

## AFRICAN AMERICANS IN HARRISONBURG

Transcript 4a: Interview with Mrs. Minnie Stuart

Date and Place of Interview: July 1978; 180 Kelley Street, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Interviewer: Inez Ramsey, JMU Faculty; also present, Brenda McCormick and an unknown interviewer

Transcriber: Theresa Staropoli, Burruss Intern in Carrier Library Special Collections, 19 January 1993

Tape 1, side 1

[Interview begins in progress]

IR: Some of the Methodists went down to the John Wesley? Is that how they...

MS: Yes. We came from first from there, you know they split down there, and then they come on up here. I don't know the names[?] or nothing there, but that's where it is. But when we got it, we bought it from the Gravelin[?] church, and the pastor was named Reverend Hammer[?], I don't know whether his name was Reverend Hammer, we bought it from the AME church, our church connection. Brought it from the Brethren church.

IR: And Reverend Hammer was the pastor of the United Brethren Church at that time?

MS: That's right. He was Pastor of the Zion[?], anyway, he's the one that we had here that we had to go to, to buy it from.

IR: Oh, I see. Do you know how much you paid for it?

MS: I can't remember. I can't remember that. I don't know how much, in wholesale. I know the one I'm living at [unintelligible].

IR: How did you get the money together to buy it, do you know?

MS: We saved it up, honey.

IR: And just the members of the congregation saved it?

MS: I'll tell you now. We had to borrow the money from our connection, from the AME church. We borrowed from the connection of our church.

IR: Ok, so you borrowed the money from the AME church. Then we borrowed the money from there.

MS: We borrowed it from the connection. They have a savings account, you know, and we borrowed from the church, and of course we had from the connection. Then we, after we got settled, we put some of it back to the connection again, to our connection. We borrowed from the AME. The AME church.

IR: So you borrowed it from the church fund, you saved some, and then you borrowed some from the church fund in the Methodist church.

MS: Just like you do around the store, when you want to buy something, and you buy in a few segments every month.

IR: In installments, right?

MS: So that's what we had doing like that, installment plan like that. And of course then we got the man at the corner store, and all that there. You'll see it out there. I'll show it to you.

IR: Who was your pastor when you bought the church?

MS: His name was, oh, what did we call him. I can't think of it. I think his name was, it rings a bell, Carter[?]. I think he was Carter, Manny Carter.

IR: Ok, if it comes to you, if his name comes to you...

MS: I'll be thinking about it.

IR: If his name comes to you, tell Brenda, alright? Because I'm interested in the history of the church. Maybe you can talk to Brenda a little bit about some of the things that the church has done over the years, and the church women, and that kind of thing, because we're interested to know about the church. And you and your husband really have been...

MS: Oh yeah, we've been there ever since it started. We were the first members.

IR: Where did you have your services before you bought the church next door?

MS: Well, we started there on Main Street by the mill. The building is torn down. It's been down for years and years, and there's a street there.

IR: Oh, you mean there's a street through where your church used to be. Was it just a room in a building that you met in?

MS: No. This lady ran a second-hand store. She sold second-hand clothes. My grandfather, two uncles, the parents were all dead. But we came from [unintelligible-Duster camp?] and my grandfather, he came first. The grandfather, he came after the father and mother, see. So we rented one room, this lady had upstairs in her place, and we rented one room and some wood boxes we used for furniture. Clothing and everything came in wood boxes, big wood boxes, and the food you know was really hot and so [?]. And we borrowed a wood box, and the grandfather made a pulpit and we rented chairs from this lady, put them in upstairs. But the first pastor, or the second pastor, I think it was the first pastor, he was from Africa, and his name was Reverend Marion Gioper[?]. He was an African Methodist priest minister.

IR: Marion, was that his first name?

MS: Reverend Marion Gioper.

IR: Gioper was the last name?

MS: That's the last name. And he passed away. No, he didn't pass away. He was from Africa, and he got a telegram his wife had passed away. And he left and went, he had to leave and we never did see him no more. Well that was when we first started from this...

IR: Hold on just a minute. Sorry to interrupt you Mrs. Stuart. [Tape cuts off briefly] Let me get started before we go ahead and get started. Now his wife passed away and he didn't come back.

MS: He didn't come back. We never heard from him that day until this.

IR: Never a word?

MS: No, never see him, across the ocean way over there in Africa, and we never did hear from him anymore. Well then naturally then we had to find another minister, and carrying on, and I was trying to think of who that other minister was. I know we had to carry on, and Sunday we'd have service and you'd just walk in like a class reunion, kind of like that, carrying on like that. We'd think about the offering and everything, and we'd save our money for it. The move from this building, we were stretching out a little bit but that was after. The move from that building, we were on top of Depot Hill.

IR: Depot Hill?

MS: Yes, over there. We moved from there, I mean from this first building, we had the church service around there, and we had more move[?] then. That's why we first started. I met the horse before the fall[?]. [Unintelligible].

IR: No that's alright. Now, did you start out on Depot Hill and then go down to, now you started on Main, and then you moved to Depot Hill.

MS: Yeah, Depot Hill. Now that's the old hill across from the railroad tracks. And these were across, on this side of the railroad tracks, and they had and of course naturally they had benches. Not benches but seats in there, that was Depot. Each person actually had seats in there, we thought we was doing [unintelligible]. And from there, we moved up here on Market Street.

IR: And so you kept going, even without a pastor.

MS: That's what I'm trying to think about this pastor, where he come from. We carried on, and the first minister that we got we went into buy this, his name was Reverend Collins[?].

IR: Collins, alright. It wasn't Carter it was Reverend Collins.

MS: Reverend Collins.

IR: Now was he here all the time, or did they do back then like you do now where, it's Reverend Smith, isn't it now?

MS: No, he's named Gordon Jones[?].

IR: Jones, well, I was close. Smith and Jones. Reverend Jones. I knew it was one of the two. Reverend Jones, now he's in Richmond, and he comes to Staunton and here. Did you have a pastor here full time, or did they travel like they do now?

MS: We used to have a full time minister, but they have so many of them [churches] now. Of course now, see, times are getting so tight, and men are not coming into the ministry like they used to, and there's plenty of churches, but they have to double up just like [unintelligible]. And see, Staunton used to have a minister there at Staunton, who'd stay there all the time for years. And we happens to have [unintelligible], you see, well, they had more churches than they had the ministers, understand, and that's when you have them double up. So Reverend Collins was one that, he was with us when we bought the church, and then he worked up to that preacher[?]. And he used to just pastor to us. And we had a parson, one man was a parson. In fact, most of the ministers stayed with me, stayed at our house when they had to travel or come like that, but partially that's why we worked up to having a rented parsonage with Reverend Collins, he was our first minister that we had.

IR: Did you rent a parsonage when Reverend Collins was here?

MS: No, I can't remember where he came from, when he come in it was on a Saturday so oh, until Monday, then he'd leave.

IR: Do you remember when it was that you started doubling up on churches, about how long ago has that been?

MS: I reckon I'd have to hunt up some old papers. I think I can find some of them. But anyhow, we kept most all of them ministers if they didn't have any parsonage, they'd come in. [Unintelligible].

IR: About how many members did you have in your church when you first got started out years ago when you were on Main Street?

MS: Oh, we had about 12 or 13. We hadn't really started.

IR: When you bought the church here, how many did you have?

MS: Oh, we didn't have too many. We were just starting. See, my grandfather and my grandmother, my grandmother, she would have Sunday school on Sundays, and we lived on Effinger Street. You

don't see anything on Effinger Street now, but Effinger Street, and the street had the white and the colored children on it. White people lived on one side of the street, on the different side, on Effinger Street. And she helped to collect money to help the church, and she had, I know, one of them old time food jars called a gallon, and she had it full of pennies, I remember this well. And she'd have Sunday school every Sunday, and all the children on Effinger Street were eager to come to Sunday school my grandmother taught.

IR: You mean both the black children and the white children on Effinger Street came to your grandmother?

MS: Yes, indeed. Their parents had them come to Sunday school, and she would save this money. I'll never forget it, that half-gallon jar, you don't see them half-gallon jars no more. You don't see them. I wish I had one. I had one jar here, and it's a quart-jar, and it's 18 and 90 something. I keep that jar.

IR: Do you know that that's worth money?

MS: I know it. [unintelligible]

IR: People are crazy about those. Those old jars and things, I can't believe how much people are willing to pay.

MS: And you don't see any of them.

IR: Oh no! That's why they're collectors items now. 1890?

MS: Yeah. And my grandfather, he would teach too. I'll never forget that. I wasn't gonna get all that too. My parents lived then over on, well now that's torn down, we were on West Market, and the people at this end, a couple of houses, two houses just on down the side of it, there was a same spot[?].

IR: Your grandmother, when she was teaching Sunday school, that was in her home? Yeah, that was in her home. She brought the kids right into the houses.

MS: Right in the house. And then they had the jobs for the children. They'd teach them, read the Bible to them and explain to them, to the children. When I was over I would read too.

IR: Oh I bet you did! Grandmother was a celebrity, wasn't she?

MS: Oh I should say! And my two grandmothers, and my two aunts, all very, very similar. My father was, you know, if you could read the Bible real good, and pray good, sing, you were granted as a minister, and my father was a preacher too.

IR: So you didn't have to go to college and do all those kinds of things to be a minister?

MS: No, not at all. Back in those days if you could read the Bible good and pray and sing...they'd call my father and make me mad, somebody, "Your father's a preacher." I was, "Sure, he's a preacher." Well he wasn't a man of the collar, but the children didn't know any difference, you know. They didn't know.

IR: A preacher was a preacher.

MS: A preacher worked most days back then. And when we started here in the church here, as I told you we had them wood boxes. Granddaddy built a pulpit out of them wood boxes. It'd take two of them to make it. Course I can see that preacher up there now preaching while everybody sitting down watching the preacher (laughs). We had to climb up them steps to go upstairs on the second floor. We got [unintelligible].

IR: I bet you did, and your daddy being the preacher. And the kids did tease you though, didn't they? About being the preacher's, did the kids tease you all the time?

MS: Yeah they'd tease me and make matters. "Oh, your father's a preacher. She thinks she's something."

(Laughs) Well, that's all I want to be[?].

IR: Preacher's kids have a hard time, sometimes.

MS: That's right, they do. And then, as I was telling you, we come from there, from Depot Hill, and you didn't walk the hill, but see, they had the station. That was a specialty station, and then they moved from that station over on West Market where I was telling you. Well, I'd be so anxious, me and my main grandmother, then my mother and father, and we were up on the hill, up on West Market, top of the hill. And my mother and father taking care of the church up there. And when we moved from the station, it was a bigger house. We had more room. And daddy and mother taking care of the church, and we didn't have to pay the rent to live in the house cause she was taking care of the church. It was nothing but a cot in the cellar. I reckon I've been moved all over this town. I haven't been moved most all over this town, everywhere. And my grandfather owned this home up in Raphine called the Midlan[?]\*.

IR: Raphine? Where is Raphine?

MS: Raphine is on this side of Lexington.

IR: Oh all right.

MS: Now my husband was born up there. I was born in Augusta County too. Rockbridge, I was born in Rockbridge, but see we came down here. We moved down here.

IR: Why did your daddy come down here?

MS: Well, you know, it's like people get tired of living in one place and move. So people began to move away from there and going away and going to the city. Most all the people that lived in Midlan[?] called it Midlan and then they called it Raphine, it was a part of Raphine, and this is Midlan here. And next is Steeles Taverns, but it's all mixed up in a little country place and didn't have a name on it. We have [unintelligible] church there in Midlan, but most all of the memories and all of the colored people have passed away, and they have a beautiful church. They have one of those great big huge chandeliers and it's antique[?]. Most of the people have tried to break in there and take it out. It's a great big beautiful thing. And it's all glass and them lamps all around it, it's a pretty thing. And they had a piano in there and the organ. Nice pulpit and [unintelligible].

IR: Was Midlan an all black community?

MS: White and colored lived there, and white people lived there had farms, you know, they farmed, and a lot of the colored people worked on these farms. Raising corn, you know, or whatever they may. Of course I was raised down here, but my husband, he was raised up there in Midway. Of course I was born there, but my parents brought me here when I was just four years old.

IR: Oh, you were just a tiny one when that happened.

MS: And I've been here ever since.

IR: Well you might as well consider yourself a native Harrisonburger, then, for all...

MS: Yeah, yeah, that's right. But I said when we went to get married, the preacher, I mean, you know, who sold us the license, he says, "Well, I want to see who courted the most, you or your husband?" And my husband couldn't write like I, you know, he couldn't write as good as I could. I had a beautiful hand. And the man who wrote the license said "I know who wrote this. I know who courted the most," he said, "You!" I said "How you tell?" He said, "You write the best!"

IR: That was cute. How did you meet your husband and court?

\* In Jan. 2002, local historian Nancy Sorrells read the transcript and felt certain that the name meant was Midway, known today as Steeles Tavern. Raphine and Steeles Tavern lie on the Rockbridge-Augusta County line halfway between Staunton and Lexington, thus midway. The county line zigzags through this area, accounting for the confusion over which county Mrs. Stuart was born in.

MS: That was something. My husband came down here and he's always so bashful, came down here. He came with my cousin down here, and my cousin just came and stayed overnight, and he was heading for New York, cause he had some relatives in New York. And my husband and this cousin, they were pals, so he asked to

come down here, and he stayed about a week, this cousin of mine, and Danny came and asked him to lecture[?] him before he went, he came down before he left. But he left him, and so Danny said, "He come [unintelligible] following him, when he went off and left him," so Danny just wandered here, and he seen me and all [unintelligible] (laughs).

IR: What did you do when you courted back in those days? You didn't go to the movies, or the drive-in.

MS: No, we'd take a little walk or something, and get something to eat, and the other girls, you know, "Danny he's good looking" and pretty hair and everything. And after you go on a walk and I'd wait for him to get dressed. He stayed at our house, and I couldn't hardly wait for him to get dressed. It would take me so long to dress, when he'd come up, and that hair was all pretty black[?]. Oh my! I'm so tickled! Is that all? I mustn't tell you that. Danny was a nice looking man. [Unintelligible] look as good as I could. And the other girls would go, "Old Miss Minnie, Old Minnie Bell," that's what they called me, "Old Minnie Bell, she's got a boyfriend." And all of them was smiling and I rolled my eyes at them! (Laughs) Wasn't that awful? I said Danny, so many girls are looking at you, and I said, "I hope none of them get you." Now wasn't that awful?

IR: No, I think that was right smart! (Laughs) Let me show, you sit still. Let me do it.

MS: Alright! Let her do it! (Laughs) It's so dirty. It's so dirty.

IR: This is Mister Stuart, and painfully this is her daughter. She has passed on.

MS: That picture is so dirty.

IR: [Unintelligible]

MS: Oh, he is a sweet thing.

BM/UI: He is a nice looking man. When was this taken?

MS: Oh, that was taken on our anniversary, our golden, what did I tell you?

IR: This is your fiftieth probably. Isn't it? Is that your 50th anniversary? What year was it, do you remember?

MS: Yeah, it's on there, somewhere on the whole album. That was when we had our anniversary. Fiftieth anniversary.

IR: Now Cathy can you imagine being married for 50 years?

MS: Ain't that something?

BM/UI: How long have you been married all together?

MS: Sixty-four years.

IR: How old were you when you got married?

MS: Fifteen.

IR: Fifteen. You were just a baby.

MS: Well, I stopped school when Danny come down here. I was in the eighth grade. That's how far I

went. I was in the eighth grade.

IR: And you went to the old Effinger Street school.

MS: Oh, yeah. Effinger Street.

IR: That Effinger Street school. Everybody who was anybody. (Laughs) I better back up here. Brenda's going to throw me out here in a minute. Let me ask you a couple of questions. Now if you don't want to answer any of these you just tell me. Do you have your sheet? Let me just fill it out on that. Now your name is Mrs. Minnie Stuart, and it's S-T-U-A-R-T.

MS: Minnie B. Stuart. That's my name, Minnie Bell, and I don't like Bell.

IR: Oh, now that's old, Minnie Mae. Mae and Bell, for some reason or another were...

MS: Minnie Bell.

IR: I got Mae.

MS: Minnie Bell Stuart.

IR: And so your maiden name was Hughes. You were Miss Minnie Hughes, huh? And you were born in Augusta County?

MS: I was born in Augusta County.

IR: Were you born anywhere near any cities or anything in Augusta County, or was it just plain old Augusta County?

MS: Plain old Augusta County.

IR: What year were you born?

MS: 18 and 94.

IR: 18 and 94. Isn't it amazing! And so you must have moved to Harrisonburg about 1898, cause you said you were about four right? That would make it about 1898. Think in terms of 1898. Did you ever hear anything about the school that was on Tin Cup Alley? There was a school on Tin Cup Alley that they had before the Effinger Street school. Did you ever hear of the old school that they had before they had Effinger Street?

MS: No. I tell you what, my parents lived down in Tin Cup Alley.

IR: Where was it?

MS: Well, Tin Cup Alley. It was between Elizabeth Street, no, let me see. Rock Street, it's Rock Street. When you come off of Main Street, and one street is Wolfe Street, and the next street is Rock Street is, no, no.

IR: I know where Rock Street is. Was Tin Cup Alley around Rock Street?

MS: Well, I don't know why they called it Tin Cup Alley because and Rock Street, and we go on down that street, and there's a street with a creek between it. Not all of the way, you go half way.

IR: About half way up Rock Street?

MS: Half way down. When you're going towards German Street. We used to have a street named German Street.

IR: Yeah, that's East Liberty now, right? That's Liberty Street now, is German Street.

MS: Yes that's the name of it. They changed it during the wartime, when they were having the war.

Well, that street, as I say, Rock Street used to come on down that street. I mean from the corner on down. Well the stream run through there, and they called it Tin Cup Alley cause they threw all the tin cups and cans and stuff down there. And the creek was running there too.

IR: Oh. So it was right down by the creek, down by Rock Street, where it comes into...

MS: See, Rock Street is straight from the corner on Main. Well when you get half way down there, they call that Tin Cup Alley. You don't hear them say that no more. But when we called it, they called

it Tin Cup Alley, and I thought because all the cans and tin things were still there, and the creek was there, so you'd wash them over. And then they'd still have a creek that runs way out the street. That's what corks up the gap. Well now there's German Street, now we lived in Tin Cup Alley, I mean we lived there...

End tape 1, side 1



Transcript 4b: Interview with Minnie Stuart, July 1978

Tape 1, side 2

The quality of the recording is poor, making many passages unintelligible.  
[Side 2 begins in progress]

- MS: Go down and carry water from the courthouse spring, on the other side, where Penney's is now.
- IR: Yeah, I know about the old grass spring.
- MS: You know about that. Well, I carried water, for the drinking water. Mother got, when it rained, get the water from that for washing.
- IR: Do you mean you went all the way from Tin Cup Alley down to the court square to get water?
- MS: I'm from Tin Cup Alley yes ma'am. I had my little tin bucket.
- IR: Oh, that's a nice little piece to walk, isn't it?
- MS: Well, yeah, but I was nothing but a little kid. I didn't mind that. I'd go two or three times to get them water, and later people would have their butter and the milk sitting in the cross section to keep cool.
- IR: You mean down in court square?
- MS: Right down at that courthouse.
- IR: You mean they kept their butter and stuff in the spring?
- MS: In crocks, darling. People ha to carry them down, not many that had it, but they carried it, they had them crocks down there.
- IR: And they took them down and put them in the spring?
- MS: Set them in there! We didn't have no ice, you know. And that water was cold! You didn't have to put no ice in. You didn't know nothing about ice. And that water was good and cold. And I kept mine in my little tin bucket. Sometimes I had two. Of course then I'd carry them in and fill up the [unintelligible] with drinking water. I'll never forget and I drank water. People would be carrying the water from there. I don't know why, and these different crops and heavy crops. You know, have some people and churn, and put the butter in there, and you'd come down there and somebody would come over with a crock.
- IR: So you kind of had a community spring house where everybody kept their stuff?
- MS: Right. I don't know, I offer wonder does anybody around here know about that. I don't know whether there's any of them living or not, but I know I am. I'll never forget that, and now they're turning[?] that water. And it's cold, I want to be real cold, just the same as when you put ice in the water, how cold it gets.
- IR: They're talking about rebuilding the old spring house.
- MS: Yes [unintelligible].
- IR: What did you think about it when they tore the old spring house out? It was just a [unintelligible] outside.
- MS: I thought it was just wonderful. It's fascinating to me. "Why did you stay so long?" I take my time, you know. A little bit of working, and talking.
- IR: What did you think about it when they tore the spring house out?
- MS: Oh, I thought it was terrible. I think it was terrible. Well then people then began, you know, bring water in [?] and we used to bring water from nasty[?] Rawley Springs, and water [unintelligible].
- IR: How did they get it? In barrels, you mean?

MS: No, no. And when you see they got no things for them to come in.

IR: Oh, ok, when they put the piping system from Rawley Springs to get through there. Going back to Tin Cup Alley, was there a school there that you remember? Was there a school there that you remember? Do you remember a school on Tin Cup Alley?

MS: I don't remember. I'm trying to think. I know that I came, when we started going to school together. I didn't start going to school there until I moved on over to West Market. I had gone there. That's where I lived and coming from. West Market. I went from West Market over to Effinger Street.

IR: And so the only school you really remember is the Effinger Street school.

MS: And that's where I caught myself graduating from. Effinger Street school.

IR: Ok, so you don't remember one before that.

MS: And then from that school to up here.

IR: To Lucy Simms.

MS: Right where they are now.

IR: We were wondering. Somebody told us there was an old school on Tin Cup Alley.

MS: I know that [unintelligible], and right on the corner there, this old colored gentleman lived there, and he owned this house. He owned this house and owned on Main Street, and he used to sell fish. We'd get our fish from Baltimore, and everybody would be there to buy these fish from this colored fellow. A big old man, and his name was Jackson. Right across the street on the other side was, I forget the people's name, but I know the daughter. The daughter, two daughters lived there, but the mother and father didn't, and I can't think of them. I see them every now and then with each other every now and then. But the mother and father passed away, but everybody, they were Catholics, and everybody would come, eat that fish, and he'd have them big tubs, tin tubs, and ice and everything. And he got his feed and everything from Baltimore.

IR: How'd he get them?

MS: Well they ship it honey. Train, come on the train.

IR: Oh, ok. So they put them on the train, shipped it down here.

MS: Yeah, in barrels and things, and you'd have all the people. See, on Friday was a fascinating day for fishing.

IR: That's right. I forgot. No meat on Friday.

MS: No meat on Friday. And everybody would bust[?] them wide open. They'd come get them things, oh my, I'll never forget that. And then there was two families, two colored families. Two on one side of the Avenue, Timber Valley[?]. And two on the other side, and all of them people passed away, and I'm still here now. And then right where the railroad track was, where the railroad comes, two houses back there. One on the corner. And this colored lady, she sold second handed clothes. See, rich people bring their clothes to her and she sell them, and honey, my husband's wedding suit, when we got married, he bought it from her. When my husband was...his uncle was so nasty to him. That's why they never come here. And he was going on the way to New York and couldn't. And he left his uncle who was so nasty, and he left him and come to Harrisonburg. Well, then we started courting, and then we got married, and we was talking mean to him. And half the time we weren't sure, really. And in those days, they had tan shoes, but they were the real light...they weren't colored like they are now, and they looked red looking, and I thought, "He looks so good in them [unintelligible]. And this second hand lady, this lady that sold second hand clothes. See, the really rich people brought their clothes [unintelligible] and brought them to her and she'd sell them and they'd pay

her so much for selling them. Well we bought the suit on time. I didn't have the \$5.00. I was working for a Jew lady. We also went to a rabbi. When we got married, this rabbi and Reverend Holler married us. Rabbi helped to marry us too.

IR: Oh really! Do you remember the rabbi's name?

MS: Yes. I worked there for him.

IR: Who was it.

MS: Rabbi Weiss[?]. Adolph Weiss, and all pastors. And they was at our wedding.

I'll never forget, my uncle, he's passed away a long time, he got married and his wife passed away first, and then he passed away, and he said, "Oh, I'll never forget this beautiful day when I'm counting on getting married." My mother bought me a white dress, and it was hand embroidered, you know, real wide, and it was all hand embroidered, and then the sides was real wide lace on the trim. Long, you know, and then real wide lace under it, and had to put the belt, laced through.

IR: It was all hand embroidered and everything?

MS: Hand embroidered. And Danny...of course, maybe mom didn't and Danny was standing with me and we wore them out. And he bought this gray suit, flannel suit, and he didn't have enough money to pay for it. It was about \$7 that day, and she let us have it for \$5 and I paid at home because we had to get married. He worked at a tannery, and worked tanning for a year. So we got married, and we paid her for the suit the next Saturday.

IR: I never heard of the installment plan back then!

MS: Yes! Well we didn't have the money for it, and when Danny came out he looked so good, and I had this long dress on. And after I was married and we had an increase of the family, I put the wedding dress away and safe. So I had the lady cut it up and make that make my son[?]. In those days a dress...you know the dresses when the ladies are born, they had long dresses on. They put long dresses on them first, when they're first born, and after they're so many months old, about six months old, they cut that dress off, and they had two.

IR: We were just talking about that. When did the boys come out of the dresses? When did the boys graduate short pants? How old were they usually?

MS: I don't know.

IR: I wondered if the reason they kept them in those short dresses for so long was maybe because they were still wearing diapers.

MS: Well I guess so. I don't know. After they were six months old, maybe six months old...see they don't do that now.

IR: No, the little boys wore the little short dresses.

MS: Yeah, short dresses. Maybe six months old that they started cutting the dresses off of them and making them short.

IR: We were trying to decide about when the young boys graduated to those short pants, what age they usually were, and I just wondered if the reason they wore dresses on the boys back then was maybe because they were wearing diapers and they didn't have those, you know, to open up the pants. You can't put pants on and off of diapers.

MS: I guess so. I don't know about that. But mother would surprise me, with Danny dressed up in his gray suit and the second-hand [unintelligible]. And going to church, I went to John Wesley Church when we first came, when we didn't have no place, no church. And I went to John Wesley. And every time they would have a children's day, and Easter, and I'd be on the program for Easter. And this colored fellow, he was a barber, and I went to Sunday school and he was

[unintelligible]. And when they had children's day, they would dress up, clean the church up all pretty with flowers and things. They don't need none of that, but back in those days you could get all kinds of flowers and daisies and everything, so the church would be pretty on Sunday and nice. Everybody would come out and they would try to dress their daughters, and the girls and the boys were nice children. It was a fascinating day.

IR: What did they do?

MS: Well we learned our pieces, recite pieces, and children's day would be a special day for the children to give a program. And the superintendent and the teachers would have to teach them. The parents would teach us our pieces, and then, "Oh, that Minnie Hughes, who does she think she is somebody?" My mother would have dressed me up all nice, and this particular Sunday, children's day, I reckon I had to have this pretty white dress on me, and stars, cut stars on the silver brim[?], and put all... and then I had a little band under here. And I had a chance to sit in the preacher's chair in the pulpit. "Oh that Minnie Hughes, she thinks she's [unintelligible]." And I'd be the first one to recite! I could see them [unintelligible]. Oh we just had the best time.

IR: How tall are you? Do you know how tall you are?

MS: Five feet something.

IR: Not more than five feet something, I'll tell you. You're tiny. You're not much more than five feet.

MS: [Unintelligible]. They had a missionary come, and I was one of the missionary chairmen, but I hadn't [unintelligible], so I told the lady, "Are you sure? I'll recite a little piece for you that I used to recite when I was a little girl," and she said, "Let me hear it." I said, "Mary had a little lamb, it's fleece was white as snow, and everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go. I wish I had a little lamb, with fleece as white like Mary's, I'd have him sheared and sell the wool to help the missionaries." "Oh," she said, "I wish you could have sang." The church was just full of people. I got a chance to tell her that's what I used to recite when I was a little girl.

IR: Has anybody from this area that you know of ever gone off to do missionary work or anything like that?

MS: Not around here.

IR: You don't know of anybody from this area who actually went off to do missionary work?

MS: No. One of my friends got the nominations[?], and this lady she lived in Newport News, and said, "Why, Miss Stuart," she said, "[unintelligible]."

IR: Oh, that's darling. I can see you standing there in your dress looking all cute! Now you went to the Effinger Street school, right? What age did you start? Do you remember?

MS: Well, I was...I can't tell what age I was, but I remember that I was in the second grade in the school. Second grade when I first started.

IR: How were you in second grade when you first started?

MS: Well, you see honey, you had a certain age you had to go to school. A certain age before you go to school. I guess I was...

IR: About six?

MS: Six or seven, something like that. Of course, I had to walk all along West Market. I remember this well when all the snow was up there deep.

IR: Do you remember...you said you were in 8th grade when you quit, right?

MS: Eighth grade, now. [unintelligible].

IR: And that really is the only school you ever went to, the Effinger Street

school.

MS: Effinger Street School. I never got the chance to go up here. Well that was fathered in[?] over there, at Effinger. And Professor Keister, he was here long years ago, and he was professor at the school, over all the schools.

IR: Oh, he was the superintendent of the Harrisonburg Public School System, wasn't he?

MS: Yes, something like that. Professor Keister. And when we'd always have the school closing, he would be always there to give out diplomas to the graduates. And he'd be there.

IR: See there, that'll teach you. Run off, get married, you don't get your diploma!

MS: You didn't get none of the certificates, you know.

IR: I've seen one of the old certificates from school. I think it was about 1911, and they gave them the little certificates saying that they completed...

MS: You see, that's how far I went. The eighth grade. I think you have to go to 11th or 12th. Now, my daughter-in-law, her mother, she went to school when I went to school, but she graduated, and I didn't graduate. I didn't mind! Isn't that awful!

IR: Oh, I know. Those young girls, can't wait to get married and all that kind of thing. Where did you work Mrs. Stuart? You worked for Mrs. Garber, didn't you?

MS: Yes indeed. Well, honey, there's so many people that I've worked for in this town and that all end's all[?]. I ran under chimney[?] and then I worked for Weiss, Miss Adolph Weiss.

IR: Ok, you worked for Mrs. Weiss. He married you, right?

MS: Yeah. He helped to marry me. He was a fine looking young man, and then we asked my pastor, the pastor, the John Wesley pastor. I didn't know any pastors then, see. And John Wesley pastor married us, Reverend Carter. We had to stand there at that John Wesley church until he had ours[?]. And we all realized after grandfathering[?], we had to school and church around different places. First, on Main Street.

IR: So you folks have really tracked? So you worked for Mrs. Weiss...

MS: Miss Adolph Weiss, Miss Herman Weiss, Lord, I've been through...just like that if I tell you all the people I worked for.

IR: And Mrs. Garber. You worked for her for quite awhile, didn't you?

MS: Oh Yes. I worked for Miss Harry Garber, and I worked with Miss, what's her name? Miss Herman Weiss. Two Weiss's I worked for. The rabbi, I worked for the rabbi when I got married.

IR: Did you work with the Methodist parsonage over on Franklin Street?

MS: Yes. Who told you?

IR: You did I thought.

MS: Yes indeed, I worked for, can't think of the name now, who was it? They just kept me on, I was [extra?]weight. Most all the ministers were, until, now the preacher is, Hughes. Was it Hughes? Just last year, and I think it had, I don't know whether it had the same one. Well, I told him, I said, "I was a Hughes, too." He said, "You was?" I worked with the parsonage years ago, and there's three or four ministers that I worked [for] there, and just stay on. "Keep that maid!"

IR: Hard worker I'll bet.

MS: Huh?

IR: You were a hard worker, I'll bet.

MS: Yeah. Well, I was just taking care of everything, and the last lady that I worked for, she was a minister's wife, she went to Washington, they went to

Washington, and I think he pastored. They were two lovely people, and I could wear her clothes, and I have a suit that she gave me years ago, and it's the prettiest thing you've ever seen and I could wear her clothes. But I can't think of her name! I just can't think of her name. And I haven't seen her for years and years, but I told Reverend, I told him one day. I went down there to the church and I said, "I want to see you [unintelligible]. Then one lady, up on Franklin Street, I worked for her 18 years.

IR: Who was that?

MS: She's dead now. Her and her husband both. Mrs. Rich Huffman[?]. You wouldn't know her. She was a country lady. She moved from the country to a house on Franklin, and Miss Harry Garber passed away, and she lived on that side, and Mrs. Huffman lived right across from her. The house, what I mean, the house still there, and she's dead and he's dead. Both of them I think. Oh, she just cried like anything. She was getting bad although, and they wanted [unintelligible]. And she just cried and cried. I hated to leave her, but my chance at working at another job [unintelligible].

IR: Oh, that's a shame. I didn't know that.

MS: Oh she was just the cutest, sweetest thing. And her husband, he was the last one that passed.

IR: He was what?

MS: He was the last one that passed.

IR: What did he do, do you know?

MS: Well they were country people, and they had a farm in Pleasant Valley.

IR: Oh, you mean they were farmers?

MS: They were country people, but they sold the farm and he had a man there that farmed, you know.

IR: Oh, ok. So they sold their land and moved into Harrisonburg? Did he work anywhere in town while he was here?

MS: Oh, no, no. He retired, and of course he had money and could do anything. Poor guy. I'll never forget him, and sold the house[?], and then I worked for, this is when I worked at the parsonage, the ministers and company keep the maid[?]. One ministered from Norfolk, and he was a minister down there, and that kind of got on my nerves with the children, you know. A little bit too much for him. But I stayed and toughed it out. But Reverend Wolf, I remember Reverend Wolf and his wife, she was Ellen, but they just [unintelligible]. I even, when I would leave a place, I would ask them to give me letters of recommendation, and all that. And moving around and everything [unintelligible].

IR: Oh bless your heart, you really worked then, didn't you? All your life you've worked, right?

MS: Yes. I've worked hard. And my husband he worked at a tannery, and he started hard work[?] on the railroad, and he waited too late to get the job with the railroad, so he worked at the tannery. And he worked up from the tannery, and he started working at the Kavanaugh Hotel. He worked at the Kavanaugh Hotel, worked at three restaurants, and George Rontopoulos, he passed away not too long ago, he had a store, a restaurant, up on East Market. And I've known his wife when she was a little girl.

IR: So your husband worked at Friddles What did he do there?

MS: Chef's cook. He was chef cook at the Kavanaugh Hotel, chef cook at Friddles.

IR: Our secretary was just saying something about Friddles the other day, that was the teenage hangout. And our secretary's mother was growing up in Harrisonburg, Friddles was her hangout there. And that was on...

MS: Main Street.

IR: Oh, it was on Main Street. I was thinking it was on Market.

MS: They had a big Friddles bakery and it used to be on West Market.

IR: Oh, ok. I thought she said East Market Street when she just mentioned it in passing. Ok, what was your husband's name again?

MS: Henry Eugene Stuart.

[Tape cuts off]

End tape 1, side 2

Transcript 4c: Interview with Mrs. Minnie Stuart, July 1978

Tape 2, side 1

[Side one begins in progress]

- MS: We got married on North Main Street, at home. We had a house wedding.
- IR: Didn't people get married in the churches very much?
- MS: Not then. Not like they're doing now, you know, they're getting married in churches now, and some are getting married in...well that's the style now. Some are getting married again, some of the girls are having babies, and then they turn around and get married. One lady got married not too long ago and had a little boy eight years old and going to school, but anyway, she married the man that gave her the child, and it was when he was going to school.
- IR: It seems like a lot of the people seem to have gotten married at home, rather than going down to the church and getting married in the church proper, or something like that, that people seem to have weddings at home.
- MS: Yes. Well we had ours at home, and my mother and me had it. Just relatives and friends. I was so anxious to get presents and gifts. And this old lady, I was so mad at her, I didn't know. She was a very dear friend of mothers, so I thought, "I'll get a nice present from her." And when they had the wedding presents and the opening, and here she had two little salt shakers, and now that's the thing to put the salt shakers on. I was so mad I was mad enough to give `em back to my mother's friend. And she came back and that ain't nothin'. She come here and ate up our stuff. (Laughs) I was so mad at her. That was too cute, though. "Oh Miss Anna," my mother's named Anna, "Oh Miss Anna, please invite me to your daughter's wedding." And here it is, talk a little[?]. This is to hold the salt shaker on. Salt and pepper, and was on that little tray. I was so mad at her. "Well she could have kept that, mother," I told her, but I wasn't keeping it. Oh my! I was looking in, I was trying to [unintelligible], and I have anniversary presents in there that I hadn't used for our anniversary. The most weirdest thing you ever seen [unintelligible]. That solid heavy white with turn[?]. And it's got gold all around it, braided. I don't know what in the world I'm going to do with it.
- IR: You'll have to use it [unintelligible]. Well, I guess I have got just about everything here.
- MS: You sure?
- IR: Brenda, do you want to ask anything? I might as well stay at this point, ok? I might as well stay at this point! I won't make you nervous.
- MS: Well surely you're gonna have more questions. Listen, you done ask me all the questions! (Laughs)
- IR: While I was here, I wanted to ask you about the church, and I just wondered if Reverend Jones would be willing to share some of himself with us. I'd like to know something about his ministry, and how he came into the ministry and that type of thing. He's a fascinating, wonderful man.
- MS: It's really interesting to be able to hear him. The only time I guess that he would be able to do that would be on Sunday.
- IR: If he'd be willing to do it for us, I could give him a cassette tape and a recorder, and he could just sort of take it home, and then just bring it back



to me when he's done. But you know, he's a wonderful man. He's one of the finest preachers I've ever heard in my life.

MS: I heard him preach yesterday. It was marvelous.

IR: He is good, I have to admit.

MS: He is good. He's good just to be starting out, he's good.

IR: Well I was wondering how he got into the ministry and what brought him into the ministry, and how he got started in the ministry.

MS: And it's wonderful to hear him tell you and explaining that all. He is marvelous.

IR: Oh, I know. He's a wonderful man. Just absolutely wonderful.

MS: A young man. But absolutely just marvelous, and this [unintelligible] asked him in bright morning, asked him if he would preach this particular sermon for this occasion, this mid-year conference. It's just for one day, well it's all this week. It's until Friday. I usually always go to the Houston[?] and senate or delegate[?], but delegate, he went yesterday and [unintelligible]. And he went along, but I used to always attend and all those as a delegate. But they are expensive, But he, this new presiding elder[?], he's the new presiding elder of that district. He was a minister and a preacher. He had a church, but now he's on the circuit, and daily, he has to go around to all the churches, different Sundays in the morn like that. But [unintelligible] every body was just thrilled to death, and of course, he was a little preacher, not like some of the other big ones, but of course we missed a lot of church services[?]. You heard the way he explains it. I think that's so beautiful. I like to hear that, you know, explain and telling different things. It's so interesting. It is. So you can tell about his life and its start, and out in the woods preaching to the trees. That's how he started.

IR: We'd be really interested to know, how he got started. Well, we'll let Brenda get in here now, and she can just ask you some...

MS: You ask some and then ask some more cause I ain't got no more! (Laughs)

BM: Well, we'll get this today and then maybe we can come back if you think about some other things.

IR: Because it's getting late. You're getting tired, right?

MS: Oh no. I'm not getting tired. Are you all getting tired then don't come back no more! (Laughs)

BM: You don't want to see us, huh!

MS: How do you like that. That ain't no nice way to talk, is it?

Would you all happen for something to drink? I have to go get it, it's across the street.

IR/BM: [They do not want a drink].

MS: Y'all don't drink. Well that's good. I have some ice water. I'll let darling ask me. What are you going to ask me now?

BM: This is about your family, like your names. Do you remember your grandmother's name?

MS: My grandmother? Her name was Phyllis York.

IR: How do you spell that, Y-O-R-I-C-K?

MS: Y-O-R-K.

BM: And her husband's name, or your grandfather's name?

MS: Oh, his name was Wesley York.

BM: And your mother's name?

MS: Anna Hughes.

BM: And your father's name?

MS: Hezekiah Hughes. Alright, Reverend Hezekiah! Hezekiah. They see them big names and put Reverend to it. He called himself a reverend. Preach, he could preach. I tell you he used to make me so mad when he'd go up there. And I'd be mad and he'd whip me.

IR: Did your daddy ever whip you?

MS: Sure he did when I made him mad.

IR: What did you do to make him mad?

MS: Probably didn't do what he told me to do. "Didn't I tell you to do so and so?" And I had forgotten. That's one time I got a whipping.

BM: What did he whip you with? A belt?

MS: Strap, honey! And them old straps, honey, people didn't whip you with, well sometimes they...they get the switches, honey, off the tree, and fold them flatter. And them things hurt like the Dickens. And then he'd have a real flat strap, and them prongs, would cut them all up and leave them welts on you.

BM: Did he whip you in the house, or did he have somewhere he took you?

MS: No, he'd whip you in the house, I'm in my home.

IR: No woodshed...right there.

MS: That's right! And they didn't whip you over your clothes, it wore your clothes out. (Laughs)

IR: Oh, you mean you pulled down your pants?

MS: [Unintelligible] That's where they get back at, honey.

IR: Oh, so it wasn't even through your clothes. They whipped your bare bottom?

MS: That's right! Ain't wearing no clothes. "Take them [off]." Old whips on you like spiders.

BM: How often did you get whipped?

MS: Oh, not often. Of course, who wanted a whuppin'? (Laughs)

BM: How many children do you have?

MS: One.

BM: And what's her name?

MS: How many did I have? I had three.

BM: Ok, and what were their names?

MS: Well, Naomi Rebecca. I should have told you Henry, first. Henry is the oldest. And Carnita Mae.

BM: That's a daughter?

MS: Both of them daughters. Carnita Mae. I had three, honey. And then my son was the oldest. His name was Henry Jr.

BM: And do you have grandchildren?

MS: One. Henry III. And I got two great-grandchildren. They graduated from JMU high school[?].

BM: Great-grandchildren that graduated from high school?

MS: [Shows them pictures] She's the oldest, and this is Mabel[?]. And this is the daddy.

BM: This is Henry?

MS: That's Henry II.

IR: He's nice looking.

MS: I mean, the second, I'm talking about he was first. Of course, he is the second. That's the daddy.

IR: Now this is Henry III, isn't it? This is Henry III right here. He's got two daughters.

MS: This is the daddy.

BM: Oh, this is your son? Oh!

MS: Don't him and his daddy look alike?

BM: Yeah, they really do.

MS: And that's my daughter. It's so dirty [the picture]. I'll wash it before you all come back in.

IR: (Laughs) I never wash anything any more! First of all, it's too hot.

MS: So they're supposed to be coming this week or next week, coming to visit us.

IR: Oh, how nice!

[Tape is stopped]

African-Americans in Harrisonburg

Transcript 4e: Interview with Miss Minnie Stuart

Date and Place of Interview: July 1978, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Interviewer: Brenda McCormick

Transcriber: Theresa Staropoli, Burruss Intern in Carrier Library Special Collections, 7 April 1993

Tape 3, side 1

(Tape begins in progress)

- MS: He sat there. He didn't have nothing like that, he just had to ask me questions.
- BM: What kind of interested, like when you were a child growing up, like if you played any games, any particular games that you played as kids?
- MS: No. I didn't play very many games. I was always with the family. I had to look after the other children. What, you want to know about childhood?
- BM: Yeah, that's one thing we're interested in, kind of. In what you remember. How about stories? Did your parents ever tell you stories, or grandma tell you stories?
- MS: [Someone comes to the door] What are you selling? [Tape is briefly cut off]. When my childhood [unintelligible - the microphone is scraped across the table] because, like I said, I was the oldest, and I had to look after my mother and the other children. My mother worked in service, but she did day work. And she'd leave at 8 o'clock in the morning and come home in the afternoon, and of course I had to practically keep house.
- BM: You took care of your younger brothers and sisters then? Did you play games with them to keep them occupied? They just went off by themselves?
- MS: Well, yes, played mostly by themselves, because I had to keep house and help take care of them and the house. I'd have to pretty much time to clean. Of course, mother always cooks the food. Now what I had to do was warm it up or something like that. I kept house cleaned up, and Momma would come in and go, "Well this is the most fascinating thing!" All the children and everything, after they were older, children were in school. I was biggest, you know. My mother smoked a pipe. It was the cutest thing. One of those clay pipes. You never seen one like that. Little small pipe called a clay pipe that had a stem on it. [Unintelligible]. And she'd leave it on, and I had to clean it out and make up the bed and clean up and everything, and I'd misplace that pipe every time! Would misplace this pipe. Well when I'd leave it cleaning up and looking after the children, I'd forget where I'd put the pipe, and I got so many beatings about it. My mother beat me so many times about it until I learned some sense. It is too funny. She would come home from work, near crazy [unintelligible]. Well anyway, you had a little tin box like that. Do you see the little tin box? That's what. And this clay pipe and she used to smoke Duke's Mixture in a little white bag. It would come in a little white bag. I'd

misplace that every time. And she'd beat me until I found it. She was crazy to get that smoke. And I got so many beatings I wouldn't misplace it. I'd make up the bed, and now, this is her bedroom and right there was the front door, where she'd come to the bedroom. I'd make up that bed and set that can and tobacco sit right in the middle of the bed. Both of them right in the front so she could see it. When she opened the door she would see it.

BM: Now she would have it, didn't she, when she came home?

MS: And then when she come home I needed to know her [unintelligible]. And she sat in the back and she sat on a round chair, a rocking chair, and I'd light a pipe, put tobacco in it and light it for her and draw it. That's one I didn't learn to smoke, but I never did smoke a pipe.

BM: You never smoked a pipe?

MS: Never smoked it in my life. Just draw it for her and light it for her. And she could see everything I did. She'd say, "Minnie, the house looks nice." But if that pipe wasn't there, and the things wasn't there, honey, I'd get the worst beating! But she was just crazy, you know, with smoke. And after everything, I'd find it after I got this beating. So she'd go and work in different places, but I kept house for her, and she'd come home and get supper and everything.

BM: Then you'd get up real early? She had to be off to work early?

MS: Well, she wouldn't go to work until about 8 o'clock in the morning. She had to call places you know. But I'd just get more beatings until I learned some sense. And of course the children played. They played hide-and-seek and marbles, and things like that.

BM: Did they have their own marbles? Did they buy marbles, or what did they do?

MS: Yeah, they had marbles, and we'd buy them marbles. I used to play with them too.

BM: How did...I've never played marbles before.

MS: Well, you just make a round ring on the ground, and you have one, and put some in the ring, and it was fascinating. You shoot all them out, and that's the game.

BM: Oh! I've never played that.

MS: There are people, they have all [unintelligible]. That was one of the games that we played. And we'd play checkers.

BM: Just like we do today?

MS: Yeah. Of course they were different kinds then. Now you get the checker board, we didn't have all those things like that. We just had a checker board, and you put the checkers on it, and then you [unintelligible]. Well, then we'd play hide-and-seek. That's fun.

BM: Did you play during the day, or at night?

MS: We'd play, we had games we played in the day, too. Another thing [unintelligible - a loud truck drives by the house] our special days that I worked for a living, and the dandelions, you always see the dandelions. And this lady had a big place, a real big place. A yard, big yard, and she liked me, and she would always call my mother, my mother's name was Anna, and then she'd call her. "Miss Anna, say will you let Minnie come up and pick some dandelions, we have the dandelions." And the people made wine out of them then. They used to make wine then. And I would go there and pick these dandelions, and all of them girls, white girls, that lived on that street...the lady, her husband owned the Kavanaugh Hotel, and there's three brothers out there, and they owned the Kavanaugh Hotel. Well, she would always

go down to the hotel in the afternoon, she stayed over on West Market. Old and has a lot of houses built around since, a year or two old, just one beautiful house, sitting in the center, and [unintelligible] and all of that in dandelions. Oh, it was the prettiest thing we ever seen, her front yard. She had to go around the back. So she said, "Miss Anna, will you let Minnie come up? I'll pay her \$.25." I got some money, \$.25. Well, all the girls were glad to see me, all the white girls were all glad to see me go up, so we'd all have a good time playing. And this lady would leave and go on down to the hotel and stay until 5 o'clock, and then she'd come back and say, "Well I'm gonna take a walk now." And as soon as she'd leave, the girls come on over, and we'd just play and have more fun. And you see, after you picked the dandelions after a certain length of time, why the dandelions go in when the sun starts to set. They close up! It was the cutest thing, and you wouldn't see a dandelion. And of course, the girls would help me pick dandelions so we could play.

BM: (Laughs) What kind of games did you all play?

MS: Oh, we'd just play anything. We'd play running and racing and sometimes we played jumping rope and all that. Just nothing. Just playing [unintelligible] and everything. And most all of those girls that I played with when I was a girl, they're all dead[?]. Ain't that something? Some married I noticed in the paper the other day, one fellow passed away, and he was Woodson, and his sisters played with me. One sister's living, and this boy, his son, her brother, passed away. Way old, too. He used to be here...I remember one time he got in trouble. He got in trouble and there was a colored fellow, a colored fellow and then two whites. They broke into this station. And he went away and [unintelligible] back. He would come back. If he come back, he'd come back at night. And he was married and had a lovely wife. She was sweet, but he was well-to-do, and he married this girl, she was a poor girl. But she had two beautiful children. And I read in the paper the other day, Woodson, who passed away, lived[?] in Indiana or somewhere, and I hadn't heard anymore from him, because if they catch him, they're going to put him in the penitentiary. So he never come back to Harrisonburg. And all those well-to-do people, white people, and they lived on West Market, and then the girls played, we all played in this woman's yard, and then they'd help me pick dandelions so we could play!

BM: Would she make wine with the dandelions?

MS: No, we just picked them up and just throw them in the garden. No, she didn't want them. But you could make wine out of it. I made wine out of dandelions.

BM: Have you?

MS: Yeah, dandelion wine. And the roots is better than the blossom. Blossom is good because just to drink like that, but the root of them, you cook them, wash them clean, cook `em, and strain `em, and that medicine for people who were sick.

BM: Oh really? The roots of the dandelions?

MS: My aunt, my husband's aunt raised him, and she was an old lady, and she would get the dandelion roots and then make the wine out of the blossom and the roots. She'd use them and make medicine. And people would be sick in the winter time, or anytime, and she would always go take them a little bottle of that wine, and it'd help them like anything. [Unintelligible] but a glass of that dandelion wine, take a spoonful of it, you're your old self. So that's what we did to have a good time. So this boy Woodson, and one of the girls lives out on Mason, and she was married, and her husband... there was an

explosion out there on Mason Street. They had an explosion in the basement.  
They said he died there.

BM: Was this a long time ago?

MS: Yeah. That's the only thing that I...when they interviewing me, the dates I don't pay attention to the dates.

BM: I've heard something about a fire they had back on Paul Street where Paul House burned down. Do you remember anything about that?

MS: Paul Street? This lady lived on Mason. She lived on Mason Street, and they owned the home, and she was a baby girl of the Woodsons, and I haven't seen her for years. I used to work out on Mason Street. I worked for one family there and she was [unintelligible]. And I walked not on this street, but the next street, Broad. I lived down on Broad Street. We owned our home down there. And our house was the first house that they wanted on the street. So we was out and then we had to move out, of course we hung around until we could find a place, but we didn't find any place because we were down[?]. So we bought this. We bought the lot from a cousin. He went to Chicago, moved to Chicago, and I always told him, I said, "If you ever decide to sell it, the house and all, give me the first chance." So he did. One night, we were just desperate. We'd been all over town everywhere trying to find a suitable place, and, well, he owned a house on Johnson, but I didn't like Johnson Street, so he sold that, and then we bought this lot.

BM: And then you built this house? You and your husband?

MS: And the lumber came from Philadelphia. Now you can get the lumber almost anywhere. But everything was cut from everything ready for. So all the lumber in this house come from Philly.

BM: Did your husband build it himself?

MS: Oh no. He had a carpenter. The man came here in the morning [unintelligible] and show us the different houses, you know what I mean.

BM: Yeah, the plans.

MS: Yeah. And so he picked out this. We didn't have no place to put the lumber and everything, put it in our church.

BM: Did you really?

MS: Yeah, and that's our church over there. We had our lumber in there. SO we had to break all the lumber [unintelligible]. But I was so sorry that I didn't have a basement. [Unintelligible - tape is paused for a phone call] Working Until 6 o'clock. So much for that!

BM: What else do you remember when you were young?

MS: Oh goodness me, I'll tell you what I liked to do. I loved to jump rope. We used to have this jump rope. Long big rope, you know. a big bunch of us would get together and jump in, jump out. Jump in, jump out until you'd get tired.

BM: Did you sing any songs when you jumped rope?

MS: [Unintelligible]

BM: You don't remember any?

MS: We'd sing a bunch of different songs, but we never needed to sing. Just running, jumping, there would be three or four of them jumping and singing. Sometimes they weren't fast enough, and when they'd jump on the rope, that would stop all the other girls from jumping. Then they would, one person would jump in there, real fast like that, salt and pepper.

BM: Yeah, I've heard of that.

MS: All[?] these kids, salt and pepper. Oh, we was having fun with that. And then I used to go skating. My parents, I never did have a chance to do that often,

skating. They had a skating ring on Effinger Street. Effinger Street is the next street, and the school's on that street. I lived on West Market, and I'd have to, when school's done, I'd never get home [unintelligible], and I wanted to skate so bad, I never did know how to skate. And all the other girls in school, they'd stop by the skating ring and skate. [Unintelligible] and I never did get to skate.

BM: Did your sister or brother ever get to?

MS: No, we had to be home from school early. We had much work to do. I remember just as well, they had a railroad on West Market, and the railroad still runs through there, and of course they had brand new stuff for storage[?]. And every evening we'd get home, we'd go walk up the railroad track and pick up wood. They had the big box cars. They would open them, and you'd have wood on them, and sometimes they'd throw them off the side of the car, and we'd pick it up and carry wood. It'd be at the depot then, and I'd go way up there, and we'd come to a junction. Carry wood on my back in sacks. We'd go every evening.

BM: So that was how you heated your house? Cooked?

MS: Mother's cooking, I didn't have to cook. Have to give them a [unintelligible] and let me tell you this other thing. Used to have a boyfriend come and see him. I'd entertain him. We had a nice parlor, mother had a nice parlor. Entertaining in the kitchen all the time. That's the bedroom there, and this is the kitchen here. And we had a dining room up there, and we used to have a dining room with the kitchen. On this side was the living room. When I went in to [unintelligible], I'd listen to everything in the kitchen, watch the clock. Bed time, 9 o'clock. If I didn't get to listen, it would be too bad!

BM: would your boyfriend stay until that late?

MS: Probably 8 o'clock, he'd have to go at 8 o'clock. 9 o'clock was bedtime. We were tired, very tired. I'd be so embarrassed. [Unintelligible] 9 o'clock, I'd be ready [unintelligible]. He said, "I come to see you and your father makes you go to bed so early." I said, "Well that's his rules." And we used to live on West Market. We lived on West Market. And West Market, do you know where the UB [United Brethren] church is over there? Now you go straight on out there from where the senior citizens live, well it's nothing but woods all around and it's Christmas trees. I bought a Christmas tree there for a dollar. And in the Spring of the year, the violets come out. Have you ever seen the violets? They're beautiful. Violets and lilacs. They have lilac trees and then the cedar trees. Well in the Spring of the year with all the lilacs and violets, on Sundays, that's where we...we didn't have no car to ride, we had to walk. And a bunch of us Sunday school girls went walking from the UB church up to where the senior center is now. I know that's my playground. And we would have the best time. We would decorate ourselves with the violets and everything, have something we'd have around. Running. We thought it was fascinating. You'd bring a red, big bunch of lilacs, and it was so pretty, the smell.

BM: So that was your date? Were you courting then on Sunday?

MS: Oh sure I had a boyfriend and courting. But you better be in by 5 o'clock. But boys, we didn't know. We talked to them if they weren't a mean bunch of boys. Decorate ourselves all up and go out. We didn't mind that walk neither. It was about two miles out of town, up there, you know. And it's all woods, and see, all the houses built up, and there weren't but a few houses. But I was telling over at the senior center, I said, "This was my playground when I was a kid."



And we walked [unintelligible]. And then Sunday when they'd have in June in the churches, they'd always have children's day, and I would always be the first one to recite. I used to always recite. And you would her other people say, "That old superintendent, Mr. Johnson, he always gave[?] on Miss Minnie Stuart. Old Minnie Hughes." I was a Hughes. "Old Minnie Hughes, she," I was cute and little, and my mother used to dress me so pretty, and I'd have on all good clothes. I'd have a little white dress, and I'll never forget the last time that I was on the program with the children's day, and my mother bought this new white dress for me. And it had stars on it. Stars around the hem. Two rows of stars around the hem. Then it had a little band around here, and it had stars on it, and a star right up front. And the other girls would be so jealous, we had of course a parents [unintelligible]. All the parents would try to dress their children and make them look pretty for children's day. And they had great pretty flowers and decorate the church up. And they had this big chair, the preacher's chair, you know, the pulpit chair. One on each side. And I was sitting in it, all the people around were mad at me, and he come in, and they'd be wondering, "I wonder who's going to sit in that chair?" And when I came and mother brought me, his name was Mr. Bart Johnson[?], he was the superintendent, and he was waiting for me, you know. Here she comes, and I had white slippers on, and stars.

BM: How about Christmas? What was Christmas like at your house?

MS: Well, Christmas was funny. Of course I was the oldest one. We had to go to bed. I knew there wasn't Santa Claus, but for the others I had to go to bed. Mother and Daddy would go down Christmas night and they would line up all the Christmas things. Well, as soon as I found out I didn't believe in Santa Claus, I didn't get nothing.

BM: You didn't get nothing?

MS: No, he wouldn't play Santa Claus like for the other children. All the storybooks and candies and stockings. [unintelligible]

BM: Did your whole family come together on Christmas day?

MS: What?

BM: Did your cousins and everything come? Did you all have it together?

MS: Oh yes, they'd all come for Christmas. And they'd have turkeys and all the dressings, candied nuts and all that stuff. But yeah, our family, you didn't get anything if you didn't believe in Santa Claus. I'll never forget one night, on Christmas Eve [unintelligible]. Other children were sleeping, and I'd wake up and the house was all dark and everything. I was scared, but all I could do was stay there with the rest of them. But they had nice things. So many cakes and pies, and we had this great big old turkey, and Daddy would carve it for Christmas [unintelligible].

BM: Did you ever make wine? How do you make wine?

Tape cuts off

Tape 4f - Quality too poor to transcribe