

190929_1612 Transcription

Participant: And then it goes another mile past Stingley Road.

Interviewer: Down toward continued...

Participant: [???].

Interviewer: Can you speak on the significance of the border? Um, and how they would migrate and move from one place to another?

Participant: Yeah, the, when I was researching, it was called "tri racial communities." On the East Coast a professor noticed that they were located on borders. And, he theorized they were located on borders that if one community passed laws against blacks, they can move across it. So, it became a very helpful with the Underground Railroad. 'Cuz, when Levy Kauffman would send, if he had escaped slaves, and the slave hunters were in Indiana, he'd send them by way of here, which is Ohio. And vice-versa, if the slave hunters were in Ohio, he'd send 'em...

Interviewer: Because they couldn't cross over into the next state.

Participant: Yeah, they could cross into the next state and any search warrants they had had to be renewed, right? Because it's a different state.

Interviewer: Would that be the Habeas Corpus?

Interviewer 2: Would that change after the Fugitive Slave Act was passed?

Participant: Um, you still, well, the Fugitive Slave Act... no keep going straight... changed things because when then all you needed was another white person to vouch that that was your slave. So I guess, in that sense...

Interviewer: And they couldn't testify if you were black at that time?

Participant: Right, right. Uh, they also used it, um...

Interviewer: So what about after Indiana and Ohio becomes a state, and the laws are kinda set in place?

Participant: Well then, they used it for, um, baseball games. The Longtown Tigers, the baseball team, had their field in Ohio, but Ohio had Blue Laws. Do you know what Blue Laws are? Oh you don't. Nothing but church and eat on Sundays, that was the law. Can't shop, can't do anything else. And so, if they wanted to play baseball, they'd go across the line and play baseball! Where there was no laws against black baseball on Sunday. In church, the AME church was actually right up here.

Interviewer: Across from the Union Literary Institute?

Participant: Yes, correct, it was somewhere along in here. It was the

Interviewer: Could someone take a photo of that, like once we get to the Union Literary Institute?

Participant: [????] is probably better know where it is. And then, in the 1870's they actually picked up the church and moved it across the line, to Ohio.

Interviewer: The AME church?

Participant: The AME church. Because, I think racism was becoming more profound in Indiana. Um, slow down, and make a left turn.

Interviewer: And we're just gonna like, take a photo and we're not gonna get all out the car.

Participant: Okay. There's the historic marker. There is the Union Literacy Institute.

Interviewer 2: Alright you want me to get... to jump out?

Interviewer: Yeah, that's fine. And, it's only to place it. So, you can get one from like the front right here.

Interviewer 2: Alright, I'll get one from the side too.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: Again, this is... there was a whole separate city over here, sorta mirrored community. You know, what was in Ohio was in Indiana. [??] the same, but...

Interviewer: So, did they intermingle together? Like...

Participant: Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, they married, they crossed the line, they...

Interviewer: So, they did not care about that... and that's what I thought. I assumed that, but I'm like...

Participant: They didn't care. They fornicated, they did whatever...

Interviewer: But it was, but it was beneficial when it came to the law.

Participant: Right, correct.

Interviewer: That's good.

Participant: When it came to families, sex, whatever, no [gibberish].

Interviewer: I was talking to Ricky, not Ricky Cottman but the other Ricky, he was telling me how, like, first cousins, his mom was like when he came here "don't marry, don't you date none of them!"

Participant: Yes. But there was a ... this is the last real building that's standing on the Indiana side.

Interviewer: Because I know there was more, where was the other part of the building [??]

Participant: The superintendent's house was right over here. Which was the, the superintendent lived down below, first floor, and then above it was little rooms for boarders to stay, to go to school. Do you remember seeing... It's a two-story building. The first floor was where the

superintendent taught, and then above it was little rooms where students would spend a semester, um, being educated.

Interviewer: In this one?

Participant: No, in the one...

Interviewer: Oh, in the one that was.... Did you get across the street? Okay cool.

Participant: Superintendent's house was right over here, and that was torn down probably in the 1960's.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: [???]. But then it was a boarding school, so you had students...

Interviewer: I saw that, um, is it Louisa Cottman... no her mother Agnes Cottman, Agnes Robins Cottman and her husband were the superintendents right before, during the Civil War.

Participant: Yeah. Well, again, it's such a historic building, but it's in such bad shape. But, as I explain to folks, black history was not cherished and so, that's what happens. The problem we're having as black historians to try and save those structures...

Interviewer: And I feel like with this type of work, not saying that we're gonna be able to do that, but eventually, like, when universities and stuff get involved, and you can get the help for writing grants, and being able to get things restored and better preserved and...

Participant: Because I'm having pushback on, they still don't think African-American history is important. In fact, I think there's a blowback even more that we don't wanna talk about that history because right now the country is very split along racial lines. And, these are stories of black superiority, and they destroy white superiority. The story they wanna tell is, which is 'go back where you came from, all people of color don't really belong here.'

Interviewer: How far is *Brenda Jet's* house from the [???'s, umm...

Participant: It's less than a quarter of a mile.

Interviewer: Because, if it's not too far, I would just wanna... because that land has been black-owned for a long time.

Participant: Yes, that was Clemens's land originally. Where are we going now? We're going to the Clemens cemetery? Okay.

Interviewer 2: What was the student population of the, like how many students went to...

Participant: There are probably over 1,000.

Interviewer: Altogether?

Participant: Altogether.

Interviewer: I remember one time I found a document, I think it said there was about 300, it listed like 300 scholars. But I don't know, like, at what time.

Participant: Well, yeah. The question is time frame. Because in 18... that's when I had a problem writing the nomination because I had to figure out, when was it really the Union Literary Institute, and then it changed over to a grammar school. And, it was about 1875 that they started, um...

Interviewer: I found, um, what is it...

Participant: Clemens cemetery is this way.

Interviewer: Um, the Smothers who was the principal of the Union Literary Institute, he was at like the Association of Teachers in Ohio, or something. And in those records, each school talked about the condition of the school and how many students were there, so in like 1860 I think he said maybe somewhere between 12 and 30 were there.

Participant: Here is the Clemens cemetery.

Interviewer: Aaah, okay.

Participant: If you wanna get a picture of the sign or whatever, it's still an active cemetery.

Interviewer: Can you take a photo of the cemetery? One right here and one right there...

Participant: Also, that white house right there is a log cabin, is a Bass log cabin. The Bass family.

Interviewer: How long has it been there?

Participant: Well, they moved it from someplace, I'm not sure where they moved it to. But, it's been, it's probably been there over a hundred years. And, probably older than that.

Interviewer: Okay, we'll take a photo of that too. I'mma tell...

Participant: That's my next building that I would like to acquire, the cabin owned by the Bass when they first settled in the 1820's.

Interviewer: And this is the same building? I mean of course, like...

Participant: Well, it was moved. But, it's a log cabin underneath, yes.

Interviewer: Who owns it now?

Participant: Um, William Jones's family. It's falling apart, but I told them it's a historic place, so, yeah, it is not being kept up...

Interviewer: That is... woaaaah. Yeah. You can like, get out and stand out in the grass.

Participant: I would love to acquire that house.

Interviewer: Oh my gosh, this is my first time seeing this one!

Participant: I don't have the resources to do anything. I'm drowning in trying to save the buildings I'm trying to save.

Interviewer: And you said it was, how old, since 18.... I'm gonna yell that out the window.

Participant: What?

Interviewer: How old the home is? He said there's a log cabin underneath, it's over a hundred years old.

Participant: It's more than that. [???

Interviewer: This is amazing. I've never seen this one, so I'm happy to see this. I trust you! And we're turning back around!

Participant: Yeah, we're turning back around. And you wanted to go to Brenda's father's house?

Interviewer: How far is it?

Participant: We were really close when we were at the Clemens house.

Interviewer: We don't have to go back!

Participant: Okay.

Interviewer: And, this is pretty much it, 'cuz we can get the Bass one as we're leaving.

Participant: Bass cemetery coming back, okay.

Interviewer: I don't know how to turn it around. Oh, here's a little parking....

Participant: I liked your example, what they did in St. Paul.

Interviewer: Oh, Remembering Rondo?

Participant: I used to live in St. Paul, Minnesota, so...

Interviewer: What a coincidence! Yeah,

Participant: Summit Hill

Interviewer: The historian that did it had came to IU to talk about it, and...

Participant: Gentrified greatly.

Interviewer: She was talking about like with the highway, going right over where they were living at.

Participant: They found the path of least resistance which was through the black community. They did that everywhere in the United States.

Interviewer: Why is it saying 'no key detected'? Oh God. Okay, I guess, can you just tell me when the schoolhouse was built? How old is it?

Participant: I have around 17... 18... 1890, 1870, somewhere around there. Because, this is the first building that I tried to put on the National Register. Um, learning about the National Register, and when I told the story, they said the problem is, that building was built after most of your story, when you talk about the Civil War. Also, it's been changed what it had been. Again, National [????], because of the addition, it's been altered, and the windows and all that. So, that's when Brenda showed me the....

[Interview ends]