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Participant: they came on the Underground Railroad, and then that made me start to think.

Interviewer: Oral history nine

Participant: So, uh, my feeling is that there is some connection with the settlements here because it is a straight line, many of the people that were in Longtown were from the same area that my great-grandparents were from.

Interviewer: In Virginia?

Participant: In Virginia, right along the Shenandoah valley and Blue Ridge mountain valley area.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: They were from Nelson County, Virginia.

Interviewer: I've heard of a Rockingham, Virginia

Participant: Rockingham, Fairmountain, there's a lot of different things. Nelson [?] County were split for a while, and then they changed the borders on it. But, they were all from around that same area.

Interviewer: That's cool.

Participant: So, I'm very much looking forward to seeing what [?] says.

Interviewer: Well, I have a question for both of you before you all go. So, just knowing, like the, um, history of your ancestors, your ancestor's history, and the history of these types of settlements, um, what would you say that freedom means to you all, and that you think it may have meant for your ancestors?

Participant: I think it was from just general pressure and oppression, I think most of my family were, um, maybe indentured servants, possibly they were free people that had trades. That

somehow they had some kind of trade that prevented them from being in a truly oppressed situation. So, some of them from that area, Rockingham and Bear Mountain, anywhere around that county, Nelson County, that they were able to go to Richmond for instance and work and do things that built up their incomes so that they were able to make a change.

Interviewer: Gotcha.

Participant: Um, but also I think they were very aware, particularly because I believe they were all melagien, that their situation was such that, you know, now it's a big deal, but during that period of time, up til 1810, it didn't matter whether you were Black or Indian, you were still going to be oppressed. But then after that period of time, around 1930 I believe, all of a sudden everything was changed and now Indian was classified as Black. So, you were stuck in both situations, you couldn't be white, you couldn't be Black. You were just in and out. And I believe, for instance I've talked to Rick about his family, that people were hiding changing borders. So for instance with Longtown, you have people living on one side of the state line, and then as soon as the law changed in that state, you went across the street.

Participant 2: She thought it was all peaceful up here, but it wasn't. This was one of the biggest Klan countries there was.

Participant: Indiana particularly.

Interviewer: Yeah, and I know about the "Black Laws," from my time period that I study, but then I haven't gotten into like, what the racial climate was like in those later periods, after the 19th century.

Participant: There was a lot of mixing going on in Virginia, Virginia particularly there was so much population, this is what prompted them to get scared, because everyone was [?] with everybody.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant: And there were so many people that were mixed. They said, we're being in the minority, we gotta deal with this. So, all of a sudden all of these laws came down to prevent people from being together. So, a lot of people moved on, like I said, moving from county to county, and many of them were the same groups of people, in other words those row houses where all those neighbors were together? They were picked up the whole row house when things started to…

Interviewer: And moved?

Participant: they all bound together, which is why this was interesting having my grandmother talk about this gentlemen, because they were probably one of the people in the row house that organized everybody and said "let's go."

Interviewer: My question, like with Indiana and Ohio, since their laws, at least back in like the 1850's, their laws closely resembled each other as far as, um, immigration of Blacks and mulattos, so I'm trying to understand how the state line worked in that instance, where...

Participant: Well, remember it was Ohio territory, so it wasn't defined as states yet. So, this was kind-of a no-mans-land where they could run to. So, some people were from West Virginia,

Participant 2: This was all a swamp, they drained [???} county.

Participant: If you look up the great dismal swamp in Virginia, you'll learn a lot about that. You'll see what kind of conditions people were living in.

Participant 2: This is the richest soil in Ohio and Indiana.

Participant: So, this is, think of coming out of the Appalachian Mountains and finding some flat land with good soil. And if you've ever been to Virginia and you look at the…

Interviewer: I haven't.

Participant: Okay, well just take a look at it. I did drive around, I wasn't able to stop, but my ex was stationed in military, we were in Norfolk, so I said "well, let me just drive past. I can't stop because we gotta go, but I just wanna see it." Honey, if I had been there I would have said "I'm not going up those mountains and I'm certainly not going through those brambly bushes to get to the next place, land, because it was so horrible. When I left Virginia, it was 105 degrees. So, imagine putting all your stuff on a cart and hauling it, by hand because the animal isn't going to carry it, and handling it, and carrying it over land to get to the…and end up at the Appalachian border and there's freaking mountains, after you got all that bramble out of the way.

Interviewer: Mhm

Participant: Tremendous.

Interviewer: So, why do you think, um, individuals continued, so after Ohio became a state, and Indiana, 1816, and you still see like, the first blacks in this area come around early 1920's, how would the moving across the border have affected them?

Participant: There was a war every 10 years, it gives you great respect for… they were made of stronger stuff than we are, we would not [?????], I'm telling you. They were crossing all these different borders to try and find a safe place to go, because you had the French-Indian War going on, you have the war between the English and the French dealing with the borders and trying to push the Natives out, you have, uh, all of these different… if you go through this list of wars

between, let's say, 1810 and 1900, there's a war every time you turn around. Okay? Not counting the Civil War, which was horrific. Okay? So, um, people were just scrambling. They were just trying to find a place to keep their families, and the loyalty to keep your family together. If your cousin, we do this today but we don't even think about why people do it. You call family friends auntie and uncle? There's a reason for that. Because, your parents have to leave town quick before something happens, so you go over to aunties house, or your friends family's house, you live there for a certain number of years until things are straightened out and you can come home. All of that kind of stuff is all a part of patterned behavior that people did to stay cohesive and to stay alive, and it amazes me how the families hung together. I was telling him about these artifacts, because why did they keep this? Why didn't they sell it? My grandmother had a number of silver sets which were passed down. I didn't get all of it, unfortunately my mother had alzheimers, my father was afraid of the cost of caring for her, and so he had an auctioneer come in and take a lot of that stuff. But, I do have a carving set that was theirs, I have several pieces of silver, I know what the pattern is and amazingly, it's one of the first minted patterns of silverware form the 1790's. This is, uh, Reed, I believe is the manufacturer. So, it's like, why do I have solid silver spoons? In a family that's trying to scrape their way through, these are keepsakes, these are things of value.

Interviewer: And that's what….

Participant: They saved a silver dollar for everybody's birth year. Okay? Amazing, interesting things that they saved…

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant: I have a planer, for a carpenter, because I believe that my great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather was a carpenter, and that was his trade, and he applied it in a number of ways, okay? So, um, interestingly enough, my mother's father was a carpenter, so, hence, they were trying to make an acquaintance or a friendship, perhaps they were, you know, union buddies or something. I don't know, it lists him as a teamster! I'm like "[??] as a teamster?" You know, before those laws came down, before Jim Crow came down, there was all kinds of things that people did, and it was giving them the option to be a part of the community. But, once they got frightened and all those Jim Crow laws came down, everything changed. The 1920's were tremendously turbulent.

Interviewer: Thank you, no, no, thank you so much!