

A Guide to the African Americans in Harrisonburg Oral Histories, 1978-1979 SdArch 0005

African Americans in Harrisonburg oral histories
1978-1979



Title Statement

A Guide to the African Americans in Harrisonburg Oral Histories, 1978-1979 SdArch 0005

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

SdArch 0005

Unit ID

/repositories/4/resources/593

Unit Date

1978-1979

Language

English

Abstract

African Americans in Harrisonburg Oral Histories, 1978-1979, is comprised of audio recordings, transcripts, photographs and background research of interviews with black residents of Harrisonburg, conducted by students under the supervision of Inez L. Ramsey, Professor of Library Science and Secondary Education at James Madison University.

source

Ramsey, Inez Linn, 1938-2025

Extent

0.46 cubic feet 7 folders, 15 audiocassettes, 15 cds

Repository

James Madison University Libraries Special Collections

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Access to the Oral Histories is governed by agreements with the narrators. Researchers must register and agree to copyright and privacy laws before using this collection. Please contact Research Services staff before visiting the James Madison University Special Collections Library to use this collection.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have been transferred to the James Madison University Special Collections Library. For more information, contact the Special Collections Library Reference Desk (library-special@jmu.edu).

Acquisition Information

Collection was donated on June 4, 1991 by Dr. Inez Ramsey.

Processing Information

Collection was cataloged at the item level in 1993; the descriptive metadata was compiled into a Finding Aid format in 2019. Cassette tapes were transferred to MAMA-R 700MB gold cd-r using Tascam cc-222 mkII; 618mb. Audio recordings were digitized by Kirsten Mlodynia, Digital Project Specialist at JMU Libraries in July 2018.

Preferred Citation

[identification of item], [box #, folder #], African Americans in Harrisonburg Oral Histories, 1978-1979, SdArch 0005, Special Collections, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Va.

Bio/Historical Note

Dr. Inez Ramsay was a librarian and professor of JMU from 1975 until her retirement in 1998. In 1978, Ramsay served as the project director for the summer workshop, "Oral Tradition and Storytelling in the Black Community of Harrisonburg," in which she worked with six JMU students to conduct interviews that would "reconstruct the kind of lives black people in Harrisonburg have lived over the years." Legal releases from interviewees were obtained in 1991 and 1992.

Scope and Content

The African Americans in Harrisonburg Oral Histories, 1978-1979, is comprised of audio recordings, transcripts, photographs and background research of interviews with black residents of Harrisonburg, conducted by students under the supervision of Inez L. Ramsey, Professor of Library Science and Secondary Education at James Madison University.

Keywords

Ramsey, Inez Linn, 1938-2025
Effinger Street School

Bibliography

Reed, Gary. "Workshop seeks to preserve local black heritage." The Breeze, August 2, 1978.

Description of Subordinate Components

Documents and photographs

Unit ID 5-1

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18267

Unit Date 1978-1979

Mixed Materials [1000898332] 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Scope and Content

Supplemental information includes list of persons buried in "Newtown Cemetery," the "colored cemetery" located on Kelly and Hill Streets, Harrisonburg, Va; "Roll of colored voters in Rockingham in the early 1900's," researched by Johnny Dove; 2 pages from the "History of the Augusta Street Methodist Church." Newspaper articles include: "Earl Johnson," from AFRO Magazine, Nov. 21, 1953, "R.E. Johnson dies; former Olympian" (Harrisonburg, Va. Daily News-Record (?), n.d.); "Mr. Harris has 93rd birthday," retired principal of Lucy Simms School (H'burg Daily News-Record (?), n.d.); "Simms School," (H'burg Daily News-Record, Aug. 22, 1978); "Despite segregation law, 'people were kind'," by Chris Simmons (H'burg Daily News-Record, Thurs., July 3, 1980); "Roberta Webb, a Valley treasure: black educator lived her religion," (H'burg Daily News-Record, Tues., Feb. 7, 1995). Photographs and negatives of Miss Lucy Simms and school children.

Peggy Curry interviewed by Eugene "Ickey" Hollins

Unit ID 5-2

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18268

Unit Date 1978 July 22

Creator Curry, Peggy Ann Harris, 1929-2009

Creator Hollins, Eugene "Ickey"

Creator Staropoli, Theresa

Access Restrictions

Oral history is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Copyright interests have been transferred to Carrier Library.

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Mrs. Peggy Curry of Harrisonburg, Va., wife of James Curry. Describes childhood including education (Effinger and Lucy Simms schools), busing of black children from surrounding areas including Elkton, McGaheysville, Grottoes to Harrisonburg), teachers, special days at school, black basketball team; Madison College (May Day); home remedies; segregation (swimming); and the free black community at Zenda. Recorded at the home of Mrs. Peggy Curry, Harrisonburg, Va. on July 22, 1978.

Keywords

Zenda (Rockingham County, Va.)

Location of Interview

Recorded at the home of Peggy Curry, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18269

Mixed Materials [1000898332] 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Willie Nickens interviewed by Inez Ramsey and Vicki Lloyd

Unit ID 5-3

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18272

Unit Date 1978 July 17, 20, 24 and 1979 February 14

Creator Nickens, Virginia "Willie" Rouser, 1895-1985

Creator Ramsey, Inez Linn, 1938-2025

Creator Lloyd, Vicki

Creator Staropoli, Theresa

Access Restrictions

Oral history is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Copyright interests have been transferred to Carrier Library.

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Virginia "Willie" Josephine Nickens (b. 1895) of Harrisonburg, Va., school teacher and maid for twenty years at Madison College. Describes childhood incl. experiences driving cattle thru town for Siebert family; "switching" (discipline); riding horses, downtown stable, local race track; roller skating, double decker sleds; bear and snake stories, fortune telling by Bob Rawls, the half-breed Indian blacksmith; heating with pot bellied stoves, lighting by kerosene lamps; early education (Effinger, Lucy Simms schools -- knew about Tin Cup Alley school, teachers Fannie Wilson, L. Simms and brother), training at Hampton Institute and meeting President Taft; cooking (quince honey, apple butter); gardening; home remedies; Madison College (Newman farms, first men on campus, soldiers, three sorority houses at Fine Arts bldg. where she was maid); stories of Indians in Bath County where her mother was born, also in Rockingham County (dug a tunnel from Hilltop to spring at Court Square in Harrisonburg); Red Hill and Zenda; churches (AME church and the missionary from Africa, John Wesley Methodist Church, Rev. Ronald Colley); Court days; various town personalities and black businesses (barber shops, black restaurant owner, first black policeman, Joseph Williams, the Olympian, R. Earl Johnson); her family (incl. story of her mother, born into slavery -- father the master, later escaped and caught), her children; mixed race families, voting privileges; and relations between blacks and whites over the years. Recorded at the home of Mrs. Willie Nickens, Harrisonburg, Va. on July 17, 20, 24, 1978 and Feb. 14, 1979. Tapes for four interviews. Note that some tapes contain blank sides: 5-3f (side 2 of tape 3); 5-3h (side 2 of tape 4); 5-3i (side 1 of tape 5)

Keywords

Zenda (Rockingham County, Va.)

Location of Interview

The home of Willie Nickens in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Transcript and Supporting Documents

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18273

Unit Date 1978 July 17, 20, 24 and 1979 February 14

Mixed Materials [1000898332] 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Minnie Bell Stuart interviewed by Inez Ramsey and Brenda McCormick

Unit ID 5-4

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18286

Unit Date July 1978

Creator Stuart, Minnie Bell, 1894-1983

Creator Ramsey, Inez Linn, 1938-2025

Creator McCormick, Brenda

Creator Staropoli, Theresa

Access Restrictions

Oral history is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Copyright interests have been transferred to Carrier Library.

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Mrs. Minnie Bell Stuart (b. 1894) of Harrisonburg, Va., known as Miss Minnie. Describes her childhood living in the black community of Depot Hill and Tin Cup Alley; importance of church in life as a preacher's kid, her grandmother teaching Sunday school to both black and white children from Effinger Street, founding of the AME Church (preacher from Africa, Rev. Marion Gioper, also Rev. Collings); daily life fetching water at the Spring House, using Black's Run as a community gathering place, picking wood from railroad tracks; black businesses (lady who owned a second-hand store,

fishmonger who sold fish from Baltimore), other downtown buildings/businesses; courting practices; clothes people/boys wore; home remedies (dandelion wine); people and Asbury Methodist Church she worked for as a cleaning maid; and information about her family and children. Recorded at the home of Mrs. Minnie Bell Stuart, Harrisonburg, Va. in July of 1978.

Location of Interview

Recorded at the home of Minnie Bell Stuart in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Transcript and Supporting Documents

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18287

Unit Date July 1978

Mixed Materials [1000898332] 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Helen Irvin Wells interviewed by Inez Ramsey and Carolyn Hobson

Unit ID 5-5

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18294

Unit Date 1978 July 18

Creator Wells, Helen Lucille Irvin, 1898-1996

Creator Ramsey, Inez Linn, 1938-2025

Creator Hobson, Carolyn

Creator Staropoli, Theresa

Access Restrictions

Oral history is open to research.

Use Restrictions

Copyright interests have been transferred to Carrier Library.

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Mrs. Helen Irvin Wells (b. 1898) of Harrisonburg, Va., school teacher at Grottoes, Elkton and Bridgewater Elementary schools and cook at Madison College for fifteen years. Describes her childhood incl. holiday observances (Easter, Christmas); games, ghost stories told by the half-breed Indian, making dolls & hats from corn husks, honeysuckle baskets; education (Effinger School, recollections of L. Simms, her brother, the poet U.G. Wilson, spelling contests, school schedule based on farming seasons), and later education at Va. State College); histories of local Methodist churches (circuit preachers John Wesley, Mr. Otterbein), gardening, canning, recipes (scripture cake); making quilts, hook rugs, and tatting (making lace). Recorded at the home of Mrs. Helen Irvin Wells, Harrisonburg, Va. on July 18, 1978 (?). Includes 4-leaf paper contains recollections of the well known teacher, Lucy Simms, the names of local black Civil War veterans, and a list of prominent black leaders within the community. Note that the paper indicates three dates (July 18-20, 1978).

Location of Interview

Recorded at the home of Mrs. Helen Irvin Wells in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Transcript and Supporting Documents

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18295

Mixed Materials [1000898332] 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Roberta Morgan Webb interviewed by Vicki Bemisderfer

Unit ID 5-6

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18300

Unit Date 1978 July 20

Creator Webb, Roberta Morgan, 1889-1990

Creator Bemisderfer, Vicki

Creator Staropoli, Theresa

Access Restrictions

Oral history is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Copyright interests have been transferred to Carrier Library.

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Mrs. Roberta Morgan Webb (b. 1889), a teacher for many years in the Harrisonburg, Va. area. Born in Raleigh, N.C., she spent her formative years with the Middleditches, a white family. Describes childhood (games, farming, holidays); education in integrated schools in Pa. and N.J. (ex. Ridley and Westfield, N.J.), graduation at Hampton College, teaching with L. Simms, Effinger School; home remedies; R. Earl Johnson; her family and children; and relations between blacks and whites. Recorded at the Va. Mennonite Nursing Home in Harrisonburg, Va. on July 20, 1978.

Location of Interview

The Virginia Mennonite Nursing Home in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Transcript and Supporting Documents

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18301

Mixed Materials [1000898332] 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

James Curry interviewed by Inez Ramsey

Unit ID 5-7

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18304

Unit Date 1978 August 2

Creator Curry, James Alfred "Billy", 1927-1998

Creator Ramsey, Inez Linn, 1938-2025

Creator Staropoli, Theresa

Access Restrictions

Oral history is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Copyright interests have been transferred to Carrier Library.

Scope and Contents

Records the reminiscences of Mr. James Curry of Harrisonburg, Va., custodian of Spotswood Elementary School and first black deacon of the Mennonite Church in Va. Describes childhood including life on the farm, discipline of children, education (Effinger and Lucy Simms schools), childhood games; his family; black churches including the Broad Street Mennonite Church, Pleasant Hill AME Church; black communities (Port Republic, Bridgewater, Red Hill in Harrisonburg); black businesses (carpenter shop, taxi business, the candy man/Dixie Williams' Store), professional teachers (Lucy Simms, Jeannie Francis) and doctors (Dr. Dickerson and the flu epidemic); home remedies; Madison College as a women's school; Harrisonburg as a small town (ex. watching horses being driven thru town, brick/cobblestone streets); reminiscences of WWI (changing of German St. to Liberty St.) and WW II (rationing, black soldiers); and general relations between blacks and whites. Recorded at the home of Mr. James Curry's son, Harrisonburg, Va. on Aug. 2, 1978.

Keywords

Lucy F. Simms School (Public school)

Location of Interview

The home of James Curry's son in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/18305

Mixed Materials [1000898332] 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)