

**UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS**

Oral History Documentation Project  
The St. Joseph Parish Housing Project

**SARAH A. WHITE**

February 13, 2006 at 3:00 PM  
Interviewed by Michael McCauley  
at the home of her son in Mechanicsville Maryland  
Transcribed by Michael McCauley in 2006  
Logged by Michael McCauley  
Original format is digital audio recorder  
13 minutes, 31 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

- 00:00 Mrs. White was raised on Somerset Farm. She got married and lived with her mother-in-law. She built her house through Father Cavanaugh (St. Joseph's Project). John Berry built his house and made his own cinder blocks. She lived in her house for 20-30 years.
- 02:19 She found out about the project from Father Cavanaugh at St. Joseph's Church. Her two sisters and their husbands; John Berry and his wife and Mrs. White and her husband were the four couples who participated in the project.
- 03:06 She thinks that the Berry's house was the first to be built. The project fell through and John Berry's house was the only one initially finished. Her mother-in-law finished building the rest of her house. Their house was started first since she had the most kids. There was some resentment with one of the couples.

Track 02

- 05:02 At the time of the building she had five children. She had a total of eight children, seven boys and one girl. The children were small at the time and she was unable to do any work on the house. Her husband helped build the house. They initially started out making cinderblocks but later bought them.
- 6:05 Her house was off of Route 235 behind Spring Ridge Farm. The land that her house was built on was owned by her mother-in-law. The house had no plumbing or electricity. Only two rooms had drywall at that time. She had the house completed in the late 50's or early 60's. Money she received from a car accident was used to put drywall in the kitchen and bedroom; install electricity; purchase washing machine and telephone. She still did not have any plumbing. She was

happy to have a place of her own even if it wasn't completed. She loved to work in her yard.

### Track 03

- 9:00 Father Cavanaugh gave her drywall when they were remodeling the school. The house had two bedrooms, dining room, and kitchen. Houses built from barracks were: The Butlers, Leroy Medley, Mrs. Holt, Beatrice Somerville, Perrywood ..., Minnette Fenwick, and Sarah Butler. The other houses in the project were built by contractors.
- 11:00 There were two Sarah Butlers; Sarah Ann and Sarah Elizabeth. She was Sarah Ann.
- 12:50 She met her ride on the highway for work. Her first washing machine was run by gas. She carried her water from her mother-in-laws spring and later her well. Her mother-in-law would say, "A chicken coup of your own is better than somebody else's palace. Her mother-in-law had a large house and was a go-getter and domineering. She died years before she moved.

### Track 04

- 14:51 Father Cavanaugh was responsible for the financing of the materials to build the houses. They were only able to build four in the projects because of a dispute over whose house was to be built first. Her mother-in-law had someone else help finish building the house. She was glad to get into her own house.
- 16:50 Don "Smack" got his cinderblocks from Mechanicsville. The few blocks that were made were used for the foundations.
- 17:00 Father Cavanaugh apologized that the project did work out the way he had planned. She learned from her experience. She went to St. Joseph's school. He was there when she graduated. He married her and baptized all her children.