

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS
Oral History Documentation Project

Angela Marie Thomas Maddox

April 22, 1997

Interviewed by Brenda Coates

Location: [unknown]

Transcribed by DWH Office Services on January 27, 2003

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Original format is two cassette tapes

1 hour, 41 minutes, 34 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 2

Track 01

- 0:00 Where did you live and where were you born? She currently lives off Cherryfield Road in Drayden, Maryland. Her address is 46132 Jamm Lane, just before the Drayden Post Office. She was born in Helen, Maryland. She lived just off of Route 5. She lived there until she was about three, when she moved to Andover Estates in Valley Lee, Maryland.
- 1:40 What kind of work did your family do? Her father was share cropper. He later became a mortician. The farm was about 10 acres. Her mother worked on the farm.
- 3:00 What church did you attend? She attended St. George's Catholic Church in Valley Lee.
- 3:15 Did you take family trips as a child? The only trips they took were to St. Joseph's Church Dinners. Most of there relatives lived in that area. It would take them all day to get there (Morganza) by horse and buggy. They would leave at three or four in the morning.
- 4:20 Did your family participate in community activities? Her mother was involved in the church dinners.

Track 02

- 4:35 Were times better or worse in those days? "We didn't have the convenience that you have now. It was harder for us then." They did everything by hand or horse

power. They had to use horses to haul or plow; hand wash clothes; haul water; and study by lamp light.

6:00 How did you family deal with their health concerns? There was a doctor named Dr. Lynch. If they got too sick they would go to the doctor. Generally, they would use their own remedies. Her mother would use a few drops of turpentine on sugar for a cold. If they had a headache, she would make toddy from whiskey, water, and sugar. In the spring they would get a spring tonic (tea) made from sassafras roots. During the war when people had influenza, her mother would make an asfridad bag which contain carbolic acids that would absorb the disease to keep it from entering the body. People were dying and they were all sick, but they didn't lose anybody.

7:51 Dr. Lynch lived just past the firehouse in Valley Lee. He would make house calls.

Track 03

8:23 How were senior citizens cared for? Neighbors would take care of each other. She would go with her mother. While her mother was in the house taking care of Miss Blanche Green, she would be outside doing chores. Nobody paid anybody for services at that time. If you needed wheat to be thrashed or needed to build a barn, they would come to your house and help you and eat a meal at your house, then you would move on to the next house that needed work done. Everybody helped each other at that time. Mr. Stony Briscoe had a wheat thrasher. They would cook big meals in an iron pot on the wood ply when they had to feed people that came to help work.

10:15 How did black folks get new/information when you were growing up? They didn't have any radios. They had an old Victorla. Her mother subscribed to the Afro American Newspaper. Most of their news came by word of mouth.

10:40 What games did you play as a child? She played baseball, dodge ball and anything the boys played.

Track 04

11:20 What chores did you have as a child? After school she would gather the eggs and bring in wood. In the morning she would help her mother feed the chickens and turkeys and help her brother milk the cows. When she helped him milk the cows, she wasn't tall enough to carry the five gallon bucket of milk. She would leave the bucket for someone else to bring to the house. Her father would get up early to start all the fires. Her mother would come down to fix the breakfast. After that everyone would go out into the field to work (father, mother, brother, and step sister Gladys). Around 11:00 am Gladys and her mother would leave the field to prepare dinner (2nd meal of the day). When it was hot, they wouldn't go back out

until 1:30 or 2:00. They would work until the sun went down. “You knew what to do and your parents didn’t have to tell you what to do. There recreation was doing their homework by lamp light.

Track 05

14:27 Describe your relationship with your siblings? When Gladys Reed’s mother died, she came to their house and became her stepsister. She didn’t get along well with her brother because her brother would tell on her. Her brother Leo went to work at a garage when he was 15 or 16. He worked for Mr. Robinson in St. Mary’s City. He would row across the river and come in at Port A Bello. She would meet him in the wagon. She never wanted to see her brother get hurt. She wouldn’t give her mother notes from the teacher when he got in trouble at school.

17:35 How did your parents discipline you? Her mother didn’t have good health. She was always very good to them. She taught her a lot. She was 16 by time her mother died. Her mother prepared her well for life. She and her brother were very close to her mother.

Track 06

19:25 Tell me about your formal Schooling? When they lived on Andover Estates, she went to Drayden School even when she was too young to go. Miss Janie was teaching there at the time. They moved across from the Shop (Happyland) which was run by Stanley Thompson at the time.

21:52 When she moved to the Valley Lee area, she went to Great Mills School #1. She went there from 2nd to 7th grade. She and Jeanette Thompson went to school together. They were buddies. Her teacher, Miss Ella Thompson taught all seven grades, so when she and Jeanette got in the 4th and 5th grade; she let them teach the 1st grade.

22:40 Miss Ella taught by repetition so they really understood their math. When she went to nursing school she understood math better then students that had gone to high school. Miss Ella would teach fractions by cutting apples. “She was a beautiful teacher who knew the work and could impart it to the children.” “I admired her because she made no difference between her children and the other students in school.”

Track 07

23:54 When her mother got sick, Miss Ella came to stay with them until she died.

24:41 When Lillian and Roger’s mother died, Mr. Thompson (Miss Ella’s husband) went and got them and bought them to his house. She went to St. Peter Claver in Baltimore for the 8th grade. Back then you had to go away for high school.

26:07 Then she went to Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. for the 9th grade. Then Cardinal Gibbons High School opened in Ridge so she came back home to go to 10th through 12th grade. She graduated with James Forrest in the 2nd graduating class. Evelyn Thomas was in the first graduating class.

Track 08

27:23 She walked about 2 miles when she went to Drayden School and less than a mile to get to Great Mills School. On rainy days they would play a game called still Lizza Jane. They would also slide down the hills on automobile tires.

Track 09 (side 2 of tape 1)

29:31 The Great Mills School was on the site of the old dump. Once per year they would go up to Banneker on the back of a truck to compete in relay races. This was around 1922

30:43 What did you dream of becoming as an adult? “She wanted to be a nun when she went to Catholic school until she started liking boys at age 16. Later she wanted to become a nurse because she loved doing for others or helping somebody.

31:30 Where did you parents approve of you going as a teenager? Everywhere we went, we went with her parents. They didn’t approve of them courting.

32:47 What was it like when you went out on your own. Her mother died when she was 16 and her brother starting telling her what to do. She didn’t feel that was right since her father was still living. Her brother continued bossing her until he went to Florida as a captain on a boat. She had gotten married while he was gone. He wanted to know why she got married when she had everything. She told him, “everything but the man.” He didn’t bother her anymore after that.

Track 10

33:49 She had left and gone to Washington just before she got married. She and her husband (Vernon) were working in Indian Head during the war. He died when her children were five and seven years old. She lived in Indian Head at the time. She moved back to Washington to try to educate the children. She worked with nitroglycerin at Indian Head. After her husbands death her blood pressure was very low. The doctor told her she couldn’t work in that job anymore so she transferred to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington, D.C.

35:49 She first did day work in Washington. Then to Indian Head and finally entered the nursing profession at St. Elizabeth hospital. When she left home and first started working she made \$7.00 per week doing day work. She was a nurse’s aid when she started at St. Elizabeth. She went to school until she became a nurse.

She worked from 11:30 pm until 7:00 am. She worried about her children because she had to feed them and put them to bed at night and then leave them alone and go to work. She would wake them up in the morning and get them off to school. After they got older, she would also go to work in a doctor's office in Silver Spring and return to pick the children up from school and then come home and cook and clean and go to work at St. Elizabeth's at night. "You do what you have to do." Her family was so small and her mother was 45 when she died and her father was 54 when he died so you do what you have to do.

Track 11

- 38:01 She was living by herself when she moved to Washington. She made \$7.00 per week but you could buy a dress for \$1.00 back then.
- 39:00 When she first got married they would go to dances at the Lincoln Colonnade.
- 39:45 How did you meet your husband? She liked him when she was going to Cardinal Gibbons. They didn't pay much attention until after she graduated. She got married when she was 21. Her cousin Adeline Figures who was married to Walter Butler was her witness. He was Ralph Butler's brother. She got married in Washington they went around to see the cherry blossoms.
- 41:30 What was your family life like? "When she was married to Vernon that was the best ten years of her life." He died on their 10th wedding anniversary. She married James Lee Maddox 14 years later. He was from the 7th district. He didn't live long before he died. Somebody asked her was she going to get married again. She said "no, I kill 'em off quick." She is very close to her children.

Track 12

- 43:12 What part has religion played in your life? Her mother was a devote Catholic so they were raised very close to the church. She is still close to the church. She volunteers and helps with different church activities.
- 44:10 Did you participate in community activities? She used to volunteer at the senior citizens center.
- 44:35 How do you feel about life in general in St. Mary's County? People don't visit each other like they use to do. The ones she grew up with are died and gone and she doesn't know the young ones. People make much more money now and people would not have homes if it wasn't for the base.
- 45:45 Do you think the people in the county are different from what they use to be? Years ago people would discuss things amongst themselves. Children never heard much. Now people discuss more information with others.

Track 13

- 47:06 How are teenagers different? When she was a teenager her mother only told them something one time. Now teenagers express themselves more. Sometimes this is good. Sometimes they tell their parents what to do. We didn't talk back to the parents.
- 49:10 How do you feel about race relations? We use to sit in the back of the church and couldn't go to communion until all the white people went. The white people wouldn't sit in a pew with you. Now they appear to be better.
- 49:50 Where you ever afraid of any group or person that practices hate. No, because we knew where we belonged and stayed in our place. Brent Thompson broke up a lot of that. At one time St. Joseph's Catholic Church had a white mass and a black mass. He went to the white mass and refused to leave and that stopped the separate mass.

Track 14

- 51:06 He sang in the choir and they went to Sacred Heart to sing. Father Good was at that church at the time. The priest didn't want them to sing the hymns that they had rehearsed. He and Father Good got into it and Brent told him "that he may have to go up the rode and won't know you're going up there if you keep..." Brent wasn't afraid to stand right up to them." There were only a few pews in the back for the blacks. They paid pew rent and had to sit behind the white people. "Where is religion?" "Brent was a brilliant man, but didn't want you to think so."

Track 15

- 54:52 How do you feel about living in the county? I love it. The city is so congested. I don't want to go to the city when I have to. "There is not a day or night when somebody is getting killed."
- 56:15 Do you feel there is a difference between the native St. Mary's county people and people who have moved from other places. There may be a little resentment. However they seem to get along and cooperate.

Audio CD 2 of 2
(begins at 58:15)

Track 01

- 0:00 People who have gone away and come back see us their way and we see them our way.

- 1:16 What do you feel has the biggest changes in this county in your lifetime?
Everything has improved. The roads are nicer, people have nicer homes, and everything is better.
- 1:50 Do you believe that people were hostile towards the federal government about the taking of their property to build the base. “I don’t know but they have a right to be upset.” Unhappy with some governmental policies.

Track 02

- 4:38 How do you feel about the growth of the base? So many people have benefited from the base. It has been an asset. For example the Ridge area at one time was a very poor area. Now some people are working on the base and have beautiful homes.
- 5:57 What do you think of the direction the county is going into today? Do you think the county will become an urban rather than rural. It will become urban eventually because they are doing a lot of building. The county needs more bigger stores. There is too much traffic on Route 235.
- 8:06 What do you consider the most valuable thing you’ve ever had? Her children are her most valuable thing.
- 8:27 Have you done everything that you wanted to do in your lifetime? I haven’t done much because I worked until I retired. If I could do it over again, I wouldn’t deprive myself of so many things. “I should have done more for myself.”

Track 03

- 10:15 Her father was a mortician with Peter Biscoe. Used to walk to school by cutting through the neighborhood. They had big cherry trees.

Track 04

- 14:04 Her father kept caskets at her house. When people died, he would take the casket to the person’s house and they would bury them on the third day. There was very little embalming in those days. The hearse stayed at their house also – across from Happyland. You had to be licensed. There was very little money in those days. Lawrence [was this her older brother? Step-brother? Uncle? Family friend?] would make the caskets and paint them mahogany and her mother would put on the fancy stuff. The baby caskets were covered with white brocade. When they first went in business, they would dress the bodies in her living room. People paid them whatever they had to give. If they were too poor, the county would give them about \$75 dollars. They buried everybody. Her mother was the last person they buried. Mr. Thomas Harris took care of the burials in the

Lexington Park area. Clients paid five or ten dollars for a casket, body preparation and layout, and burial. If folks had no money, the county paid about \$75. Everyone got buried, no matter what.

17:18 Her father also ordered some caskets from Baltimore. They would come down on a steamboat to Port-o-Bello and she would pick them up in a wagon.

Track 05

17:55 Lawrence had been away a long time and did not recognize Jeanette. Talks about all the folks who helped out and lived in the house. Stanley the oldest, then Lawrence, then Francis, Lizzy, Brent, Malcolm, Burton, Ella, Melvin, and ... Darlene has all the names and birth order. Sidney was an uncle. Jeanette was the youngest.

19:45 Uncle Stanley had a shop at the first Happyland – before 1938. Many of the folks in the neighborhood worked there over the years. Mr. Leroy Thompson took it over some time after 1938. Leroy taught school. Family history no longer passed on. Children today not interested in reading.

22:13 Folks today don't give enough credit to those who came before them and made life what it is today.

Track 06

23:16 Remembers the old church nearby. It had two isles laid out in a cross. Pews were high back and white.

24:17 Miss Naomi used to sit up front – maybe this was later when things were starting to change. She remembers that whites and blacks sat separate in church and segregated outside as well. She said, "Miss Ida Carroll was as prejudice as she wanted to be." During first communion if there was an odd number white child and black child, she would not let them walk together.

25:50 There never was a time when she didn't have plenty to eat while she lived at home. Her mother also had her own garden. They had cows, chickens, turkeys, sheep, and hogs. They always had plenty of crops and meat. In the winter time they would make a kiln with a pile of dirt and straw on top. They would put sweet potatoes and white potatoes in the pile and close it up. In the winter when they wanted some, they would dig it up just like it had just come out of the field. They would bring cabbage up close to the house or barn and cover them up.

Track 07

27:48 Papa, Peter Briscoe, and Chauncey Briscoe were the first black people in the county to have automobiles. The Briscoe's were good musicians and they always

had good music in their house. Briscoes: Chauncey, Irving, Minnette, Mary, Irene, and Gertrude. Only three still live in the area. So many folks have moved away.

29:45 Feels that there is move for her to do. Recording the family history?

Track 08

30:38 [picks up during conversation on the flip side of tape 2] . . . stored was near the old firehouse, near the Base gate. The property that is now the military base was called Pearson, Maryland. Years ago they sat outside at Happyland and could name the folks in every car that drove by. Things have changed for the better.

33:13 They would bring live chickens to church dinners and kill them and cut them up. The Watson's would play the music. When intermission would come, they would ask Mr. Steve Watts what he wanted to eat and he say, "I take a to and someone else would say, I take a to too. Translation – I'll take a stew, I'll take a stew too.

Track 09

34:23 They would have tournaments and dances at the church dinners. The dinners were annual events and people would come back from the city to go to the dinners. Miss Alberta Saxon would do bingo. Miss Nellie Brooks and Miss Ella Thompson would work at the cake table. Mr. Morris Blackwell would do something by the door. Miss Lizzie Thompson would do the grab bag. "Five cents a grab."

36:22 Misses the old days when folks were more social. Now folks stay indoors, they don't go out as much. Older folks dying off and the younger ones lack commitment to family and neighborly socializing.

Track 10

40:25

Biographical Data Information

Angela Marie Thomas Maddox

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DOB 2/24/1913 in Helen Maryland

She attended Drayden School, #1 Great Mills School, St Peter's Elementary School in Baltimore (8th grade), Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. (9th grade) and Cardinal Gibbons High School in Ridge (10th through 12th grade).

Occupation: Nurse (retired 1973)

Husbands – Charles Vernon Maddox and James Lee Maddox

Mother – Lucy Marie Thomas (Thomas was also her mother's maiden name)

Father – Richard William Thomas

Sister – Gladys Reed Golf

Brother – Leo Hamilton

Marie is the youngest child

Paternal Grandparents - unknown

Maternal Grandparent - unknown

Children (grandchildren)

Charles Vernon Maddox, Jr. (Frenchell Lena Maddox, Leslie Maddox, &
Charles Vernon Maddox, III)

Marie Valentine Richardson (Williams Richardson Jr., Michael
Richardson, Clinton Richardson, Tyrone Reginald Maddox, Larry Ricardo
Maddox, & Tanya Marie Rainey)