

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS

Oral History Documentation Project
The St. Joseph Parish Housing Project

Mary Dickerson
Joseph Dickerson

July 2, 2009 at 10:00 AM
Interviewed by Michael McCauley
at their home in Abell Maryland
A verbatim transcript is available
Original format is digital audio recorder
26 minutes, 23 seconds

Audio CD 1 of 1

Track 01

- 0:00 Introduction; Dickersons still live in the “barracks” house built in 1953. Married in 1947 and lived with his parents until 1953.
- 2:00 Mrs. Dickerson’s mother [Mother] made all the arrangements for the house and Mr. Dickerson’s mother [Miss Betty] paid for the lot. Been married sixty-two years and are the only “couple” still living in their home (St. Joseph’s first project).
- 3:20 Moved in with five daughters and one son. Very exciting time to move into their own home. No running water or electricity. Added electric shortly after they moved in.

Track 02

- 4:24 House was somewhat assembled on arrival – had to fit the sections together. They had to pay for the foundation and preparation. Mother paid for the house package. Mr. Dickerson’s brothers help put the home together. Since then they have added on to the home.
- 6:30 She attended St. Joseph before she got married. Likes Father Kavanaugh – but he never came down to their new home-it is out of the parish area. Scanlon Herbert was a proponent of the project.

Track 03

8:35 School was also from Fort Meade – St. Joseph’s Colored School – now used as apartments. It took about a year to get their home ready to move in. Miss Betty’s husband was George Allen – who was a waterman. Remembers crabbing along the shore as a child.

11:30 Paul Reed had a house in Morganza years ago. They were so glad to move in. It had two bedrooms – later on they added a third bedroom. They page through the “book” and comment on who they know and remember.

Track 04

13:34 They ended up being away from most everyone else in the St. Joseph’s Project. Other family members lived nearby – since Mother bought a large property. Three brothers and Mother lived together on the road. Mother’s house is still standing but is in bad shape-was never added on to-is just like it was when they moved it there. Before 1947, Mrs. Dickerson’s family moved around from farm to farm and tenant farmers.

Track 05

16:44 Lived here for sixty-six years. Many of the home, at least half, are now gone. They look through the book and comment on what homes are still standing. Also ask about some of the people since McCauley has quite a body of knowledge about the people involved in the St. Joseph’s Project.

18:32 There were thirteen barracks houses. Still standing: Helena Holt’s, Dick Forbes (Jerome Herbert lives there now), Ella Hebbs home is gone. Ella played the accordion and lived on Morganza Turner Road. Mac Holt’s home still stands and has been renovated. Alfonse Fenwick’s home is gone. Parren Woodland’s home is still standing – Miss Alberta lives there. John Pinckney Young’s home is gone.

Track 06

19:53 Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Somerville – that was Mother. There were none adults and seven children in that home (around 1950). Mother had thirteen children all together. Before they moved to that home (one they lived in about 1950), they lived in a tenant house on Johnny Somerville’s farm. Colens Butler’s home is gone. Harrison Nelson – ? Paul Reed - ? John Carter’s home is gone. Six or seven barracks homes, out of thirteen, are still standing.

22:15 They put a lot of work into the house over the years. It made a good start to their life. Mother wanted everyone to live up by her, but then she bought the property from the Fredericks and built homes.

Track 07

23:19 Mr. Joe Somerville didn't want to leave the water and Mother didn't want to leave either. They had to pay \$500 to get the house. Later on folks had to pay \$1000.

24:12 In 1993, they hired a contractor to jack up the house, take off the dormers, and do a little more - cost \$15,000. They look at photos of the renovations . . .