



Iron Hill Museum oral history recordings and transcripts 2003-2010

Abstract: The Iron Hill Museum oral history collection consists of 37 interviews (recorded on 59 audio cassettes) documenting the history of the Iron Hill School #112C, which was one of the African American schools built in Delaware with funds provided by Pierre S. du Pont. Additional interviews in this collection document life in the Iron Hill community and nearby Pleasant Valley, as well as education provided in a few other Delaware schools in Hockessin, Milton, and Claymont.

Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 587
Creator: Delaware Academy of Science. Iron Hill Museum.
Title: Iron Hill Museum oral history recordings and transcripts
Inclusive Dates: 2003-2010
Extent: 58 audiocassettes and .6 linear ft.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 587, Iron Hill Museum oral history recordings and transcripts, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Box 1: Shelved in SPEC Media audiocassettes; Box 2: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes

Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/>

Source: Gift of the Delaware Academy of Science. Iron Hill Museum, April 2008.

Processing: Processed and encoded by Evan Echols, 2008; updated 2010.

Materials Available in Alternative Format: Access to streaming MP4 files of the oral histories and PDFs of the transcripts is available by following the links in the finding aid below. These digitized files are housed in the [University of Delaware Institutional Repository](#).
Typed transcripts are also available for recordings.

Access Restrictions: The collection is open for research.

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Historical Note

In 2003, oral historian Roberta Perkins and Laura Lee, director of the Iron Hill Museum, near Newark, Delaware, initiated a project to document the history of the Iron Hill School #112C, a former African American one-room schoolhouse from the days of segregated education in Delaware. The schoolhouse, in operation from 1923 until 1964, later became the Iron Hill Museum, operated by the Delaware Academy of Science. The building is one of 89 rural schools constructed through the philanthropy of Pierre S. du Pont for the community, and one of only a few that are still architecturally intact. A 2007 survey of the buildings by the Delaware State Historic Preservation office determined that 44 of the 89 schools are still standing, though many are in a state of disrepair or have been radically altered as homes or churches.

The Iron Hill School and others like it were constructed in an era of educational reform. In the early 1900s a federal survey of all schools ranked Delaware very low, with only those in the deep South ranking lower. Delaware's response was to pass laws supporting improvements of the white schools, but the state reserved virtually no funds for the segregated black schools. Pierre S. du Pont, in a fashion similar to Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears who personally funded construction of 5,000 schools for Southern blacks, took it upon himself to improve the educational situation of African American students in Delaware. He embarked on a school funding project to either improve existing schools or construct new schools throughout the state. Du Pont also provided funding for white schools.

As director of the Iron Hill Museum, Laura Lee met many former alumni who would visit the museum and share their school memories. In order to preserve these stories, she enlisted the help of oral historian Roberta Perkins and transcriber Marcia Adams to establish an oral history project. (Marcia Adams conducted a few of the interviews, as well.) The oral history project received partial funding from the Delaware Academy of Science, Delaware Humanities Forum, and Delaware Heritage Commission. In addition, Rohm & Haas Community Partnership Initiative provided funding for a school outreach program featuring the oral history project.

Scope and Content Note

The Iron Hill Museum oral history collection consists of 37 interviews (recorded on 59 audio cassettes) documenting the history of the Iron Hill School #112C, which was one of the African American schools built in Delaware with funds provided by Pierre S. du Pont. Additional interviews in this collection document life in the Iron Hill community and nearby Pleasant Valley, as well as education provided in a few other Delaware schools in Hockessin, Milton, and Claymont. Between 2003 and 2010, Roberta Perkins, Laura Lee, and Marcia Adams interviewed Iron Hill School alumni, parents of former students, one teacher (Townsend, Delaware), and alumni of other du Pont schools in Hockessin and Milton. Perkins and Lee also interviewed alumni of the white Pleasant Valley School, which was located less than a mile from Iron Hill, and a Conowingo, Maryland, alumna. Other interviewees include long-time white residents of the Iron Hill area, one of whose father owned and operated Dayett Mill. The scope of the oral history project broadened to include other small schools, mostly in New Castle County.

The interviews include but are not limited to discussions of community and school life, relationships between the schools, civil rights, transportation issues to and from school, employment, churches, and political vote-buying.

The content list in this finding aid provides limited descriptive information about the tapes, including name of interviewee, date of interview, number of tapes (60-minute tapes), name of the interviewer, and whether or not a transcript for the tapes exists. If not noted, transcripts are not yet available.

Digitization of audio cassettes and transcription is an ongoing project and links will be added to the collection as more material becomes available.

Selected Search Terms

Corporate Names

Delaware Academy of Science. Iron Hill Museum.

Topical Terms

African Americans--Delaware--Education--20th century--Sources.

Education--Newark (Del.)--20th century--Sources.

Oral History--Newark (Del.)--20th century--Sources.

Segregation in education--Delaware--20th century--Sources.

Geographic Names

Newark (Del.)--History--20th century--Sources.

Delaware--Race relations--History--20th century--Sources.

Iron Hill (Del.)--History--20th century--Sources.

Hockessin (Del.)--History--20th century--Sources.

Claymont (Del.)--History--20th century--Sources.

Conowingo (Md.)--History--20th century--Sources.

Form/Genre Terms

Audiocassettes.

Transcripts.

Personal Contributors

Lee, Laura, interviewer.

Perkins, Roberta, interviewer.

Adams, Marcia, interviewer.

Related Materials in this Repository

MSS 179 Robert H. Richards, Jr. Delaware oral history collection

Arrangement

The finding aid is listed in alphabetical order by name of interviewee. Tapes and transcripts are housed in order as received.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Riva Brown, 2008 January 16

Discusses Claymont Stone School, a one-room school in Claymont, Delaware, interviewed by Roberta Perkins..

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T1**]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [**Box 2 F1**]

[PDF](#)

Elsie Earl Bullock , 2004 September 14

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T2**]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [**Box 1 T3**]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [**Box 2 F2**]

[PDF](#)

Hermine Cleaver, 2007 March 5

A former student of Pleasant Valley School, a white school, interviewed by Marcia Adams.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T4**]

[Listen](#)

Herman Congo, 2007 March 13

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins. Bishop and pastor of St. Thomas AUMP Church in Newark, Delaware.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T5**]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [**Box 1 T6**]

[Listen](#)

Robert Congo, Jr., 2007 March 23

Discusses the Iron Hill community, interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T7]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T8]

[Listen](#)

Charlotte Corday, 2007 March 14

A former student of Pleasant Valley School, a white school, interviewed by Marcia Adams.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T9]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F3]

[PDF](#)

Victor L. Doyle , 2003 November 7

A former student of Pleasant Valley School, a white school, interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T10]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F4]

[PDF](#)

Lena Satchell Todd Dyer and Alice Prestbury , 2003 April 24

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C (Dyer) and a parent of a student (Prestbury) interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T11]

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Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T12]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F5]

[PDF](#)

Lena Satchell Todd Dyer and Alice Prestbury , 2005 April 15

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C (Dyer) and a parent of a student (Prestbury) interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T13]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [**Box 1 T14**]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [**Box 2 F6**]

[PDF](#)

Ronald Earl, 2008 July 23

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins. Relative of Shirley Smith Earl.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T15**]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [**Box 1 T16**]

[Listen](#)

Shirley Smith Earl , 2008 February 21

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C (Dyer) and a parent of a student (Prestbury) interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T17**]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [**Box 2 F7**]

[PDF](#)

David J. Grinnage, 2009 March 7

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins. One of the last students to attend the school and the brother of Gail Grinnage.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T18**]

[Listen](#)

Dorothy Earl Grinnage and Evelyn Earl Walley , 2006 September 29

Two former students of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T19**]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [**Box 1 T20**]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F8]

[PDF](#)

Gail Grinnage , 2004 December 18

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T21]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T22]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 3 [Box 1 T23]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F9]

[PDF](#)

Robert Grinnage , 2003 April 22

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T24]

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Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T25]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 3 [Box 1 T26]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F10]

[PDF](#)

Robert Grinnage , 2003 September 20

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T27]

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F11]

[Listen](#)

Robert Grinnage, 2008 August 19

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T28]

[Listen](#)

Gloria Howard Hinson , 2008 February 15

A former student of a Conowingo, Maryland, school interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T29]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F12]

[PDF](#)

Margaret D. Hoffman and Conrad E. Hoffman , 2006 July 26

Long-time residents of the Iron Hill area interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T30]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T31]

[Listen](#)

Lois May Johnson , 2007 April 11

A former student of Hockessin School #107C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T32]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T33]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F13]

[PDF](#)

Lois May Johnson , 2008 January 17

A former student of Hockessin School #107C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T34]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F14]

[PDF](#)

Sandra Lewis Johnson , 2006 June 8

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T35**]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [**Box 2 F15**]

[PDF](#)

Raynor Johnson , 2007 February 21

A long-time Iron Hill resident, his father ran Dayett Mill. Interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T36**]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [**Box 1 T37**]

[Listen](#)

James Knott , 2003 April 22

A former student of Hockessin School #107C interviewed by Roberta Perkins and Laura Lee.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T38**]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [**Box 1 T39**]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [**Box 2 F16**]

[PDF](#)

James Lee, 2010 April 2

White resident of the Iron Hill area interviewed by Roberta Perkins. Discusses interactions with families in the area.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T40**]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [**Box 1 T41**]

[Listen](#)

Donald W. Lewis , 2003 April 22

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins and Laura Lee.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T42]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T43]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F17]

[PDF](#)

Edith Beatrice Miller Lewis , 2006 June 8

A parent of a student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T44]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F18]

Richard Wayne Lewis, Sr. , 2006 July 26

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T45]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T46]

[Listen](#)

Elsie Mills, 2007 March 16

A former student of Pleasant Valley School, a white school, interviewed by Marcia Adams.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T47]

[Listen](#)

Noble W. Prettyman , 2007 February 7

A former student of a Milton, Delaware, school interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T48]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T49]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F19]

[PDF](#)

Reverend Allen Oliver Smith , 2003 October 3

Street minister and former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T50]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T51]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 3 [Box 1 T52]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F20]

[PDF](#)

Reverend Allen Oliver Smith , 2008 March 18

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T53]

[Listen](#)

Reverend Allen Oliver Smith , 2009 February 6

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T54]

[Listen](#)

William Charles Smoot , 2004 February 17

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [Box 1 T55]

[Listen](#)

Audiocassette 2 [Box 1 T56]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [Box 2 F21]

[PDF](#)

Betty A. Webster , 2008 March 12

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T57**]

[Listen](#)

Transcript of interview [**Box 2 F22**]

[PDF](#)

Margaret C. West , 2005 June 18

A teacher at a Townsend, Delaware school interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T58**]

[Listen](#)

Nora May Thompson Williams , 2003 October 10

A former student of Iron Hill School #112C interviewed by Roberta Perkins.

Audiocassette 1 [**Box 1 T59**]

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Transcript of interview [**Box 2 F23**]

[PDF](#)
