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## Mattie Hale Memoir

**H134. Hale, Mattie** (1892-1982)

Interview and memoir

1 tape, 90 mins., 33 pp.

### BLACK COMMUNITY PROJECT

Hale, long-time resident of the Springfield area, discusses her experiences as a member of the city's African American community. She recalls her family history, farm life and growing up in a rural area, Springfield neighborhoods and schools, relations with white neighbors, marriage and family life, her husband's work in the Tuxhorn coal mine, the 1908 Springfield race riot, and racial discrimination.

Interview by Reverend Negil L. McPherson, 1974

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## Preface

This manuscript is the product of a tape recorded interview conducted by Rev. N. L. McPherson for the Oral History Office on April 30, 1974. Paula Bergschneider transcribed the tapes and Linda Jett edited the transcript.

Mattie Hale was born in Springfield, Illinois in June of 1892, and was 81 years old at the time of this interview. She has lived in and around the Springfield area all of her life. In this interview, she tells how she was raised and what it was like to be black in those days. She discusses the effects the Springfield Race Riot of 1908 had on her life and also gives her views regarding the Depression and discrimination.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Mattie Hall, Springfield, Illinois, April 30, 1974.

Reverend Nigel McPherson.

Q: Now, Mrs. Hale, you said you were born at Fourteenth and Spruce.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember anything about that neighborhood?

A: Not a thing.

Q: Why?

A: Because I was too young. You see, my father moved to the country when we were all very small.

Q: I think you said also that your mother died.

A: She died there.

Q: You don't remember her at all.

A: Don't remember her at all.

Q: So you wouldn't remember anything about . . .

A: Not anything about my mother.

Q: When you went to the country, do you remember what country?

A: What country?

Q: What was the name of the . . .

A: Well, we just said country, and now they call it Taylor Avenue.

Q: Oh, I see. It was just on the outskirts of Springfield.

A: Yes.

Q: How long did you live out there?

A: Oh, I lived there until I got married.

Q: Do you remember when you got married?

A: I was married in--just a minute--I'll go get it. I'll see if I can find it. (tape stopped)

Q: Now out in this country then is out in the area where Southeast High School is now?

A: Oh, yes. I used to pass through the Southeast High School going to school.

Q: Where was the school? Oh, you were going to Iles School.

A: Going to Iles School. Now all those buildings out there are new. They have been built since I went to school.

Q: I think we will talk about the time that you lived out there until you got married. What did you do? Did you help on the farm?

A: Yes, I did. We sold vegetables. We had five acres, and we raised vegetables. And we would pick them, we would gather vegetables of an evening and then bring them to town the next morning and sell them.

Q: You said we. Does this include your sisters and brothers?

A: Yes.

Q: And would your father come with you or would you . . .

A: My stepmother.

Q: Did you all sell these vegetables?

A: Yes, we would sell them.

Q: How?

A: Well, we would go around to doors and knock on doors.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. And they would open the door and we would say, "Good morning, would you like to buy some . . ." and we'd go on and name what we had. "Would you like to buy some beets, strawberries, peas, green beans?" And they'd ask us, "Well, how much are your beets a bunch?" And we'd tell them. "How much are your strawberries a box?" And we'd tell them. And then they'd say, "Well, you can bring me in two boxes of strawberries." Or "Bring me in a quarter's worth of green beans."

Q: Very interesting. Do you recall, for instance, how much a box of strawberries was selling for at that time?

A: Very cheap to what they're selling at now. Oh, we'd sell them at twenty cents a box.

Q: What size boxes were these?

A: Like the boxes they have now in the stores.

Q: They hold about a quart or something like that.

A: Yes. They were a quart, quart boxes.

Q: About how long would that take you to sell all your vegetables?

A: Well, we would leave home of a morning about, oh, I'll say about seven o'clock. And we wouldn't get through not before about one or 1:30.

Q: Well, that's a good half day's work. How many days a week would you do this?

A: We would go Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and sometimes Saturday.

Q: Did you raise corn and things like that?

A: Corn, and potatoes, turnips. And we had red raspberries. They're many now, when I speak of red raspberries, "Red raspberries, what are they?"

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. We would raise them and we'd pick them and sell them also by the quart.

Q: Did you have fruit--pears or peaches or any apples?

A: Yes. We had pears and peaches.

Q: And you would also sell those?

A: We would sell those, but not too much of those, because we didn't have but a very few fruit trees. We had chickens, we had hogs, a couple of horses.

Q: Did you sell the chickens or did you sell eggs?

A: Sell the chickens? No. We didn't sell chickens or eggs. We just kept them.

Q: For family use.

A: We just kept them for our own use.

Q: It sounds interesting. I'm also from the country. (laughter) What would a day on the farm be like for you? Could you describe it? Would you have to get up early in the morning?

A: Oh yes! Some morning we'd have to get up at five o'clock. And then if we didn't get our berries picked and our peas and beans picked that

evening, we'd have to get up early and finish, and then bring them to town and sell them.

Q: In picking these berries, were they on your farm proper, or did you go to some neighbor's farm or something?

A: No, we had them.

Q: Oh, this is what you cultivated.

A: Yes.

Q: I know some places people can go pick strawberries or something like that that grow wild.

A: No, we never did. We raised them.

Q: Oh, this is what you raised.

A: Yes.

Q: You'd get up at five o'clock in the morning and do your little chores.

A: Yes. And sometimes we wouldn't get our vegetables tied that night, well, we'd have to get up and finish tying our vegetables--you know, like you see now in the stores in bunches. Beets--four and five in a bunch--we'd have to tie them. And our onions, we'd have to tie them, put so many in a bunch. We had, what then you'd call a spring wagon, and we'd have it filled full.

Q: Was this wagon drawn by a horse?

A: Yes, by one of our horses.

Q: And then you'd get this and take it into town?

A: Yes, bring it into town here.

Q: You didn't sell to any grocery stores or anything like that?

A: Yes, we'd go to the grocery stores. A lot of times they'd tell us to bring in--maybe if we'd go there like today, they'd say, "What day will you be back?" And we'd tell them, and they'd say, "Well, bring me in a bushel of green beans; bring me in a bushel of green peas." And we'd take them to the stores. Yes, we sold to the stores, too.

Q: Now, when you finished on the farm--you'd get up early in the morning and do your chores--then you would go to school.

A: Yes, had to get ready for school.

Q: Now, what time did you generally leave home for school?

A: Well, we'd leave home . . .

Q: About eight o'clock?

A: Just about eight, or sometimes a little after eight because my stepmother, she wouldn't let us leave not until we . . .

Q: Finished your chores.

A: Finished chores, yes, and get our house cleaned up. I was brought up with a very clean stepmother.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. And we would have to clean the house, leave the house clean so when she came in the house would be clean. All she'd have to do would be start supper.

Q: Did you go to school all day?

A: All day.

Q: From nine o'clock until four o'clock?

A: Until four o'clock in the evening, yes.

Q: Of course, you walked to school.

A: Walked, yes. Walked through the snow and the rain.

Q: When you went back home, there were other evening chores to do?

A: Yes.

Q: What were some of these chores?

A: Well, school was out at four and we had to be home about, oh, 4:30. You know, our parents didn't let us fool around. We had to go straight home. And I'd have to go home maybe, and help gather some more beans, peas, or go in the strawberry patch and pick strawberries up until dark.

Q: About what time did you ordinarily have supper?

A: Oh, we wouldn't have supper until, oh, about six o'clock.

Q: Then your evening chores were done and your supper, then you had homework to do?

A: Sometimes after supper we would have to go and finish tying up vegetables.

Q: Of course this would depend on whether or not you are going to town the following day.

A: Yes.

Q: Now you mentioned that you had three sisters and one brother. Were they younger or older than you?

A: They were older--my two sisters were, but my brother was younger than I.

Q: Oh, it was two sisters and not three.

A: Three.

Q: You included.

A: I included made the third one.

Q: Yes, I've got it. Now they helped, everybody helped?

A: Oh yes, everybody worked at our house.

Q: You mentioned your stepmother. Could you tell me something about her? You seem to be very fond of her.

A: Yes. She was, before my father married her, she was a George. This Will George that I'm conferring on this year, was her brother, one of them. And my father married her when she was very young. My father was much older than she. She just came into a--I'll say baby, taking care of babies. (laughter)

Q: But she did a pretty good job, anyway.

A: A good job.

Q: Do you remember the wedding?

A: No, I don't even remember when they got married.

Q: Is that right?

A: No.

Q: So, you couldn't tell me anything about their wedding.

A: No, I couldn't tell you anything about it. I'd hear my father talk about it.

Q: You said you stayed out there until you got married. Before we go on to that, I want to ask you now. You did finish Iles School?

A: Yes.

Q: You went to the eighth grade there.

A: Yes, there.

Q: Did you go on?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Is there some reason?

A: Well, no, there wasn't no reason. Out of us four, there's only one that went to high school, Springfield High School. That's my sister, Miss Coral.

Q: Miss who?

A: Coral, Gertrude Coral.

Q: Now, would you tell me something about your marriage? Where did you meet this young man and all that?

A: I met him at a wake.

Q: A wake! (laughter) Is that right? Whose wake was it? Do you remember?

A: Yes. I remember his name was Mr. Riddle.

Q: Was he a relative or a friend?

A: Just a friend. He was a dear friend to my father.

Q: How did you start talking?

A: Well, we were sitting there that night and we just started talking, and the next morning he walked home with me. He wasn't with me because my parents didn't let me go out alone, and my mother and my stepfather and one of my sisters were there.

Q: How long did you talk to each other before you got married?

A: Oh, I guess about eleven months.

Q: Where did you get married?

A: Where did I get married? Right down here on Brown Street. The pastor of Zion Church married us. His name was--maybe I can call over the phone and tell you.

Q: We can check this out.

A: Yes. The minister of Zion Church lived down here on Brown Street in the house where . . . Do you know Engleman's that live down here on Brown Street?

Q: No.

A: You know where that large house is on this side of Schamburg's? Well, the next house to it.

Q: I see. Then after you got married, where did you live?

A: I lived out there in the country, out there by the old brickyard.

Q: By Poston Brickyard?

A: Yes. Oh, no, no, not Poston. I said brickyard, excuse me. I mean coal mine.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: That wasn't too far from my house.

Q: That's right. Do you remember what the name of that coal mine was?

A: They called it Doolittle. (laughter)

Q: What did you husband do?

A: He was a mule driver at Tuxhorn when we got married. He had to walk from out there to Tuxhorn.

Q: What did his job entail?

A: His job?

Q: Yes.

A: He worked in the coal mines.

Q: Oh, in the coal mine.

A: Yes. He drove a mule. You've heard them talk about driving mules in the coal mine? Well that's what he did.

Q: Oh, I see. So he was a coal miner, but his job was driving the mules to pull out the coal.

A: Yes.

Q: Have you ever been in the mines?

A: No, but my sisters went down.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes, my father'd taken them in the mine. He wanted to take me, but I wouldn't go. I was afraid.

Q: Was your father a coal miner, too?

A: Yes.

Q: Did your husband ever tell you any stories about a coal mine or anything? Do you know anything about coal mining?

A: No. All I know, they would dig coal down there, he said, and they had to stoop over all day, you know.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. You've seen this slate that they bring up?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, sometimes it would fall and would kill men in the mine, and they'd have to bring the men up on the . . .

Q: On the wagon.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know of anybody that has ever been killed in the mine, a neighbor, or any relative or friend?

A: No, I can't recall right now.

Q: You mentioned about a wake. What was a wake like in those days?

A: Well, I'll tell you, nothing like it is now. It was, you see then, you'd have them at the home. Have them stretched out at your home. The body would be in one room, and we would be in the other rooms around.

Q: So they would bury him early then. It wouldn't last two or three days.

A: Oh, no.

Q: What did the friends who came to visit the relatives do while they were at the wake?

A: Oh, nothing, just sit and talk like they do now, serve lunch.

Q: I imagine it's the same sort of thing that they do now to an extent. Family and relatives bring in food. About how late would you all stay?

A: Oh, we'd stay until about ten o'clock.

Q: What would the funeral be like?

A: Some of the funerals, they would have cars, but not too many. Maybe they'd have a car for the family, and the rest of them would go in, what I mentioned a while ago, spring wagons--their buggies.

Q: Did you ever see any funeral where they had to walk and the men had to carry the casket, where they didn't have either the spring wagon or cars?

A: No.

Q: Well, I've seen many of them.

A: You have? Now they'd have to do what? What did you say?

Q: Men would carry the casket to the cemetery.

A: Oh, no. I've never seen that.

Q: What was the neighborhood like where you and your husband first lived?

A: Well, I'll tell you we were all what you might say relatives. Now, this Mr. and Mrs. Robert O'Banyon, that was my father's sister. This Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gain, that was my stepmother's uncle. Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot to put my stepmother's father's and mother's name on here. Mr. and Mrs. Gus George. Those were my stepmother's parents. And our farms all joined. We just had fences between.

Q: So then after you got married, your husband worked in the coal mines. And you stayed home?

A: Stayed home.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: I have gave birth to three--two girls and a son, this son which is leaving now.

Q: That's Harry.

A: Harry.

Q: What are your girls' names?

A: Edith Loreen and Ethel.

Q: Did they live to be adults?

A: Oh, yes. No, the last one didn't.

Q: Ethel.

A: Ethel, no, no. She died from childbirth. And the funniest thing. All three of my children were born on Sunday morning.

Q: Is that right?

A: All three of them, yes. And this last one, Ethel, she was born on Sunday morning and died on Thursday afternoon.

Q: Where did your children go to school? Did your children go to Iles School?

A: Yes, and to Feitshans.

Q: You were telling me something about the riot.

A: Yes. What I have read, I know that.

Q: Let me see that.

A: Now I don't know whether you can read my writing or not. (laughter)

Q: You said you remember the year of this riot.

A: Yes, there it is on there. 1908.

Q: Could you tell me something about it?

A: Yes. It started on Friday evening about 6:30 p.m. During the night two Negro men were murdered. Namely Mr. William K. Donnigan was hung to a tree; Mr. Burton, not knowing his given name, was shot to death. Mr. William I. Donnigan was the grandfather of Mrs. Marie Cunningham, now living at 1723 South Eighteenth Street. Those two men were married to white women.

Q: You mean Mr. Donnigan and the other man?

A: Yes, Burton. Yes, that's what it mostly started.

Q: Do you know if the riot was because of them?

A: Yes, over them. Someone hit one of these white women or some kind of a mess. I won't try to go into that but I know it started over them. The riot took place at Spring and Edwards Street on Saturday evening about 5 p.m. A crowd of people went to the country for shelter. They went to these various homes. Mr. and Mrs. George Taylor, the parents of Mrs. Mattie Hale, now living at 1914 East Brown Street; Mr. and Mrs. Robert O. Banyon; Mrs. and Mr. Thomas Gains. All are deceased. Some went far beyond the homes just mentioned. Some went to the country with food and clothing in sacks on their backs. The riot was serious for three days, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On Monday the people began to calm down. These men were not afraid. They were in business so they remained in town. Mr. Amos Duncan, Mr. Robert Jackson, Mr. James Coral, Mr. Edgar White, Mr. Bob Cancellor, Mr. William George, Mr. Bunny Wright and others not mentioned.

Q: You said a crowd of people went to the country for shelter. Was it out where you were living?

A: That's where they came, to our house.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: They came to our house and they went farther up the road. We called it road, it wasn't a street. And they had their food and their clothes, some were barefooted. We sheltered, I guess, about twenty or twenty-five.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. We had a large barn and up above--we called it in the barn loft--that's where we kept feed for our horses and for our chickens, but at that time we did not have any. We had ordered our feed for our horses, but it hadn't come in yet. And a lot of them went up there and stayed all night in the barn loft. Some slept out underneath of our fruit trees and we'd taken some in the house.

Q: About how many families were living out in the country there where you were living?

A: Six.

Q: Now, did this riot take place before you were married or after you were married?

A: Before I was married.

Q: So you were still at your father's house.

A: Yes, I was still at home.

Q: Did the rioters come out there?

A: From town.

Q: I mean the white people.

A: Oh, no. They didn't come out there.

Q: Is there a reason why do you think they didn't?

A: Well, yes. You see because they were after the colored people in town.

Q: Do you know of any white person or heard of it who may have gotten killed?

A: No, but I don't remember of any whites getting killed, but there was some got hurt.

Q: About how long did these people stay out on your place?

A: They stayed until Sunday.

Q: Until Sunday. And then things had sort of quieted down.

A: Yes. Things began to calm down on Monday.

Q: Did you hear anyone say that many people left town and didn't come back?

A: No.

Q: I heard some people took a train and left.

A: No, I never heard.

Q: Now this Mr. Amos Duncan, what did he do?

A: Oh, these were men of the world, they were rough men.

Q: But they had businesses downtown.

A: Yes, they were what you call gamblers, big gamblers, all of them. They didn't run, you see, they stayed with their . . .

Q: With their business.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, do you know of a Loper's Restaurant? There was a restaurant that got badly destroyed--Loper's.

A: No, I don't, I really don't. All I know is just what I have wrote.

Q: After the riot, when you all came to town, were you afraid?

A: Well, yes, we were. We didn't come in with vegetables, not until that following Thursday. We were kind of afraid, you know.

Q: Did the black people set up any kind of a watch to protect their families, do you know?

A: No, I don't remember.

Q: When it happened, what did you all do out on the farm?

A: Well, we didn't do anything, only just sit out there afraid with the rest of them. And we fed them; we went to the garden and we gathered vegetables and cooked.

Q: Do you know what effect this riot had on black people who were living in town as far as their jobs were concerned, whether or not they lost their jobs or anything like that?

A: No, I don't remember any of them losing their jobs.

Q: Do you recall anything about housing--whether or not after the riot certain people couldn't live in a certain place or anything like that?

A: Oh, yes. I just remember hearing them say that the colored people couldn't live there and the colored people couldn't live in this place.

Q: Did anybody come out to your house to talk to your father about . . .

A: The riot?

Q: Yes.

A: No, only those that came from town out there.

Q: And so far, this is what you know about the riot?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you all go to church that Sunday?

A: No, no. We hardly ever went to church out there. When we went to church, we went to St. Paul's with my auntie--this is Mr. and Mrs. Robert O. Banyon. She was my father's sister and they were members of St. Paul's. My father didn't belong to it.

Q: Now, these persons like Mr. and Mrs. George Taylor, that was your father?

A: Yes, that was my father.

Q: Did they say anything to you children about--you were a girl then during this riot?

A: Yes, I was still at home.

Q: Did they say anything about what you all should do when you come to school the next day or the next week?

A: No, they didn't say anything.

Q: When you got to school were you all afraid?

A: Well, yes. I was some afraid but we just had to go to school. And then some of the white children would say, "Oh, two niggers got killed." You know how they did.

Q: What would you all say to them?

A: I didn't say anything. Maybe I'd be jumping the rope or playing and I'd just . . .

Q: About how many black children were going to Iles at that time?

A: No, I couldn't say.

Q: It wasn't too large amount, was it?

A: No. Iles School at that time only had four rooms. It had two grades in each room.

Q: It went to the eighth grade.

A: It went to the eighth grade. But they had enlarged it before I quit. Not as much as it is now, but they had added a new addition on.

Q: Right now it is one of the larger elementary schools in town. These white women that these men were married to, you don't know what happened to them after their husbands died?

A: No.

Q: Well, it was a sad experience really.

A: Yes.

Q: Where did you all do your shopping for groceries?

A: Well, we had to come to town. There was a grocery store on Fifteenth Street; it was named Lenhart. I remember it. And then there's a grocery store on Fifteenth and just a few doors from Iles School. They called it Roach Grocery Store.

Q: Is that about where Humphrey Grocery Store is now?

A: Yes.

Q: Were these the two places where you'd do most of your shopping for groceries?

A: Yes, because they were closer to us. On our way home when we'd come in to sell our vegetables, we'd stop and get our groceries.

Q: Did you all sell them much vegetables?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: What about drugstores and things like that?

A: Well, up here Hearders Drug Store on South Grand and there was a drugstore down on Eleventh and South Grand. But it's been so long, you know . . .

Q: How often did you all do your shopping at this drugstore?

A: Well, every day that we came in town if we needed anything, we'd just pick it up and take it home.

Q: You were not like some people who come to town once a month or once very two weeks.

A. No, because you see, we were in town so often selling our vegetables.

Q: Of course, at that time that looked like country, but now it's right a part of the city.

A: Yes. Have you ever been out there as far as the house where Elizabeth Gains lived--it's falling down. Has anyone ever showed you where Elizabeth Gains lived . . .

Q: No.

A: . . . in her lifetime? Now, our house and barn, this large barn we had, my little nephew--we had a cat and she had some little baby kittens, and my little nephew was trying to warm them . . .

End of Side One, Tape One

A: . . . you know, we'd bank our fire, put a chunk of coal in. He caught himself leaving the door open so it won't burn too fast. They left the door open and a spark of that came out of the stove--a spark of fire--and that set our house on fire.

Q: The same time?

A: Oh, no, no. The barn was burned down first and then our house.

Q: Did you lose your animals, or were the horses not in the barn?

A: No.

Q: So, you'd bank your fire at night. Of course, a lot of people don't know what banking is.

A: They don't know what it is.

Q: I know this is something we had to do.

A: Yes.

Q: And you said one night your house caught on fire?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it badly damaged?

A: My mother and father weren't at home. They were at the neighbor's house. They said they were up there playing cards.

Q: And where were you children? Were you children at home?

A: Oh, I was married then.

Q: Oh, I see. And the others were grown and gone. Did they lose their house?

A: Yes. Everything in it except the piano, they got it out, and the music cabinet--that's all they saved.

Q: And it was just a spark, nobody set it afire?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they rebuild the house out there?

A: Yes, he just put up a little two-room place. There was no one but just he and my stepmother.

Q: Where did he put that up?

A: On the same place.

Q: How did they go about building that? Did the neighbors come in and help them or did he hire somebody to do it?

A: No, he hired someone to build it.

Q: How long did you and your husband live out there?

A: Oh, we didn't stay out there too long. I guess we were out there maybe a year, a year and a half. We didn't stay out there at the coal mine too long.

Q: Where did you all move to from there?

A: When we first moved from out there--you'd be surprised. You know the house up here, the pink house on Eighteenth Street? One of the Hale girls lived there, and her husband, he got killed last year on his job--something about a tire blew up and killed him.

Q: Yes.

A: In the pink house there, that's where we moved to, from the brickyard, up there.

Q: What was that neighborhood like when you moved out there?

A: Oh, it was muddy, and nothing like it is now.

Q: The streets weren't paved?

A: No.

Q: Was this a white neighborhood or a black neighborhood?

A: It was more a black neighborhood.

Q: When you moved out there?

A: Yes. I remember Mrs. Anna Page, she lived two or three doors from me.

Q: Were there any white people living there?

A: I don't remember of any whites. All colored.

Q: Did your husband continue to work in the coal mine when you moved into town?

A: Yes.

Q: Was there some reason why you all decided to move into town?

A: Well, I got tired of the country. I said I was raised in the country and I was just tired of it.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. And I told him I wanted to move.

Q: And so you all decided to move.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you buy the place or were you renting?

A: No, we were renting. This is the only place we've bought.

Q: Were your children born over there then?

A: No. Well, I had my daughter that is deceased--well, they both are deceased as far as that goes--Edith. She was born out at the brickyard. And my son, he was born over here on Stuart Street. They have torn that house down. In the last year, they have torn that house down. Every time I'd pass by there, if I'm with someone, I'll say, "There's where my son was born."

Q: Is that right? So you moved to Eighteenth Street to Stuart?

A: Over on Stuart Street, yes.

Q: What was that neighborhood like?

A: Well, it was mixed. And there's a white family still living over there.

Q: Is that right? And they've been living there?

A: Yes.

Q: You don't know their name do you?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Did they have children?

A: Yes, they did.

Q: Did your children and their's play together?

A: Well, sometimes. They were bad on saying nigger. They would play a while, and then they would fight and say nigger. That's the word they used, nigger.

Q: And your children didn't take that.

A: No. You see, they'd start fighting.

Q: How long did you live out on Stuart, do you recall?

A: I don't know.

Q: About two, three, four, five years?

A: Maybe about five years.

Q: About when did you move to this place where you are now, you and your husband move here with your family?

A: Oh, we've been here for about 47 years.

Q: And I think you told me that this is the place you bought.

A: Yes.

Q: What sort of neighborhood was this?

A: It was mixed. And the white family the second door from here, their children were bad on hollering nigger and wanted to fight. You see that was the only white family. The rest were all Negroes.

Q: Did you buy this house from a black person or from white?

A: White, from a real estate lady.

Q: Do you think the whites resented you moving in, or by the time you moved was the neighborhood so mixed that it didn't matter much?

A: Well, I really don't know. In those days the white people were really death on saying, "Nigger, want to fight?"

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: Besides your housework and taking care of your children, did you do any other type of work?

A: I never have.

Q: Have you come up across much discrimination?

A: Well, not too much.

Q: Do you think the fact that you have not been out working . . .

A: I think that had a lot to do with it, yes.

Q: Well, what about your children? Did Edith grow to be an adult?

A: Oh, yes. Edith was 38 when she died.

Q: What kind of work did she do?

A: She worked at a hotel, a maid at the hotel.

Q: Do you recall which hotel?

A: I think it was the Leland.

Q: Your son, Mr. Hale, he went to Iles, to Feitshans.

A: And he went a year to Springfield High.

Q: I know he works for the State now. Is that what he has always done?

A: No. He worked at a drugstore, and just around.

Q: Did he ever work in the mine?

A: No, he never did work in the mine.

Q: Did he ever visit the mine?

A: No.

Q: He's like you, then.

A: He didn't want no part of the mine. (laughter)

Q: Did you ever hear them talk about discrimination that they've come up against because of their color?

A: No, never.

Q: What about politics? You've been involved in politics?

A: No. I've never cared, only just go and vote.

Q: May I ask you, what did you vote, Democrat or Republican?

A: Republican.

Q: Most of the time or all of the time?

A: All the time.

Q: Is there some reason, may I ask?

A: No, I don't know.

Q: It seems that there are many people who voted Republican for some time, and I'm just interested in finding out why.

A: I guess just because my parents were Republicans, you know, and I just went on. To tell you the truth, I don't think one party's no better than the other.

Q: Do you think the fact that this is Lincoln's home had anything to do with it?

A: Well, I don't know whether it did or not.

Q: I notice this picture here that you have. Now this is your . . .

A: I'm sorry it's all in pieces. I lent that to Ebert Walker, you know the mail carrier. He did live there on the corner right there on Nineteenth and Stuart. In fact, his widow is still living there. I had a large picture, and they ask me to lend it to them so they could have one taken of it, and that's the way they brought it back.

Q: Now, this is your school picture?

A: That's my school picture. That's the way we looked when we went to school.

Q: That's a good looking picture. You take a very nice picture. This was at Iles School.

A: Yes.

Q: Is this the regular class picture?

A: It's the class picture.

Q: It's good you have kept it this long, and if this person didn't tear it up . . . Did you give him a glass--was it in a frame when you gave it to him?

A: Yes, and that's the way they sent it back. Oh, I was so mad!

Q: And never said anything to you?

A: Never said anything to me! I doubt that anyone has got a picture of it, you know.

Q: That's unfortunate. It's a very nice picture. You don't have any other pictures of you?

A: No.

Q: Now, Mrs. Hale, have you come up across any discrimination in the hospitals?

A: In the hospitals? Well, yes, I have because I have been in the hospital a number of times. I've been in a room with whites and they'd act like they didn't want to be in the room with me.

Q: What did you do? Or course you couldn't do anything.

A: I couldn't do anything. After I seen that they didn't want to talk and be bothered with me, I just laid there in bed.

Q: Was there a time when they put in all the colored people together?

A: Yes. There've been times when they'd put us together and the whites together.

Q: Was this on the same floor or in the same room?

A: In the same room.

Q: But as far as you know, they didn't have a section that was called for colored or anything?

A: No.

Q: But they'd try to put all blacks in the same room.

A: Yes.

Q: Was this true of both hospitals?

A: Well, I couldn't say because I've only been to St. John's.

Q: Have you ever eaten at any restaurant downtown in those days?

A: And they'd act like they didn't want to sit beside them.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you go to any place where they'd turn you out? Wouldn't serve you?

A: I went someplace where they said we don't serve--I can't think of where that was at. They said they didn't serve colored. And we had to leave. I just can't remember now where that was at.

Q: What did you do when they said they wouldn't serve you. Did you just leave?

A: We didn't do nothing. We just came on out. That's been some time ago, but if I'd go in now and they'd tell me, I'd tell them something.

Q: What would you do now?

A: Well, I'd go to someone, someone like you or someone like my pastor or somebody who would be able to tell me something, and tell me what to do, and they would help me, you know.

Q: Was the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] functioning then?

A: Yes, I believe it was.

Q: After they turned you out, did you try to eat at any other restaurant downtown?

A: Yes, we went to another place and they served us.

Q: What about the movies? Did you go to the theater much when you were . . .

A: No, I've never cared for it.

Q: So you wouldn't know too much about . . .

A: No, I've never cared for the movies.

Q: What about your children?

A: Oh, they'd go, they have went.

Q: Did they say whether or not they came across discrimination?

A: Yes, when they'd go in. My granddaughter, not--just before she got married, no, since she's been married she and her husband went to a show uptown someplace. And she was telling about the old white boys what they would do, you know, walking by them and stepping on their feet, you know. And they were throwing peanuts or something at them, you know. Of course, and my daughter told them what she would do and her husband, too.

Q: People are just mean and silly.

A: Yes.

Q: What was life like raising children back in those times?

A: Well, Reverend, they weren't like they are now. You know, we could go and tell their parents if they did anything and their parents would just tear them up--whip them. But now, I wouldn't think about going to tell someone if I saw their child do anything.

Q: Why?

A: Oh, because these mothers, they're so radical. My goodness!

Q: Did you buy your children's clothes or did you make them?

A: No, I bought them. I don't know how to sew. I know how to patch.

Q: Did children seem to be more obedient to adults and respectful?

A: Yes, more then than now.

Q: What do you think is the cause of this, Mrs. Hale?

A: Well, I think it's because their parents don't talk to them, you know, when they're coming up, and they don't stay home with them. Half of these parents, they really don't stay home with the children, and the children just run the neighborhood and they go anyplace they want to go. I really don't know what to say. And their parents, they don't seem to care. I know we have some children that comes to our church, and you know, they can't play--just kids, you know--and they got on the piano and bang, bang. I've went and I have taken them off a time or two and I've even closed the lid down so they can't play it and tear the piano up. If you've seen your children on a piano playing, and know, too, that they can't play, make them get off. But I've had some mothers [say], "That's not your piano."

Q: You think the attitude of the parents has something to do with the behavior of the children?

A: Yes, I do. "She can play if she wants to." And then one time the child went back after I closed it and she raised it up and started playing it again--the mother just sat there. I did, too, I didn't try to . . .

Q: People are very easy to get angry with somebody talking to their children.

A: Oh, yes, very quick. I know at the Boar's Club Sunday night, Sunday week ago, the war mothers, we had a tea there and not knowing that they didn't have a piano or I wouldn't have went. They've got one there, but said the children have torn it up. There's only about four or five keys that will play, so they had a padlock on it.

Q: War mothers, this brings me to another question I wanted to ask you. Did your son go into the service?

A: Yes, and little Harry was in the service and my grandson Larry, all three of them were in the service. That's my granddaughter and her husband.

Q: Did your son go overseas?

A: Yes, I think he did.

Q: How long did he stay, do you recall?

A: Just two years. You see he was drafted. He didn't enlist.

Q: He didn't volunteer.

A: No, he didn't volunteer.

Q: So he spent his two years and got out.

A: Yes.

Q: Now what do these war mothers do now?

A: We make garments, we make aprons for them, and we send boxes to the veterans, and we help the soldiers here. But we mostly help the soldiers in--we go to Lincoln, Decatur, Champaign--and we fix a box, nice boxes of clothing. And we send shoes, anything that we can get that's decent. We don't send no rags or nothing like that. And we send them chewing gun--no candy--cigars.

Q: Where do you send this, to the veteran's hospital?

A: Yes. And we'll have our name and where it come from and everything. Then they will send us a card, a thank you, to let us know that they received it.

Q: Do you send it to just one veteran home, or as many as you can afford?

A: Yes.

Q: Where do you generally send? Do you send to Darville?

A: Yes.

Q: What about Quincy?

A: Yes, we have Quincy, too, on our list.

Q: Do you still have one up in Dwight, Illinois--of course, that was a veteran's hospital.

A: Yes. I don't remember us sending any there.

Q: As war mothers have you all ever written any letter to the government about conditions?

A: Well, we write letters to the government whenever we want a tag, and he will gladly answer back. He sends us a very nice letter back. We will write to him and tell him what day we would like to have, and he will gladly write back and tell us that that day will be open and that we can tag that day.

Q: Now when they have these state fairs during the month of August, don't they have a special day, the war mothers, a veteran's day? When they have a veteran's day, do the war mothers . . .

A: Turn out? Yes. Some of them do and some of them don't.

Q: Is there anything else that war mothers do? How often do you meet?

A: Twice a month--the second and fourth Monday.

Q: Is this a morning meeting?

A: In the evening.

Q: Where do you generally meet?

A: Various homes, whoever will take us.

Q: Among your membership.

A: Yes. Well, we have never asked anyone else, but it's mostly among just our members.

Q: About how long do your meetings usually last?

A: Oh, it'll last . . . we're suppose to meet at eight o'clock.

Q: Eight o'clock in the evening?

A: In the evening.

Q: Is that right? That's late, isn't it?

A: It is. It's late. I really think it's too late for us, but that's when we meet. And sometimes we don't get out until ten, ten-thirty. This past Monday we didn't get out--money involved. (laughter) From the tea, you know. (laughter)

Q: What time did you ever get out?

A: I always call my granddaughter--whenever I go out and I come in she wants me to call her, and let her know that I'm all right, you know. I called her before I left home, and I said, "Evelyn, I'm going to a war mother's meeting tonight. We've got fifteen cents to count and I may not get in until three o'clock in the morning." (laughter) She just screamed.

Q: And did this prove to be true?

A: Well, I didn't get home until a quarter after eleven. My goodness!

Q: And this money from this tea, this is what you will take to buy these things?

A: Yes, and to send our officers off to the different meetings. They're in Chicago now, to our state meeting.

Q: Have you ever been an officer among the war mothers?

A: I've only been our sergeant-at-arms. I could have been secretary, but I didn't care for it.

Q: Did you ever go off to represent your group at some of the meetings?

A: No, only when we met here at the Leland Hotel, when the state met here, well, I turned out with them then. It was very nice; I really did enjoy it, the meetings, you know. I started to go with them Sunday to Chicago, but oh, I said I better stay home. I'm kind of afraid of my neighbors there next door, so I didn't know whether they'd break in or what they'd do, you know. And when I go out and come in, some of the women will come in with me, you know, until I look around.

Q: You don't go out too much at night.

A: No. I've got to be out this week; we started revival last night. I didn't go last night because there were too many cars parked out here. And they'd naturally see me go out when I fastened my door. The police had been over there, so I was kind of afraid to leave home last night. But I'm going to leave home early tonight. I'm going over to my son's and then I'm going from there on to church.

Q: Where do you go to church?

A: Pleasant Grove. Look at that picture there. That's when we had our ceremony.

Q: This is your ground breaking?

A: Yes. Oh, we've got a lot more--different kind. That's the one I bought.

Q: Oh, they sold these.

A: Yes, only they got different kinds. They got them with the breaking the ground.

Q: You are looking forward to going to your new sanctuary then?

A: Yes. Maybe someday, I'm just asking the Lord to let me be around someplace so I can go in, march in with the choirs.

Q: What about the depression? Did that affect your family much?

A: Well, yes it did.

Q: Was your husband still working in the coal mine then?

A: Yes.

Q: Did he get laid off or what?

A: No, he never did get laid off or anything. Came out of the mine, he just simply quit working and he got tired. And then he started at the brickyards, Poston Brickyard out here.

Q: Could you get things to buy during the depression?

A: There were things that you couldn't get, yes.

Q: Did you have money in the bank, or did you lose any money?

A: No, I had money in the bank, but didn't lose any.

Q: Did you draw it out, or did you let it remain?

A: We let it remain.

Q: That's good, because there's some people who lost . . .

A: Yes, so many.

Q: Your children at that time were in school?

A: Yes.

Q: How did it effect you and effect your family? Do you recall? What I mean is, did you have money to buy things and you couldn't get it?

A: That was it. Had money to buy, but couldn't get it. We had a shortage of coal, fuel, you know. We had money to buy, but we couldn't get it. And I remember I went and stayed with my sister, stayed with her a week--the whole family.

Q: Because you couldn't get coal?

A: Yes.

Q: Where was your sister living?

A: She was living up here on Brown Street across the tracks, across the railroad tracks.

Q: Were the coal miners working?

A: Yes. They were working but they weren't selling the coal. You just couldn't get it.

Q: And, of course, at that time most people used coal for heating purposes.

A: Yes.

Q: Let's hope something like that doesn't happen again.

A: Oh my.

Q: Did your sister use coal?

A: Yes.

Q: About when did you start using gas? Was it much more recent?

A: Yes, I've been using gas for a number of years.

Q: After you stayed that week, did you all come back? Did you get coal?

A: We got coal.

Q: And this was the only time you had to go off because you couldn't get coal?

A: Yes.

Q: During that time, about how much was your husband's weekly salary?

A: Oh, it wasn't too much, but still things weren't high like they are now, and were high too, for what they were making.

Q: Did you have a garden in the backyard?

A: Yes, we had a garden.

Q: Did you do much canning?

A: I've never cared for canning. My neighbors would can for me. I have fruit trees now, in the back and I'll give them the fruit and they'll can for me.

Q: What about streetcars?

A: Yes, that's something I want to tell you about, streetcars. Now the streetcar used to run out here to the end of South Grand right there to the railroad.

Q: That's right at the Poston Brick place there.

A: No, it didn't go way out there.

Q: It didn't go that far?

A: No, just up here where that large building is at Twentieth and South Grand.

A: Just right there.

A: Yes. And you know, carfare used to be a nickel.

Q: From here to town.

A: From here to town, and you could get a transfer with it.

Q: My, my. Did they have just one? These streetcars were they the electrical kind, or were they run by . . .

A: The trolley you know.

Q: About how often would you ride them to town?

A: Well, I don't know. Every time I . . .

Q: I mean, did you ride them often?

A: Yes, I used to ride them quite often. And only five cents.

Q: About when did they stop using streetcars, do you recall?

A: They would go straight to South Grand with them. They'd go to Eleventh and South Grand, they'd go that far and then turn.

Q: And go north.

A: Yes.

Q: How far up would it go?

A: Oh, it would go as far as . . . where was that they made a turn on?

Q: Did they do up to Capitol or to Jefferson or Madison?

A: I think they went to Madison.

Q: Do you recall when they stopped using streetcars?

A: No, I can't recall when they stopped using streetcars.

Q: Now, do you know where these coal mines were located around Springfield, when say your husband was working?

A: No, only the one out here, the one called Doolittle. And he worked at Jefferson Coal Mine, but I really don't know just where it was.

Q: You just didn't like coal mining, so you just didn't find out too much about it.

A: Not too much. (laughter)

End of Side Two, Tape One