

Interviewer: Larry E. Rivers

Interviewed Mrs. Margie Hall Johnson at the Florida A&M University Black Archives Research Center and Museum on September 24, 1993.

Brief Introduction/Rivers: Mrs. Margie Hall Johnson, I am Larry Rivers. I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to interview you concerning Rosewood in 1923.

Question: Would you please tell me something about you ,such as your age, how old you were at the time of Rosewood in 1923, and anything you might want to tell us.

Answer: I can't remember how old I was in 1923. I was about grown wasn't I?

Question: You were born in 1908?

Answer: Yes.

Question: In 1908, you were about 15 years old. Now what did your father grow on the farm, on the big plantation?

Answer: Sugar cane, sweet potatoes, peas, and beans.

Question: Did he sell them to people in Rosewood, Wylly and Sumner?

Answer: Yes, he had a wagon with two or three horses. He hitched the horses up to the wagon and we would gather the crops from the field and put it on the wagon and then he would take it out and sell it.

Question: Do you remember how many acres your father owned?

Answer: I just can't remember.

Question: But it was a big plantation?

Answer: He had more than one place. He had so many acres down in a place called Gulf Hammond and then he had so many acres going north between Wylly and Rosewood.

Question: So he had several farms or plantations.

Answer: Yes.

Question: And he owned them all?

Answer: My mother said he owned them.

Question: What was your father's full name?

Answer: Charles Baccus Hall.

Question: And your mother's name?

Answer: Mary Hall

Question: From what you can remember of Rosewood was it a community that consisted of certain kinds of homes? What did the people of Rosewood do and did they own land like your father?

Answer: Yes, practically all of them owned their own home.

Question: Can you describe the homes?

Answer: They were just wooden homes.

Question: Were they basically one-story homes?

Answer: Yes, all but where we lived. We lived in a two-story building.

Question: Were there any churches in Rosewood?

Answer: My daddy was a minister right in Rosewood. He had a little white church.

Question: Was he a Baptist, Methodist?

Answer: Yes, he was Baptist.

Question: There were other churches besides your daddy's church, right?

Answer: Yes, there was a Methodist church. But the Baptist church was in Rosewood and the other churches were down farther like in Sumner, Florida like going toward Cedar Keys. I can't remember

Question: What did most of the people in Rosewood do for a living?

Answer: They farmed for different people and then you went to Sumner. They had a big sawmill in Sumner, Florida. That's where people went to work at and as you go north that was a big turpentine place where people dip turpentine and

Question: Was that owned by the Goins?

Answer: I don't know what that was owned for but that was Goins, Goins.

Question: From what I have gathered, the Goins had a big turpentine still in Rosewood around the time of the Rosewood incident in 1923. Do you recall anyone talking about a turpentine still owned by the Goins.

Answer: The turpentine still I'm talking about was in Wylly.

Question: So this ~~steel~~ was in Wylly?

Answer: Yes, Wylly, Florida. My brother, Sammie, who used to go up there. He lived about two or three miles from Wylly. He would get up every morning and walk to Wylly and catch the truck and go out and dip turpentine.

Question: What do you remember Mrs. Johnson about Cedar Keys?

Answer: I don't remember Cedar Keys. It was going south. Cedar Keys was a great big one way in and one way out. You had to cross the water. It was eight miles from where we lived. My mother use to take me with her to go fishing down there at the river. I was too small to fish but my mother carried me with her for company. We was down there fishing one day and a shark, it was a shark or whale that came through under the bridge and knocked one of the pillars that hold the bridge in place. We left from down there and did not go back.

Question: In terms of businesses, did Blacks own businesses in Rosewood?

Answer: They owned their own homes.

Question: Did most of the Blacks own their own land?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Were there stores owned by Blacks in Rosewood?

Answer: Only the one my daddy had.

Question: Was it a general store?

Answer: My daddy had a very big store. He had caskets in there and when people passed they would come to my daddy and get a casket and be buried in it. Now that was upstairs. Downstairs we had a fountain. People call them now ice cream stands, but he had a fountain where you go in and get ice cream, soda water, and things like that. That was downstairs and upstairs is where he kept the caskets.

Question: Your daddy was quite a businessman?

Answer: Right.

Interviewer: He was a farmer, he had a store, he sold caskets and ice cream, he preached, he was a principal. That is very interesting.

Question: What do you remember specifically about the Rosewood incident that occurred January 1, 1923 in Rosewood.

Answer: All I can tell you about that is that the children were at home and it was night. All of us children were in bed and my mother was gone to bed. She came into our room and woke us up and said, "Y'all get up, y'all get up, they're shootin', they shootin' y'all get up. She came in and woke us up and we didn't have time to put any clothes on. We just jumped up and ran out of the house and took off into the woods going toward Wylly.

Question: Was this on the first of January?

Answer: I can't think of that.

Question: But you know you were taken to the woods?

Answer: Yes, I know we went to the woods from Rosewood to Wylly where my sister was.

Question: So your sister was in Wylly?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Do you remember boarding a train to Gainesville or somewhere?

Answer: Yes, we did. We went to Wylly. When the train came and the man owned Wylly, this white fellow that owned Wylly.....

Question: Do you remember his name?

Answer: No I don't but he went out and stopped the train and then he hollered and called into the woods. We all came out the woods and got on that train and went to Gainesville where my sister's brother was. We went to Gainesville and the train stopped. She had to look to try and find Uncle Joe. Uncle Joe was my mother's brother. We found him in Gainesville. He had a store.

Question: In Gainesville?

Answer: Yes.

Question: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Answer: I had three sisters and five brothers. There are only three of us living now which include my sister, Wilson and myself.

Question: All eight children went into the woods, and boarded the train with your mother.

Answer: Yes.

Question: Where was your father?

Answer: I'm sure he was living at that time.

Question: But you specifically remember your mother and the children going to Wylly and a white man signaled for the train to stop so that you could get on board.

Answer: All our children.

Question: How many children were there all together? How many Blacks came out of the woods when the train stopped?

Answer: All I know is that it was just us. Just our family.

Question: Were there other families that came out of the woods and boarded the train?

Answer: If they did they came out of a different direction and caught the back of the train. I don't remember anyone catching that train but the Hall family.

Question: Do you remember any males boarding, like 15 years and older getting on the train?

Answer: My brother.

Question: Your brothers boarded the train?

Answer: Yes, all the Hall family. All of them that were not working. You take my brother Sammie, he left there. He left all of us, he left there walking that night of the riot. He stripped through the woods running by himself.

Question: You mentioned the riot, how did the riot get started and escalate?

Answer: I don't know, but I can tell you what I heard.

Question: Where were you exactly when the riot occurred?

Answer: When they started that shooting? I was home with my mother.

Question: You were at your mother's house, right?

Answer: Sure, I was only 15 years old.

Question: And how far was Wylly from Rosewood?

Answer: I think it was three miles.

Question: What do you remember about what happened? You just know that your mother woke you up and there was a lot of shooting going on?

Answer: Right.

Question: She told you that you needed to get on up and get to Wylly.

Answer: See the shooting was not right in Rosewood, the shooting was down a little further where the Bradley's and Carrier's were. So she heard the commotion and woke us up and we got up and went to Wylly.

Question: Did she say why you all were going to Wylly?

Answer: We knew. We heard the Carriers shooting too. They were having that riot down there. They say the Bradley's or Carries had raped a white woman. And the white people didn't like it, but it wasn't like that so I learned later. This white man was going with this other white man's wife and he blacken his face and whipped this

man's wife what he was going with, his girlfriend. So people thought the Black man was whipping her. That's what I heard.

Question: So they started looking for the Black man who allegedly attacked the white woman, and they came upon Sam Carter. Do you remember Sam Carter?

Answer: I don't know because I was so scared.

Question: Do you recall from your mother or anyone how many people actually died as a result of that whole situation? Did any members of your family die over there?

Answer: Nobody in my family died, I don't think. I don't think many died because the biggest people they were after were the Bradley's.

Question: Were they after the Sylvester Carrier?

Answer: Yes, they were after all the Bradley's and Carrier's.

Question: Why were they after them so much?

Answer: Because one of them they say raped the white woman.

Question: People say there was an escaped convict by the name of Jessie Hunter?

Answer: I don't know about that.

Question: Did the whites figured it was someone Black from the Bradley or Carrier families.

Answer: Yes, out in that community. That's what they say it was a Carrier or Bradley. That was the only people they were looking for. But any Black they saw they were killing them, but it wasn't many Blacks in Wylly.

Question: I know your family settled in Gainesville after it was all over, do you remember where the other families that scattered after the Rosewood incident settled?

Answer: The Bradley's, the Carrier's and the Hall's, they were only ones in Rosewood.

Question: How many people do you think lived in Rosewood?

Answer: I don't know. I was only 15 and was going to school.

Question: So you don't have an idea?

Answer: Yes, the Griffins, Bradley's, Carrier's and the Hall's that's us. The Edward's

Question: So you know some of the families but you don't know exactly the number of people? Were most of the families related?

Answer: To us?

Response: Yes?

Answer: No.

Question: What else can you tell us about Rosewood and the Rosewood incident, that you can remember?

Answer: As far as I can remember are the girls from the Bradley and Carrie families. We all went to school together. Gail, Mossy, Nita, ...

Question: So you can remember some of the other families in Rosewood?

Answer: Yes, the ones we went to school with you know.. I was going to school in a building.

Question: Do you remember about Polly Wilkerson or Henry Andrews? Would they be white or black?

Answer: They would be white. I don't know anything about no white people.

Question: You didn't know anything about the Ingram family? Or about Sheriff Bob Walker?

Answer: No.

Question: Is there anything us you want to tell us about Rosewood that you can remember before we end the interview.

Answer: There were only two stores in Rosewood. A white fellow owned one of them.

Question: By the name of Mr. Wright?

Answer: Yes, that's who it was, Mr. Wright.

Question: And who owned the other store?

Answer: My daddy.

Question: So would you consider Rosewood to be a thriving community prior to the Rosewood incident in terms of people having jobs and having businesses?

Answer: Yes

Question: So people were making a good living and owned land?

Answer: Practically everyone in Rosewood owned land. My daddy had a big plantation and a big store.

Question: There is not much you remember like Bob Walker, the Ingram's, or other people in the area?

Answer: Were they white or black?

Response: Yes, they were white.

Question: So it's not much you remember about them?

Answer: No, I don't know much about the whites.

Question: Do you have any idea of the total number of people killed?

Answer: No.

Question: Do you remember anything at the Carrier house when the whites came there.

Answer: No, because we lived a good way from the Carrier house.

Question: The main thing you remember is running out into the woods?

Answer: That's right, I remember that.

Question: Your five brothers and three sisters, and your mother boarded the train in Wylly?

Rivers Thank you very much Mrs. Johnson and we appreciate having the opportunity to interview you.

Mrs. Johnson: I wish I had more to give you.

Rivers: No that's good, you did good. Thank you very much.

MS. MINNIE LANGLEY'S INTERVIEW

By
Thomas Dye

(Dye) Why don't you just tell me about what you remember when you were a child, and start with just what Rosewood (the town) looked like.

(Ms. Langley) I figured that's what y'all wanted, but I don't want to give it.

(Dye) You don't want to do that today, okay. Well, can you give your birth date, or birth year approximately. Do you remember that?

(Ms. Langley) Yeah, July 4, 1913.

(Dye) July 4, 1913. Okay, and your parents were -- do you remember your parents name?

(Ms. Langley) My parents were Emma Carrier, and my grandmother's name was Daisy Mitchell (the one that birthed me), and she died when I was a baby and my grandmother raised me.

(Dye) Alright, good, you grew up and lived -- your family lived in Rosewood. You grew up there as a little girl? Did you go school there in Rosewood?

(Ms. Langley) Yes, I did.

(Dye) Do you remember your teachers name?

(Ms. Langley) Mahula Brown.

(Dye) That's great, I can hardly remember my teachers anymore. Okay, do you remember the church that you attended? I know you have been asked this before.

(Ms. Langley) A.M.E. church.

(Dye) A.M.E. church in Rosewood, and you sang in the choir, or you . . . ?

(Ms. Langley) No, I was the Sunday school teacher. I was a Sunday scholar.

(Ms. Langley's daughter) She was seven years old now.

(Dye) Can you remember, what the houses looked like in Rosewood when you