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Iron Hill School Oral History Interview

Interview with Reverend Allen Oliver Smith, Junior

Date of Interview: February 06, 2009
Interviewer: Roberta Perkins
Transcriber: David Cardillo

[00:00]

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins, and today's date is Friday, February the 6th, 2009, and I am here at Iron Hill Museum in preparation for doing an interview with Reverend Allen O. Smith, and we're hoping, we're talking today about his relationship to a couple of the prominent names from past Iron Hill communities. Daisy Webster and Mary Holand Smith, known as Granny Smith, as I understand it. Granny Smith was his grandmother, and Daisy Webster was her daughter, and as he said, an aunt of his. His father's sister.

(Sound of tape stopping and being restarted **01:02.**)

Roberta: Okay, Reverend Smith, thank you again for coming and sharing this information and then of outlining a little more detail than what I already have. Let's start with our telephone conversation. You know, I had a couple questions about your grandmother and I guess, I guess she is a good place to start with you talking about your relationship to her, and your aunt. Okay.

Rev. Smith: You want to know more about my grandmother?

Roberta: Yeah. Let's just... Let's just let's see... (Unintelligible **1:58**.) Let's start with your grandmother and as much as you know about her coming here, who she was married to... Do you remember who?

Rev. Smith: Uh, okay. Well, as far as I can remember, I think she's, her birth place, originally where she was born of, that was in Jersey. But I... I really don't know what part of Jersey she was born.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: And she came, I don't know what year she came into Delaware, but I do know that she was married to my grand...grandfather. And his name was David Smith.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. And, and your grandmother's full name was Mary Holand?
H-O-L-A-N-D?

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: Okay. Go ahead.

Rev. Smith: And she married, but I don't know what year she married my grandfather. But I knew she married my grandfather and he had her children, she had three boys and one girl. And then of the children of the oldest was Daisy. The next one was named Ernest. And the next, her son was named Allen which, who was my father.

Roberta: What, what was his name?

Rev. Smith: Allen.

Roberta: Oh. Same as you.

Rev. Smith: Yeah, senior, yeah. And my next uncle was Warren. And my youngest, next uncle was named Walter.

Roberta: Okay, so, it's four boys?

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Three, yeah, two, four boys and one girl.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: So, I, as far as I can remember, as... Do you want me to name my aunt's children, or what?

Roberta: Oh, okay, you're talking... Okay, we're going, we're moving over to Daisy Webster now.

Rev. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

Rev. Smith: Okay.

Roberta: And give me... Was she married?

Rev. Smith: She married. Her husband was named Edward Webster.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. And they had...

Rev. Smith: They had... Let's see, they had her daughter. She had a daughter named Alberta. She had...

Roberta: Would you spell that?

Rev. Smith: Alberta.

Roberta: A-L-B-E-R-T-A?

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: And she had a next one was a, was a (unintelligible **04:44**) son. His name David. Then she had another daughter named Viola.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: Then her next was Leah (phonetic **05:00**), her daughter. Elsie. Her next would be a son named Sam. Yeah, his name was Sam.

Roberta: Okay, it wasn't Samuel? It was Sam?

Rev. Smith: Sam. No, Frankie. I'm sorry. His real name was Frankie, but we called him Sam. And we have another son named Edward Junior. And the youngest one was named Alice.

Roberta: Alice? A-L-I-C-E. Okay. Okay. How did Frankie get the nickname Sam? Do you know?

Rev. Smith: Well, just that he called himself Sam.

(Laughter.)

Rev. Smith: We all had, all of us had nicknames.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: In fact, my nickname was Ollie.

Roberta: Okay. Now, see, that, that I can see where that comes from.

Rev. Smith: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Roberta: Yeah. I... When we were talking on the telephone, we talked about, I believe, correct me is this is out of the sequence, or... Saint Daniel's Church... I think your grandmother was involved with the record-keeping, keeping the records of St. Daniel's Church?

Rev. Smith: No. My aunt. My aunt.

Roberta: Your aunt.

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. So Daisy Webster was the keeper of the...

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Yeah.

Roberta. Okay.

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: All right. Do you know who that responsibility passed down to?

Rev. Smith: Well, it passed on down to a man, (unintelligible **06:37**) keeps the record now is my cousin and who is (unintelligible **06:45**). Let me get the right name. (Unintelligible **06:50**.)

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: Yeah. He's the one who keeps the records now.

Roberta: Do you know how extensive the records are for St. Daniel's? Like, some churches will keep records of where people came from and who their parents were.

Rev. Smith: No, I don't think so.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: No. Not St. Daniel's. Not St. Daniel's.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. Okay, evidently, and this was dated 1927...

Rev. Smith: '27, yeah.

Roberta: ...and the State Department of Education, they called it of Public Instruction at the time, offered adult education. And, and as you can see, Daisy M. Webber...

Rev. Smith: M. Webber.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah. And then her husband...

Rev. Smith: (Unintelligible **07:50**) birthday and everything.

Roberta: Yeah. And her birth date was May 19, 1888.

Rev. Smith: Yeah, that's right.

Roberta: And, let's see... Yeah, it has "M." What was her middle name? Do you know?

Rev. Smith: Daisy Marie.

Roberta: Marie.

Rev. Smith. Yeah, because my sister was named after her.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. And you have... And then, they've listed her husband. Her husband's name...

Rev. Smith; (Unintelligible **8:23**) Edward.

Roberta: And then all of their children. There you go. And their birth dates. And where they attended school. And it has... For Francis, it has all it, too.

Rev. Smith: Okay, now... Now here, this is (unintelligible **08:43**) Maryanne Webber.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: And...you know?

Roberta: Okay, that would... Okay, and I guess they've listed it from oldest to the youngest.

Rev. Smith: Yeah, that's what it is.

Roberta: So Mary Alberta was the oldest.

Rev. Smith. Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah.

Rev. Smith: See, down here, down here, they have, she doesn't have Alice, but here she is here.

Roberta: Ah. Yeah. Okay, so under, under her husband's name, your grandfather, right?

Rev. Smith. Yeah. Yeah.

Roberta: On his sheet...

Rev. Smith: On, on my uncle. That's my uncle, Edward.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: That's (unintelligible **9:16**) husband.

Roberta: Okay. All right. Keep me, keep me on the right track, here. I keep getting this incorrect.

Rev. Smith: Okay.

Roberta: Okay, on his list, so it might... Well, the handwriting's the same, so it might be the same person. But he was born in 1877.

Rev. Smith: Oh, yeah. He, yeah.

Roberta: And see, and this is Maryland...

Rev. Smith: Yeah, he was born in Maryland. Yeah, you're right.

Roberta: I know what else it was I wanted to ask you about your family, and I think, I think this is the couple, and you tell me correctly, that they were... Cooch talked about them...

Rev. Smith: Yes, he talked about my grandmother.

Roberta: A grandmother in this...

Rev. Smith: Talking about my grandmother and my grandfather.

Roberta: And I failed to follow up on that. It kind of gets...

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Because he wrote a book and I believe he had my grandfather's, and my grandmother's, name in the book. Yeah.

[10:07]

Roberta: And you had stated that you weren't too happy about the content, you know...

Rev. Smith: Yeah, yeah, so I, yeah, I didn't...

(Cross-Talk.)

Roberta: ...and I meant to ask you to explain if you don't like it...

Rev. Smith: Yeah, I did say, well, I... See, I never met my grandfather because he passed before I was born. But he had on there a very black man, just dark and (unintelligible **10:29**), and my grandmother, she was nearly, I think she had some white blood in her anyway cause she was really fair-looking. She could pass for either a Negro or a white. Yeah. I didn't like the way he had it written in the way of saying my grandfather didn't black man...

Roberta: What, what... How did you feel about that? What was...

Rev. Smith: Well, I know it was... I, I, I (unintelligible **10:51**) I'd never seen my grandfather, but they said he was really dark. He said, all he could say was that he was a Negro and that most Negroes were dark anyway.

Roberta: So, is that, was that the extent of what he, how he...

Rev. Smith: Yeah, well, you know he (unintelligible **11:09**) because he didn't know much about him, you know. There wasn't that much about him. No.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. Okay. So, you just weren't happy about...

Rev. Smith: The way he had...

Roberta: Described him...

Rev. Smith: The way he worded it. But then, you know, now, I, wait, I I know they told we're from the black, black race now. Now, I, I can accept it now, you know. We were black, you know? I'm proud to be a black, got black (unintelligible **11:40**). You know?

Roberta: That is a historical (unintelligible **11:43**).

Rev. Smith. Yeah. Yeah. It is.

Roberta: So, I have not read the book. So, what else...

Rev. Smith: I don't know (unintelligible **11:52**) the library or not. But it had, I knew it was really written by Cooch. I don't know what his first name was. But I do know he was a Cooch.

Roberta: They might have it at the Ten (unintelligible **12:03**) Heritage.

Rev. Smith: Probably. It might be there. Yeah. Could have.

Roberta: And so, why was he mentioned in his book?

Rev. Smith: Well...

Roberta: Was it his relation to Iron Hill?

Rev. Smith: Well, yeah. He was, he was (unintelligible **12:16**) Iron Hill, yeah, you know. Because, you know, I guess he was a part, you know, he knew most of the black families that lived around Iron Hill, so he just, you know, just sort of part of the history of the black people at, at Iron Hill, you know.

Roberta: Okay, let me get back to this instruction. On the back, on the back sheet, it also shows whether they finished the class or not...

Rev Smith: Oh yeah?

Roberta: And the grade that they got. But it does not... It does not give information on what they took, so I think it's just general adult education.

Rev. Smith: (Unintelligible **13:04**.)

- Roberta: Yeah. Okay. I thought that that might be... I know you've never mentioned it.
- Rev. Smith: Yeah. No, I never knew this. This was way way before I was born.
- Roberta: We can make a copy of it.
- Rev. Smith: Oh, yeah.
- Roberta: So, did you ever hear anybody as you were growing up, as you got older, talk about folks taking adult education?
- Rev. Smith: No, no.
- Roberta: Because there's several...
- Rev. Smith: This is the first time... I didn't know they had adult education.
- Roberta: Okay. Okay. Yeah, this was back in 1927...
- Rev. Smith: Seven, yeah. That's three or four years before I was even born. Yeah. (Unintelligible **13:45**), too.

Roberta: Uh huh. Yeah, they really did really well. I also have down here a note to myself, Reverend Smith... The Earls, well, the Websters I can see you're related to. But the summaries in Earls came up in our conversations...

Rev. Smith: Well, you know, this has happened all (unintelligible **14:06**), how the Earls came on the scene. My cousin... She married into the Earl family. My cousin, Alberta, married (unintelligible **14:22**). Her name, her first name, was Mary. She married Earl, (unintelligible **14:29**). That's how Earl found, came into the Smithsens (phonetic **14:37**), and also my two, my two older sisters, they married Earls, too. So that's how the Earl family was woven into our family, you know.

Roberta: Okay. All right. So...

Rev. Smith: It all originated with, with Daisy with Alberta.

[15:01]

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: Alberta (unintelligible **15:02**) Daisy is older, and Daisy's older, too, and she married an Earl, his name was Maynard Earl (phonetic **15:09**).

Roberta: Okay, so your cousin and your sister, you said, married an Earl.

Rev. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. I just had a note there. I didn't know if (unintelligible cross-talk **15:18**) wanted to ask you about that.

Rev. Smith: That's how the Earls came and (unintelligible **15:23**).

Roberta: And I also made myself a note to talk about the members of Saint Daniel's Church. And I don't know exactly what I mean by that other than if you remember the members, if there are still any folks around who are members.

Rev. Smith: Oh, yeah. Our church at St. Daniel's is active. Yeah, it's still active. We... The last time I believe they had the road made twelve or fourteen people are still going there.

Roberta: Okay. Okay. Okay.

Rev. Smith: In fact, I have, I have quite a few of some of my relatives still go there.

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

Rev. Smith: They... I, I can, I know a long time ago the names of the most of the older people that were there back in the late '40s. There was, well, my aunt, or first (unintelligible **16:33**) was my grandmother, was Mary who was (unintelligible **16:40**), there was my Aunt Daisy and my Uncle Edward. And then there were my father, Allen, Senior, and then it was my mother, Estelle (phonetic **16:56**), and then there was Maynard Earl... Who else? Okay, there's Maynard. And then there was a lady's name... Green. Mary Green. And that was a, that was a prominent family, too. The Greens. And also the Gaines (phonetic **17:25**). There was a Gaines family was prominent in Iron Hill. That's way before my time.

Roberta: Okay. Okay.

Rev. Smith: Way before my time. But I didn't... I heard them talk about the Gaines family.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: And that makes up the older members that I knew, know about back then in the late '40s or maybe in the '30s, even.

- Roberta: Okay. Do you know if there are any descendants from either of these families still around? The Greens and the Gaines'?
- Rev. Smith: Gaines'? No, not now.
- Roberta: They just kind of moved out, didn't they?
- Rev. Smith: Yeah, they just moved out, they died. I really, I really liked them, you know. You get the families, their roots where the Gaines family and the Green family... But they had written it down in Iron Hill. I do know that.
- Roberta: Did they? Yeah. Yeah. That's part of my research now. I'm, I'm, I'm very curious about how did the African American community arrival at Iron Hill begin.
- Rev. Smith: Yeah, quite sure, and also the Winn (phonetic **18:42**) family, they were a part of, they were a part of Iron Hill and also of Glasgow. See, Iron Hill and Glasgow had two, no, they had a church that they, they had a school at Glasgow and they had a school here. So, but they would come together, like, we had two churches. We had the St. Daniel's Church, which is on, is on Iron Hill, and St. Thomas' Church, which was in Glasgow. That's where, that's where Bishop Herman Congo (phonetic **19:17**), he pastored that church down at St. Thomas' Church in Glasgow.

Roberta: Right. Right.

Rev. Smith. Yeah.

Roberta: I interviewed him there.

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: Okay.

Rev. Smith: I wish that we had got my, my daughter Mary, they said (unintelligible **19:44**) we wished that we could get more history about the families that lived around Iron Hill. I wish I could give you more information, but I, it's all I can give. I don't want... I want to give what I know (unintelligible **19:59**).

Roberta: As I come across things, I will gladly share it.

[20:02]

Rev. Smith: I wish you would.

Roberta: Cause that's what we're doing down in Dover and there, they can very easily...it's very... Anybody can go down there

Rev. Smith: That's good. I like that (unintelligible **20:12**).

Roberta: I'll make sure you get a copy before we leave.

Rev. Smith. Please, yeah.

Roberta: Yeah. And it's... I get curious, you know?

Rev. Smith: Yeah, I am too, now, you know? I like to probe into it now, you know?

Roberta: Yeah, yeah. Land... I think I have to look at land records and that sort of thing.

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: I have to get back down there.

Rev. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Roberta: It's worth the trip. It's an interesting (unintelligible **20:35**).

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. You (unintelligible **20:39**) in the archives, yeah?

Roberta: Yeah. It sounds... Actually, it's right across the street from Legislative Hall.

Rev. Smith: Oh, yeah?

Roberta: Yeah. It's...

Rev. Smith: Wait, do you have to have a appointment to go?

Roberta: No. You just go.

Rev. Smith: Just go?

Roberta: You just go. There's several people there that can help you.

Rev. Smith: Oh yeah?

Roberta: If you have questions, you go down and say what it is you're looking for. They might want you to have dates, maybe, of somebody when they were

born or that kind of nature. That's where (unintelligible **21:06**) of information...

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

Roberta: There was a lady there named Margaret, and there was a gentleman, too, I forget his name, who helped us out. And she brings up this large box that had to do with the State Education System, and...

Rev. Smith: Oh yeah?

Roberta: ...and these were laying on the top. I'm not finished with it because I thought I'd see a lot of the names of family members of that interview here.

Rev. Smith: Oh yeah?

Roberta: So that's why I have to go back down...

Rev. Smith: Is my name there?

Roberta: I don't know. Well...this is the 1927...

Rev. Smith: Oh, okay. Okay.

Roberta: ...Continuing Education for people. And, you know, I'm curious as to what was that about.

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Yeah. It's the first time I've heard about that. I'm sure it's (unintelligible **21:47**).

Roberta: ...very interesting. She brings up this, and so I... That box alone. I mean, you go down there, you just have to be prepared because you're going to spend either a lot of hours when you go down there, or you're going to go back a lot of times.

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: So much information.

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: So much information.

Rev. Smith: I do know that they said that this, the old school, was down, down a little bit farther from where this building is. They said it was historic. Burned

down. That's why. A lot of, a lot of the older people in there
(unintelligible **22:20**). I think the school was built in 19-something...

Roberta: 1923?

Rev. Smith: '23, yeah.

Roberta: Something like that.

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Yeah.

Roberta: Yeah, cause I'm... I'm trying to think. Hold on one second.

(Tape stops and restarts, **22:33**.)

Roberta: If there's anything else that you have that might, that might shed some
light on these two ladies... You know, the family members haven't talked
about the business side...

Rev. Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Roberta: ...you know, of living there. You're not going to know that unless you
(unintelligible **22:56**).

Rev. Smith: No, no. No. I wish I could give you more information, but...

Roberta: No, I think this is good. I think this is pretty much... Cause I know what we talked about on the phone, and then you were more interested in just coming down and sitting with me.

Rev. Smith: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Roberta: And just spelling it out. Yeah. And that's fine. Yeah. The other thing I'm going to look at is the property transfer records. I don't even know how... See, that's new to me. I have to learn how to find that out. So that might, that might be some information. Yeah.

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Could there be. Yeah. Yeah. Could be.

Roberta: Okay. All right. I think that, I think that's good. I think that's probably... This gives me more information directly.

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: So I have it from your mouth and so I can find, I think, a little better.

Rev. Smith: Yeah. Yeah.

Roberta: You know, this lady, Mary Smith and Daisy Webster. Yeah. Okay.
Okay.

Rev. Smith: All right?

Roberta: Yeah. I think I have, I have as much as I can.

Rev. Smith: Okay. If you need me (unintelligible **24:07**), just give me a call.

Roberta: I certainly appreciate all this info, so, yeah.

Rev. Smith: Yeah (unintelligible **24:11**) get, get, get to know everything. I'm really curious now about how it was.

Roberta: Yeah. Yeah, well, we're keeping it moving.

Rev. Smith: Yeah.

Roberta: We're keeping it moving. Reverend Smith, thank you so very much.

Rev. Smith: Enjoy. You're more than welcome. Yeah.

Roberta: All right. This then, this concludes the interview for today.

[End 24:38]