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Iron Hill School Oral History Project

Interview with Betty Webster

Date of Interview: March 12, 2008
Interviewer: Roberta Perkins
Transcriber: Marcia Adams

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins and today’s date is Wednesday, March 12th, 2008 and I am here with Betty Webster in Newark, Delaware. I am at her home and she has agreed to share her memories of going to Iron Hill School and growing up in the Iron Hill community. I want to take this opportunity to thank Mrs. Webster for her time. Thank you.

Mrs. Webster: You’re welcome.

Roberta: I want to start out by asking you if you would just kind of tell me a little about who you are, your family and just a little bit about growing up in Iron Hill.

Mrs. Webster: Well it started with my Mom, Emma Louise Webster then she married James Roland Chandler and I had 6 brothers and 5 sisters. When we was going up we had a lot of rag ball. We didn’t have real balls. She made them out of old socks that we wore out. She put them together and made a sock ball. That’s what we usually played during the evening. We stopped from school, this lady had a big cherry tree, she had a house not far from the museum so we stopped there every day and picked cherries. Her name was Miss Morgan I remember her. She lived by herself. She had a big, old house. She always wanted us to come in. She would give us Kool-Aid, water, we would stop and pick cherries, go home and cook them.
Roberta: She lived next to or across…?

Mrs. Webster: Across the street from it, where Whitaker Road is. There was a house there and they had a house across from the museum. The Garnets lived there, then the Greys lived there some of them went to school with us the Garnets. Willis and Marion or Mary Ann?

Roberta: Do you know if any of them are around?

Mrs. Webster: I think Marion lives in the Northeast somewhere [[inaudible]] and then they had the Greys, they had a daughter Linda May and she lives in Elkton, Maryland. Her Mom lives in Elkton too.

Roberta: Linda’s mother? Okay, what was her name?

Mrs. Webster: Arlene.

Roberta: Arlene? Do you know if it would be possible to get in touch with any of them?

Mrs. Webster: Maybe Linda May.

Roberta: We’ve been curious about who lived across the street so both of these families, the children went to Iron Hill.

Mrs. Webster: They lived across the street.

Roberta: Was there an orchard or something across the street?

Mrs. Webster: They had I don’t think there was many apple trees more or less like a blossom, a cherry blossom tree – pretty pink and white. They had an egg farm. Salmon’s Egg Farm.

Roberta: What was the name of it?

Mrs. Webster: Salmons.
Roberta: Salmons? S-a-l…

Mrs. Webster: S-a-l-m-o-n-s Egg Farm. We used to go there to get eggs. It was across from the museum too. They’re still there matter of fact, the same people I don’t know but everybody bought eggs from there. Then we had Leonard Bacon he lived across the street, a white family and there was another white family, was it the Walkers? they had a big old dog that used to chase us.

Roberta: Do you think any of those are still there?

Mrs. Webster: The Davises, they lived across the street from us before we moved up there by the museum. They are still there, the Davises are. Their house is still there. I think their dad died but Miss Vivian, I think she is still living. She’s still out there in the same house. We used to have a house down the road across from them before we moved up there. My grandmom and grandpop lived on one side and we lived on the other side. There was a lady named Alberta Earl. They lived there. They used to take care of the church too.

Roberta: And what was her name?

Mrs. Webster: Alberta.

Roberta: And they were your grandparents?

Mrs. Webster: Yes, my uncle, my mom’s brother Bill was married to Shirley. That was Bill’s dad and mom. My mom was Bill’s sister, he was my uncle but he’s younger than me.

Roberta: That’s no unusual. So let me back up a little. What I want to get is the lady that we keep coming across, a little bit about her and how she connects to you. Miss Daisy Webster.
Mrs. Webster: She was Alberta’s mom and she had an Uncle Sam and Aunt Oley and Aunt Alice, Aunt Elsie. All of them have passed. She was married to Uncle Jimmy. We called him uncle. Everybody called him Uncle Jimmy they lived not on the same side, they lived over on the other side.

Roberta: Okay, what was the other side at that time because I know you lived…

Mrs. Webster: We lived down on Old Baltimore Pike.

Roberta: Old Baltimore Pike.

Mrs. Webster: And they lived on I don’t even think they had names on the roads then. I don’t think they did. The church up there is Otts Chapel and I guess that’s what they called it. That’s where they lived at, Otts Chapel Road.

Roberta: Because one side is Otts Chapel and the other side is Pleasant Valley, is that right?

Mrs. Webster: They lived on Otts Chapel [[inaudible]] because there is a white church up there off to the south on the left hand side on Otts Chapel Road.

Roberta: What do you know about her? What do you remember?

Mrs. Webster: We used to go there and watch TV because we didn’t have TV.

Roberta: To your great-grandmothers?

Mrs. Webster: Yes, to Betsy. We went there to watch Gene Autry every Sunday. [[Inaudible]], she cooked a lot for everybody. My brother lived there. My oldest brother, Francis, he lived with them and we went there every Sunday. She was a short lady with curly hair, blue eyes. She liked cats. She had about 17 cats, maybe more than that. She had a boarder that lived there his name was [[inaudible]] he was related to [[inaudible]] but he lived with Grandmom. [[Inaudible]], they made a homemade board. They played that too. Most of the time on Saturday.
Roberta: Do you know whatever became of that board?

Mrs. Webster: No it was a homemade [Inaudible], my uncle made it. I don’t know what they ever did with that board, it was a homemade board. Roberta: Was there any talk or whatever, or any knowledge of how your great-grandmother came to live here in Iron Hill?

Mrs. Webster: I don’t know how they came to live there because my dad came from I think it was Jersey with his mom. My family always lived there.

Roberta: Did I ask you that, what was your father’s name?

Mrs. Webster: James Rowland Chandler.

Roberta: James Rowland? R-o-l-l-i-n?

Mrs. Webster: R-o-l-a-n-d.

Roberta: Roland, ok and Chandler.

Mrs. Webster: Yes.

Roberta: And your mother?

Mrs. Webster: Emma Louise Chandler.

Roberta: So when I spoke with you earlier we found records where Mrs. Webster was a trustee I guess that what it was. She was the keeper of the deed and that sort of thing because she was pretty involved.

Mrs. Webster: With the church.

Roberta: So was she pretty much with you, you answered this, is the only way I can think of to ask it, pretty much like a matriarch of the community would you say?
Mrs. Webster: Yes I think so. She took care of everything, yes. They had a lot of socials, well they called them socials then where you could go buy stuff and they made cakes and pies and stuff like that and sell them. We still do that, sell them to raise money for the church. A lot of people don’t do that any more I guess it’s too much work worth the effort.

Roberta: Do you have a pretty good turn out?

Mrs. Webster: Yes, I did about 2 weeks ago and we did pretty good. They’re having another one this Friday to raise money to get a new heater. I know [inaudible] Day is Sunday, that should be nice.

Roberta: So she was pretty well respected in the community?

Mrs. Webster: Yes.

Roberta: When is your first memory of Iron Hill? Going to school there?

Mrs. Webster: I hated it because we had to walk in the rain and in the snow. It was terrible. We couldn’t go anywhere. We didn’t have no days off like they do now, we had to go anyway with the snow and all.

Roberta: So this is when your family lived on Old Baltimore Pike?

Mrs. Webster: Yes we had to walk to school.

Roberta: How far was it?

Mrs. Webster: Probably about a mile and a half maybe two. We had to walk, my mom had bought me these ugly shoes that wouldn’t tear up they was black and white and they had the red soles on them, I cut the tongues out and gave them to my brother to make slingshots and I still had to wear them. They were ugly shoes, they wouldn’t tear up for nothing. I tried everything, walking down the [inaudible], make me put them on then they didn’t have no bottoms in them, the other shoes, they put cardboard
in them. They would be soaking wet by the time we got to school but you still had to go. We didn’t have days off like the kids do now. I hated walking. We never had a lot. My dad worked for J. C. Jones and sometimes they gave you an old piece of box and when they got done with it ([inaudible]) glad to get it. We used to ride bikes and play a lot of softball. Those kids from up on the other side of Otts Chapel, they came over our way to play ball all the time. We played softball all the time. We had a lot of yard a lot of room… blackberries, pear tree. The Lewises they came sometimes, not a lot, mostly the Earls.

Roberta: When you say “the other side” meaning?

Mrs. Webster: Meaning off of Otts Chapel.

Roberta: Who were the Lewises?

Mrs. Webster: They went to school there. I went to school with Rosetta and her brother named Don I went to school with Don. Who else went there?

Roberta: Do you think any of those folks are around?

Mrs. Webster: Yes, well Don and them still live on Pleasant Valley Road.

Roberta: Yes you are right because I interviewed her and? I have so many names rolling around in my head I forget.

Mrs. Webster: There was the Hayman’s too they lived – the Congos they had a great big farm out off Old Baltimore Pike like you are going towards Maryland. [Inaudible], Eleanor Rebecca, Williams, another brother, his name is Arthur, they went to the school too.

Roberta: Are any of those around because I talked …

Mrs. Webster: They all live in Wilmington I think.
Roberta: I am trying to get a hold of some Congos other than Bishop Congo, I’ve talked with him.

**Mrs. Webster:** You’ve talked with him?

Roberta: Yes, I might go back.

**Mrs. Webster:** [Inaudible] He might can tell you [inaudible].

Roberta: Did you ever get ill that you had to take time off from school?

**Mrs. Webster:** No, if you got a cold do you know what they gave us? Sugar and better and kerosene on a spoon. They’d get the oil out, put a little bit of butter and sugar and you had to take it and if you got a chest cold they’d fry onions on a stove, make you a rag cloth, when it cooled off they put it on your chest, pin it to you.

Roberta: Where did the kerosene remedy come from? That, I never heard that one.

**Mrs. Webster:** The lamps, didn’t have electric.

Roberta: But why use kerosene to help you get better?

**Mrs. Webster:** They said it worked, I don’t know why but that’s what they gave you. I said now it would kill you. We didn’t have a lot of sickness back then like it is now. We had cows, pigs, goats, chickens, ducks. We ate a lot of chicken and duck and pork.

Roberta: Did you have responsibilities for any of that?

**Mrs. Webster:** Oh yes.

Roberta: What did you do?

**Mrs. Webster:** I had to carry water from our lane we had to go across a ditch with a wagon and put these big milk cans in it and fill them up and then you
had to get the chips, after they cut wood, we had to get up all those chips and put them in another bucket to start the fire in the morning [inaudible].

Roberta: When you say across…now you are on Old Baltimore Pike and you say going across the ditch is that across the other side of Old Baltimore Pike?

Mrs. Webster: Across the road. Right across the road where the Davises lived, there was a big ditch there and we would have to get water there. They got water there too. My brother and my aunt used to go swimming when it rained, they would go out there because the water would be so high it would flood the road. They used to go swimming in that water. Get your water every day and chips every evening.

Roberta: Now you were about how old when you’re recounting this? How old were you?

Mrs. Webster: When we had to do all that work? Probably around maybe 8. Started combing hair when I was probably 11. My mom would help us learn.

Roberta: So you had responsibilities of the little ones.

Mrs. Webster: Yes, my sister too. All of us. Had to bath the little ones. We had to bath everybody in one tub of water. That’s the way it was. Pour more water in it when it got cold. Had water on the stove to keep it hot. A block of ice in the refrigerator. I said I’d never wanna’ go back and live like that.

Roberta: Not the good old days for you, huh?

Mrs. Webster: No.

Roberta: So how did you folks get around? How did your family get around? Did you have transportation?
Ms. Webster: My dad had a car.

Roberta: What did he have?

Mrs. Webster: He had a big, old, ugly car, a Buick I believe.

Roberta: You said he worked for J. T. Jones, what was J. T. Jones?

Mrs. Webster: Construction, he worked there until he left. I got it on his obituary, he was there for a long while, thirty some years I believe.

Roberta: He retired from there?

Mrs. Webster: Retired and then he worked for another company.

Roberta: What was the school day like for you, you know, you trudged through, you know this rain or this snow or whatever.

Mrs. Webster: It was fun because they had like 4 rows, first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade and whatever row was first – first grade when she got done teaching them then they would go out and then we’d go out. Different ones would go out and play while she was teaching somebody else.

Roberta: And who was your teacher?

Mrs. Webster: Minnie Ryder. My brother and them had another teacher, Miss Body.

Roberta: Oh yes, Miss Body.

Mrs. Webster: My brother and them had her.

Roberta: Now were your brothers older?

Mrs. Webster: Yes.

Roberta: Okay
**Mrs. Webster:** He went with the other set of girls like Ernie, and Nora Thompson she passed last year. He went to school with all of them.

Roberta: Thanks, I appreciate it. Oh, we were talking about your classes you know at school. So you went for 4 years so the school was down to 4 years by the time you went in.

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes, well by brother and them went, I think they had 5 years.

Roberta: Okay they were gradually shutting it down then weren’t they?

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes.

Roberta: So what was, like what activities when the school day started for you?

**Mrs. Webster:** We would raise the flag first, then we would ring the bell and get in line and the first grade first, then second, then third, then fourth, that's how you went in. Go right to your seat. Sometimes she would start with the fourth grade so they could go out first.

Roberta: Were the students pretty orderly when they got in line?

**Mrs. Webster:** Oh yes you better had, they didn’t play back then, they would tear you up. Get a beating. You would have to stand in a corner. Can’t beat no kids nowadays? that’s what some of them need. We used to have monkey bars, swings, dodge ball, we had all that. It was fun.

Roberta: Do you remember having visitors to the school like somebody from the Board of Education or a health, nurses or anything like that?

**Mrs. Webster:** No, I don’t remember any nurses.

Roberta: Like a superintendent coming once?

**Mrs. Webster:** No. She had a boyfriend come. He’d come out there.

Roberta: So the years that you went were from what to what again?
Mrs. Webster: One to four.

Roberta: And that was 1960 something, right?

Mrs. Webster: Probably.

Roberta: ’59?

Mrs. Webster: Probably somewhere around there. I was born in ‘46 so I probably went to school ’52, somewhere around there. You started when you were 6.

Roberta: What about the activities that she had that you remember that she had the students do? Besides, in addition to your classwork?

Mrs. Webster: She had parties like an Easter egg hunt, Halloween.

Roberta: What was the Easter egg hunt like?

Mrs. Webster: Like? Outside.

Roberta: So did she hide things?

Mrs. Webster: Yes.

Roberta: Did she do that before school started or

Mrs. Webster: We stayed inside and she would take a couple kids out with her and help and hide ‘em. She still gave you a prize.

Roberta: So that’s what she did, she would give a prize for what?

Mrs. Webster: For as many eggs and the ones that helped out. We used to play pin the tail on the donkey and bob for apples. It was fun.

Roberta: Were some of the eggs in the woods?

Mrs. Webster: Yes, on the edge, she didn’t want us to go back in the woods by yourself.
Roberta: So the woods area was kept pretty far back from the school?

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes we weren’t allowed to go back there in the woods.

Roberta: Outside of the class curriculum did she teach anything else you know like home ec or music or anything?

**Mrs. Webster:** We had music but not home ec.

Roberta: What was that like, the music?

**Mrs. Webster:** Just like we would sing. We learned a lot, we did have music.  
[inaudible]

Roberta: Did you like math?

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes, I didn’t like reading. I don’t know why. My mom read a lot. Books and books and books. She’d make you read. I guess that’s why because she would make you read. You had to learn how to read.

Roberta: Do you know what type of reading she did?

**Mrs. Webster:** Any type of books she could find. Love stories, westerns, she read any kind of book. When we would go to the store she would get magazines different thinks with the garden. We planted a lot of stuff, tomatoes, corn and string beans and greens. We had a big garden. Squash and cucumbers. We had all that.

Roberta: Tell me about that, preparing the garden…

**Mrs. Webster:** My grandfather, he had a horse and a plow. He would plow it up. We would go to his house and plant the seeds. They canned tomatoes and they canned a lot of stuff, string beans and all day they cooked cabbage. How come it took all day to cook cabbage. [inaudible] They would put it on in the morning when we would go to school. They would be up like at 5:30 or 6 o’clock - we would come home from school and the
cabbage was still on the stove. Now you can cook cabbage in 20 minutes, the same way you would cook soup all day.

Roberta: So they had it on a real low flame?

Mrs. Webster: A wood stove, wood but they cooked it all day.

Roberta: Interesting.

Mrs. Webster: All day long, when we would come home from school it was still cooking. All day.

Roberta: Did you ever ask them why?

Mrs. Webster: No, better not. I’d say is it done yet? Nope, won’t be done till 5:30 till 5:30, it was dinner time.

Roberta: So with it having cooked all day was it soft, was it chewable?

Mrs. Webster: Yes, because they made bread and yeast, have it by the stove and push it down, make the homemade doughnuts and stuff like that. They made all their bread, rolls, biscuits.

Roberta: Did you learn to cook from your mother?

Mrs. Webster: Yes because when she started working when you came home from school you would have to cook. I learned from her, everything. We used to have the same thing on Fridays. We used to have hot dogs and beans. Sundays we always had chicken or ham. Sometimes on Thursday she would get crab cakes. She would make them and she worked on a turkey farm, a lot of turkey. My dad used to like to mix everything that was left out of the refrigerator. He would dump it in one pot and that’s what we ate. I don’t care what was left, it was in one pot, big pot.

Roberta: How did it taste?
Mrs. Webster: Sometimes it didn’t taste too good. Sometimes it was all right I guess, it depended on what was in it. We ate it anyway. We didn’t have no choice. Cereal wasn’t too good. We always had Cream of Wheat or Oatmeal and then they came out with them bags of wheat puffs and stuff.

Roberta: Yeah, what was your family’s reaction to you know, to commercial foods you know, I know that there is a big difference between growing your own and eating it, the vegetables, and meat.

Mrs. Webster: We didn’t watch a lot of TV because we didn’t have TV unless we went to my Grandmom’s and then when my grandfather and them ? from us they got TVs we watched it a lot.

Roberta: The cereals, you know the manufactured cereals versus what you folks would eat I mean what did you [inaudible]

Mrs. Webster: The Oatmeal and the Cream of Wheat.

Roberta: Right and then you said they came out with puffed wheat and all that kind of stuff. What did you think of it?

Mrs. Webster: Yeah, my brother and them liked that a lot because it was a change from all that Oatmeal. We had oatmeal…

End of Tape 1 side 1.

Begin Tape 1, side 2.

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins, this is tape 1, side B and I am here talking with Betty Webster about her experience growing up in Iron Hill. From the other side of the tape you were telling us about the difference between cereals and how your brothers liked the new stuff.
Mrs. Webster: They liked the wheat puffs and rice puffs, they got tired of Oatmeal and Cream of Wheat. We only got one kind of cookies, fig newtons.

Roberta: Is that right?

Mrs. Webster: Yeah.

Roberta: Did your mother or your grandmother make cookies?

Mrs. Webster: Yes sometimes but they always bought the fig newtons. There were others but that’s the only kind of cookie they got she said take what I buy so we had fig newtons a lot.

Roberta: Did the school have, did you remember, have like activities, like social activities?

Mrs. Webster: We used to have like, this guy used to come and do, what do you call it, like a magic show. His name was Blackburn, I can’t think of his first name but he used to come and do some shows for us.

Roberta: Now did he come frequently?

Mrs. Webster: No, not that much.

Roberta: And his name was Blackburn?

Mrs. Webster: Yes.

Roberta: Was that his stage name or his real name?

Mrs. Webster: That was his last name, I don’t remember his first name.

Roberta: Was this during school or after school?

Mrs. Webster: After school.

Roberta: So the community would…
Mrs. Webster: Yes, the community went. Families came to the magic show.

Roberta: So how did you like it?

Mrs. Webster: Good. Something different.

Roberta: So the school was used as a community center, is that right? Tell me

Mrs. Webster: Sometimes.

Roberta: Did the parents meet there and discuss things with teachers?

Mrs. Webster: I don’t remember.

Roberta: They didn’t have parent-teacher meetings?

Mrs. Webster: No.

Roberta: What other social activities do you remember? Like around the holiday
times, were there any holiday activities, Christmas?

Mrs. Webster: No, we didn’t do nothin’ for Christmas.

Roberta: Do you remember whether outside of your workbooks, your school
workbooks, whether there was a library of sorts or a book for extra
reading?

Mrs. Webster: We had some at school but you weren’t allowed to take them home.
You had to read them there.

Roberta: Was time set aside if you wanted to read?

Mrs. Webster: Yes, she set times, sometimes we just had a class for just reading and
she didn’t teach if you wanted to read, so we had time to read. I didn’t
like reading so it didn’t bother me.
Roberta: I was just going to ask you if there were any books you remembered if you had any favorites there.

Mrs. Webster: I didn’t like reading.

Roberta: With your interest in math and you enjoyed math did you get an opportunity to help the other students?

Mrs. Webster: Sometimes there was only 2 students there was only 2 of us sometimes in a class. Sometimes in the first grade there would only be 2. Maybe second grade might not be but 2 or 3. Sometimes they only had 1. So it depends how many there were there at the time.

Roberta: And why would that be?

Mrs. Webster: Because some of them had already left or go to another school. Someone just startin’ might not only be but one startin in the first. Maybe two in the second.

Roberta: The enrollment for that year was just that many students. I see. Do you remember what the school looked like on the outside, you know like the color, what color was the school?

Mrs. Webster: It was like a gray color, dull color.

Roberta: What about the lighting on the inside?

Mrs. Webster: It wasn’t bad, ceiling lights plus they had lights from the windows. I don’t there was no shades on them. Some times we had to go clean them.

Roberta: Who generally did the maintenance for the school, do you know?

Mrs. Webster: No, I remember we used to have to go clean it with my aunt. Sometimes my grandfather got to go. He would take us and we would go up there and clean.
Roberta: So was this something that each individual family took turns doing or was it just your grandfather?

**Mrs. Webster:** My grandfather I guess cause he always? if it wasn’t me and my other aunt it would be somebody else would have to go and clean it.

Roberta: What was your grandfather’s name again?

**Mrs. Webster:** Maynard Earl.

Roberta: Do you know whether or not the state hired him to do that?

**Mrs. Webster:** I don’t know.

Roberta: What about heating in the school, do you remember what the heating was like?

**Mrs. Webster:** No, it wasn’t cold.

Roberta: Did they use a wood stove? They had a furnace probably by that time.

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes.

Roberta: After, I’m going to move on and I’ll come back to Iron Hill and if you think of anything please jump right in. Where did you go after Iron Hill?

**Mrs. Webster:** Middletown, Louis L. Redding.

Roberta: And how long did you go there?

**Mrs. Webster:** I left when I was in the 11th grade.

Roberta: How did you adjust to the change, I mean did you feel like there was a change going from Iron Hill.
Mrs. Webster: Big difference. Never seen so many people. Scared. Didn’t know your way around. It was terrible. Everybody had a hard time when you first started. You had to catch the bus. Just find your way around. It was different.

Roberta: Did you get any, I guess your parents probably knew which bus for you to catch.

Mrs. Webster: There was only one bus. One bus picked up everybody from Otts Chapel all the way around down Pleasant Valley on our side, Old Baltimore Pike. They picked up all the kids. Going towards Middletown was [inaudible]

Roberta: What were their names?

Mrs. Webster: Bruce Andrews.

Roberta: Bruce Andrews?

Mrs. Webster: Bruce Andrews and they had the Grinnages, baby Janice and big Janice ?, Fred Grinnage. We picked all them up.

Roberta: Where did the Andrews live?

Mrs. Webster: Just like you are going towards Middletown on a back road, it was a long road, they lived back in there. Had to pick Marion up? she drove a bus, she had 2 kids, I forget their names Calvin they called the girl papoose ? She went to Middletown with us too.

Roberta: Did they have anybody, where you, the students from Iron Hill, were they given any help to adjust? Did anybody kind of keep you under their wing there at the school and kind of…

Mrs. Webster: No they just pulled up and left you out and you go to the office and find out where you had to go [inaudible] nope, you got there and a whole
bunch of kids, all of us had to go to the office to find out where you go, what room, teacher. I used to have to write down everything because I was scared. It was a big school, you’d get lost. Big difference.

Roberta: How were the teachers?

Mrs. Webster: I had a good teacher.

Roberta: So as time went on…

Mrs. Webster: You got accepted, you fitted in with the rest of ‘em. Had a lot of friends. I met a lot of girls, I stayed overnight and they come and stayed with me. It was nice.

Roberta: So just the school structure, the educational structure and the activities were so different, did you find…

Mrs. Webster: We had home ec, cooking, sewing, different. I liked sewing, made my sister’s? sewing, home ec, cooking. We already knew how to cook so we fit right in.

Roberta: What were some of the other advantages this school offered that you didn’t have before?

Mrs. Webster: Gym. We had gym. We liked gym. We never had gym class before. We had science, we never had a project where we had to open up a frog or something like that. Dissected all that stuff. We didn’t have that. That was different.

Roberta: What did you think of that?

Mrs. Webster: Scared at first but we learned to do it. I didn’t like to take my clothes off in front of people for gym but you had to do that too. I used to look around, be scare and you would be scared. Got used to it.

Roberta: Let me ask you so how long did you stay in Iron Hill?
Roberta: You mean, live?

Roberta: Yes.

**Mrs. Webster:** [Inaudible] on Whitaker Road so I stayed there until I was, I left home when I was 18.

Roberta: And then where did you move to?

**Mrs. Webster:** Newark.

Roberta: Okay. Why did your family move from Old Baltimore to Whitaker Road?

**Mrs. Webster:** Bigger house, more rooms.

Roberta: Did you like it?

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes.

Roberta: So when you moved there were you still going to Iron Hill?

**Mrs. Webster:** No.

Roberta: By that time you were going to Middletown?

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes.

Roberta: Did Miss Ryder have to discipline?

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes.

Roberta: What was the situation, what did she have to do?

**Mrs. Webster:** Sometimes the boys liked to hit, most of the times she would get a chair and make them sit in the corner, face the corner. You couldn’t talk. You had to stay there all day. She would let you eat your lunch and put you back there in the corner a lot of times. That one boy was bad,
Arthur? and so was Don? he was bad and Bob, I think he was ready to leave when I came but he used to like to throw stones. We had a lot of stones out there on the playground that he liked to throw.

Roberta: And who was this, Bob?

**Mrs. Webster:** Bob Earl, Robert Earl.

Roberta: Robert Earl?

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes, he had to sit in that corner all day on that chair.

Roberta: So what happened, he had to sit in the corner all day, did they miss their lessons? Did Miss Ryder let them make it up?

**Mrs. Webster:** They had to make it up.

Roberta: How did they make it up, was it homework that they took home or?

**Mrs. Webster:** She would make them stay and you had to do it the same day, he didn’t get no time off. Everybody had to walk home anyway so sometimes you had to walk by yourself if you was in the corner.

Roberta: So from what you’re saying your lives were pretty full, pretty busy. You didn’t have any time that was unaccounted for.

**Mrs. Webster:** No, because Sunday we had to go to church. Sunday School and then church, all day. Went home, changed, get your wood, get your water and do whatever else you had to get for school for Monday. One time we had to go clean the bathrooms at the school and straighten up. Sweep. My grandfather wouldn’t mop, we had to sweep the floor and mop it up. The bathrooms.

Roberta: Was there anything in particular that you liked to do? Something that you enjoyed?
Mrs. Webster: Miss Ryder [inaudible], ring the bell was good…time to come in and time to go out.

Roberta: Did you get that chore a lot?

Mrs. Webster: No, she gave it to everybody.

Roberta: Okay.

Mrs. Webster: Gave everybody a chance to ring it.

Roberta: What about when you were home, was there something you enjoyed doing you know, people have things that they like to do, they like to build things, they like to play by themselves or they like to play with the other children?

Mrs. Webster: [inaudible] …there was too many of us. We had time to talk at night but then you can’t talk too much – time to go to sleep, time to get up, we didn’t have a lot of time. The weekends you had to work. Sometimes they’d make us go to this place and pick tomatoes all day, on the wagon, put all of us on the wagon and go up there to, I guess it was called Folks, they had a big tomato…we would be there all day picking tomatoes and ? they used to come back and get us. We didn’t have a lot of play time.

Roberta: What do you remember about Miss Ryder as a teacher being like?

Mrs. Webster: She was nice. She was a good teacher. She took her time with you. If you didn’t understand something she would help you. She was good. She was always the emcee at our church. They called them emcees back then but she always did everything, for everybody’s funeral, everything, she done all that. She played the piano. She was good.

Roberta: She was very active in the community?

Mrs. Webster: Yes. She did everybody’s funeral. Everybody’s.
Roberta: Now she lived in…

Mrs. Webster: She lived in Newark, she passed away too.

Roberta: Miss Ryder was the last teacher at Iron Hill?

Mrs. Webster: Yes.

Roberta: Did she have any relatives do you know?

Mrs. Webster: She had some nieces, her husband passed too. She was related to Matthews. She was related to those…Roleen Matthews, Wayne Matthews.

Roberta: ? did I have that name down here before? No. You said Roland Matthews?

Mrs. Webster: Roleen.

Roberta: R-o-l-e-n-e are these folks around?

Mrs. Webster: Rolene lives over in, I think she lives in West Chestnut Hill or something ?, she got married. I don’t know if she is still there or not.

Roberta: That was her niece.

Mrs. Webster: They were related some kind of way, I don’t know how.

Roberta: And then the other person that you had mentioned?

Mrs. Webster: Her brother, Wayne.

Roberta: This was Miss Ryder’s brother or Rolene’s?

Mrs. Webster: Rolene’s

Roberta: And Matthews is his last name?
Mrs. Webster: Yes.

Roberta: Is he around?

Mrs. Webster: [Inaudible] I don’t know.

Roberta: It would be kind of interesting to get a picture of who she was, you know, from another perspective, from a relative, that kind of thing. You mentioned a family of Haymons. Is that Ham or Hay?

Mrs. Webster: Hayman.

Roberta: Where did they live?

Mrs. Webster: They lived on Old Baltimore Pike.

Roberta: Oh really? Okay.

Mrs. Webster: They lived down there with the Congos. They had a great big house.

Roberta: Who do you…

Mrs. Webster: Bishop Herman would know them, he’s related to the, his nieces I think.

Roberta: So he would be able to hopefully give me a contact? I know there is some Haymons in Newark.

Mrs. Webster: Yes, it’s like a different set.

Roberta: Right because there is 2 different spellings. ? and I were supposed to get back and talk again anyway. I don’t think I can think of anything else I wanted to ask you about the school and your time there. You already told me about lunch well lunch and recess what was that like? Now did you bring lunch? You brought your own lunch?

Mrs. Webster: Yes brought your own lunch, usually peanut butter and jelly everyday. I don’t even eat it no more. Once in a while you would get baloney and
cheese, not very often. Peanut butter and cookies, peanut butter and jelly, that’s what we had.

Roberta: And so when you finished lunch and when you had recess did Miss Ryder ring the bell, everybody went at the same time or you went out when you finished lunch?

**Mrs. Webster:** Finished lunch and you went out. Everybody went out. She went out too and she watched, she made sure you didn’t get into nothing. She would go sit on the steps sometimes. Sometimes she would correct your homework and somebody else would have to be the lookout. She was a good teacher.

Roberta: What else can you tell me that I might not have touched on that you remember about going to Iron Hill?

**Mrs. Webster:** Did I give you the names of any of the Butlers that went?

Roberta: No.

**Mrs. Webster:** Howard Butler went and Joanne and Lena, she went, Lena Todd.

Roberta: I spoke with Lena.

**Mrs. Webster:** Did you?

Roberta: Yes, she and her mother were one of the first ones that we spoke to. Robert Grinnage, Don Lewis.

**Mrs. Webster:** Okay.

Roberta: Are the two Butlers that you gave me, are they around?

**Mrs. Webster:** Yes, they live in Newark there somewhere.

Roberta: Do you think that your experience going to Iron Hill was a good one?
Mrs. Webster: Yes. Some of the things we learned at Iron Hill, when we got to Middletown some of them hadn’t even done none of that. I thought it was good because we were like ahead of them. I guess it’s because of the school being so small and when she taught, you learned. You didn’t have a choice. If you didn’t understand it then she would make you stay there and sometimes you stayed late. [inaudible] Until you would catch on to what she was talking about. We were like ahead of them.

Roberta: Did you feel that that what was there was that same kind of, when you went to Middletown school was there that some kind of commitment to making sure you learned?

Mrs. Webster: No, it was different. They didn’t help me there. If you didn’t learn then you was out of luck. They didn’t do a lot of teaching or help me.

Roberta: Was there effort like after schools hours if you needed it.

Mrs. Webster: We had to go home because we had to go on the bus. Either you did or you didn’t.

Roberta: What did you feel about the education there versus Iron Hill?

Ms. Webster: I think we had it better at Iron Hill. The teachers were different. Even like if you didn’t do your homework and you wanted to make it up maybe going to the library – Uh uh, they would send you to the office, I said, shoot, if you got a free period why can’t you do it.

Roberta: If you could have gone to Iron Hill for your entire schooling you know, all the way up to you know your entire school experience would you have preferred that over Middletown or would Middletown have been okay?

Mrs. Webster: Middletown was okay because you get to meet different people and learn different things, what they did. There it seemed like at Iron Hill it was just like you were secluded there. You might have 1 student. One
teacher, one on one level, that’s good but there you didn’t have it. The kids were hoopin’ and hollerin’ and we were looking around like it was crazy, how come the teacher is letting them make all that noise. She didn’t have that. They would curse you out and curse the teacher and all that.

Roberta: How did that affect you?

Mrs. Webster: I didn’t like that. We weren’t used to that. You got used to it. They would curse the teacher out, go outta the room and slam the door. The teacher let ‘em do it. Sometimes they would take their [inaudible] and bang their [inaudible] heads the teacher would bang their heads on the door and push them out the door.

Roberta: Were many of your schoolmates from Iron Hill with you in the class. Okay so you [inaudible]

Mrs. Webster: [Inaudible], everybody, yes. I caught up with my brother because he didn’t want to learn. He didn’t like it. He didn’t want to do nothing. We was in the same grade. I caught up with him? [inaudible] He didn’t want to do nothing. He didn’t even know the date or the day and the teacher gave him an A. I don’t even know what day it is. I still tell him this, do you know what day it is. He said no, I still don’t know what day it is? [inaudible] So you think a teacher is going to give you an A and you can’t even think of the date or the day.

Roberta: This is the end of tape 1, side B. This concludes today’s interview with Betty Webster, again this is tape 1, side B.