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## Iron Hill School Oral History Project

### Interview with Robert Grinnage

Date of Interview: August 19, 2008  
Interviewer: Roberta Perkins

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins. Today's date is Tuesday, August 19, 2008 and I'm interviewing Mr. Robert Grinnage at his home in Dunlea, New Castle, Delaware and he has been able to identify two people. One positively and another one who is a guess in this 1918 photo of the Iron School was what it looked like five classes of students. Mr. Grinnage, now if you could kind of explain for the tape the first person that you explained to me and identify where they are on the picture and then the second person **[inaudible]** the second person.

**R. Grinnage:** Yes, on the top left side he has a vague resemblance to the Congo family. They had a protruding short forehead with deep set eyes and they were light skinned so that seems to be someone that I recognize and then the next row down in the center comparing to pictures that we have of our family with their sister Carrie being an infant baby it seems and her hair is fixed exactly like Catherine wore and she seemed to be about ten or twelve and she is in the center in the third row from the front and the more I look at it the more I feel positive that it is her, but I don't know for sure but I feel that way.

Roberta: This would be your sister Catherine and does she spell it with a "C".

**R. Grinnage:** Yes, with a "C" and the next two **[inaudible]** my older brother was Ralph and I was looking for him on there, but I don't see anybody that resembles any of the other ones.

Roberta: And you said also about the Congo's around that age there were three Congo's that might have been?

**R. Grinnage:** Yes, around that age it was three of the Congo girls. The youngest I think was Marguerite and Emily and Blanch and they all had the same resemblance. If you saw one you would know the others. They were the original Congo's, the one that three generations later were undertakers.

Roberta: So in that 1918 time period so the original Congo family resided in Iron Hill.

**R. Grinnage:** Right off below Iron Hill down Old Baltimore Pike, that's where they lived.

Roberta: You know what? I'm going to pause this. Anything else you want to share about that time is fine or if you are finished that's fine.

**R. Grinnage:** Well I can't think of anything else. The time period seems to be about right too for a picture around that time.

Roberta: Is there anybody else who you think might be able to identify anybody in there from like a family photo. I know this is a long shot.

**R. Grinnage:** [inaudible] cause everybody's gone. I'm about the oldest one down there. Now see the Smith family and the [inaudible] all of them are gone and the Earl's, they were new comers comparatively speaking. They came in around 1920's. The Smith's that is someone I should try to remember. There was Ollie and that was Ollie the preacher [inaudible]. Ollie is still. [inaudible] One time it was quite a [inaudible] of our (?) people around Iron Hill.

Roberta: Quite a few of what?

**R. Grinnage:** Our people. Of course we weren't black then. [inaudible] We lived on they call Whitaker Road then and on that one was Miss Mary Green, Mr. Coons, Mr. John Taylor and right off Miss Smith lived on there. Now see that was that many different families. But now they're gone. See Miss Green's been gone and

I think [inaudible] and all them rocks and stones I didn't think they'd ever be able to build back in there.

Roberta: Somebody made, actually the woman who does [inaudible] made a simple map for me because I wasn't familiar with that area and here's Whitaker Road so if you can, so this is the school and this is where we'd be coming off of now and coming off of 95 and the school's on the right. So Whitaker Road is after the school? That's where St. [inaudible] church is.

**R. Grinnage:** Yes, this is the first road that goes off your right coming down 4 [inaudible] Old Baltimore Pike and this would be Whitaker Road. Now we lived about up in here.

Roberta: You lived close to Welsh Tract Road?

**R. Grinnage:** Right, right. Maybe 300 yards from Welsh Tract Road and see down, the quickest way down here this end see right up in here on this side was Coon's place and back over in here someplace is Mrs. Smith's place.

Roberta: I have a pencil and I'm going to mark those right there so [inaudible]. Correct? [inaudible] How's this?

**R. Grinnage:** Yeah, yeah that's it.

Roberta: Just put your last name in pencil and the other folks about where they lived.

**R. Grinnage:** I'm going to put it right here.

Roberta: Un huh, that's good.

**R. Grinnage:** G R I N N A G E that's right. Coon's is round about here and I'm going to try to get it right.

Roberta: [inaudible] this is Ronny's dad.

**R. Grinnage:** Now I think they spelled their name McCoons and oh, right up in here is John Taylor. T A Y L O R. I hope I haven't gotten that backwards and over in, just right about in here, over on this side, Miss Mary Smith.

Roberta: Ok so she would be before you got to Saint Daniels?

**R. Grinnage:** It was over on the other side and almost directly across. Now that, oh now Miss Green's got to come in there. Miss Green was close to us so she would be up in here see. Be closer, if I put it here would it matter? She would be closer to us than Mr. John Taylor and that was Marian (?) Green.

Roberta: Ok, this is good.

**R. Grinnage:** Now on Welsh Tract Road it was none of us but Cochran's. Cochran's lived right in here. That's where Bush (?) and them lived. See **[inaudible]**. Where is Cochran? I can't think of his name now. Now over on Smith Way now here was John Lum and then **[inaudible]** Ollie Smith and yes, we're going the right way. Ollie Smith and then it was, we lived in their house when we first moved, it was another house here, right about in here, James, James. Her other name was Sellie. Seelie James. I think I got them in the right way.

Roberta: What was Mr. Green's first name?

**R. Grinnage:** Ed. Her name was Mary.

Roberta: Mary, that's what I want because by the time I take it back to her I'll forget her first name and John Taylor that I remember. I'll write that down.

**R. Grinnage:** These people's name was two brothers and a sister. Ike McCoon.

Roberta: And what was the first name?

**R. Grinnage:** John.

Roberta: It was John also, ok. **[inaudible]**.

**R. Grinnage:** Now towards the [inaudible] where Ott's Chapel is going towards Mt. Pleasant.

Roberta: On the other side, Pleasant Valley Road.

**R. Grinnage:** So it would be up Welsh Tract Road, came out about here and here was Ed Webster.

Roberta: So what road is that? Ott's Chapel?

**R. Grinnage:** Ott's Chapel. See Welsh Tract Road runs right into it and then Ott's Chapel runs all the way down to Pleasant Valley and Route 40 and that was [inaudible] and the families are still there. They're still there, the Webster family but all the older ones are gone. See the ones that are there now are about third generation.

Roberta: Would they have gone to Iron Hill School?

**R. Grinnage:** Oh, they went. They went just before the school closed.

Roberta: This is great.

**R. Grinnage:** And down here is Pleasant Valley Road we get to Route 40. They've built a little community in there now. Several people live there but one time wasn't nobody but Mr. Miller lived down in there. Millers and [inaudible] and they would be down in here near 40 [inaudible]

Roberta: Yeah, yeah now everybody. So you think that, so you said down in that area now it's developed?

**R. Grinnage:** Yeah.

Roberta: Okay but before Mr. Miller. What was his first name?

**R. Grinnage:** Isaac and I can't spell that.

Roberta: I S S A C I think.

**R. Grinnage:** S S, A I C [inaudible]

Roberta: Now did any of that family go to Iron Hill?

**R. Grinnage:** See what happened they lived up on Iron Hill and after they moved they still came then later they started going to that other school on, down in Glasgow on 40.

Roberta: That might not be around here.

**R. Grinnage:** Fraser Road, Frenchtown Road.

Roberta That's way over at Saint Thomas Church.

**R. Grinnage:** Yeah. Because see they weren't too far from that and it was after you crossed over 40 see that was **[inaudible]**. Well that was most of them anyhow.

Roberta: Well that's good, that's really good.

**R. Grinnage:** Now, oh wait a minute, now where's the Iron school? Ok there's another one. Right along in here was a, right in here in by the school it was a house I recall. It was Miller, Taylor and that place is still empty. I don't know why they **[inaudible]**.

Roberta: Just haven't sold it yet.

**R. Grinnage:** Although I don't know what they ever did with it.

Roberta: Now did they go to this school?

**R. Grinnage:** Oh yeah, all of them went there and they were Finn(?) people. That's what they called them, that **[inaudible]** and look there were Finn(?)**[inaudible]** and this woman's name ended with a "yen" and I said are you Finnish and she didn't say. I said I knew because of the name ending and I think that was pretty good right in there. Those were the old names that owned(?) the land when I was coming up. Now of course **[inaudible]** **[inaudible]** Pleasant Valley Road see from, oh what was their name? But from where Miller farm was all on the right going

towards 40 they sold lots and a lot of the soul(?) people bought lots in there so you got a little community right in there similar to [inaudible].

Roberta: Down here, down Pleasant Valley Road?

**R. Grinnage:** Right and then you went all the way down just before you get to 40 [inaudible] just before you got to 40. That trailer park right in there that is Alberta Dye's trailer park. She was the daughter of Mr. Jake Dye and he was a little small farmer when after they died she got [inaudible] and she made a beer garden out of a bar and restaurant and this trailer park and that was Jake died(?).  
[inaudible]

Roberta: [inaudible]. Now did any of that family live in Iron Hill? These were separate ?

**R. Grinnage:** No. They went to Glasgow. Yeah, that's right they went to Glasgow course I got carried away for a minute. I went to Iron Hill but they were all like I said (soul) people. They had their own place around in there and see down a little bit further it was a place it was called Brooks Town. It was a family that Brook's and they had about four or five homes all in that area.

Roberta: Now when you say further down, further down Pleasant Valley Road?

**R. Grinnage:** Right and up towards your left towards Glasgow. Right on through Pleasant Valley Road it was, that was where Brooks, Maryland Roller Rink that crossed the creek and their place is right down on the property line I think extends right out to Pleasant Valley Road and that I heard that they weren't doing nothing to it and people were trying to buy it and they never seemed to get together. I know one time my brother was trying to get one out of them and they wanted so much of it they lived away, way up in New York and they never satisfied or actually when he first told me, my brother, he said that he'll sell it to you if you build him a home on it.

Roberta: Now your brother was Butch you said?

**R. Grinnage:** Bush.



Roberta: Butch ok.

**R. Grinnage:** Butch but we called him Bush(?). His right name was Owen but he was much younger than us. He wouldn't show up in [inaudible]. He [inaudible] was four years (?) older than I am.

Roberta: Mr. Grinnage this has been wonderful. This gives me much more than I had.

**R. Grinnage:** Well I hope so. Anytime that you think that I know something, if I don't know I'll tell you and then if I do know it I'll tell you what I believe it was. Because if I'm just going to talk I'm not going to say.

Roberta: Well we appreciate it. I might have to take you up on your offer at some point. It's ongoing. I'm going to stop the tape so you folks can get your air back. This ends this session, tape one, side A.