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Iron Hill School Oral History Project

Interview with Elsie Earl Bullock

Date of Interview: September 14, 2004

Interviewer: Roberta Perkins

Transcriber: Marcia Adams

Also present: Laura Mackie Lee, Museum Director, Iron Hill Museum of Natural History

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins. Today's date is Tuesday, September 14th, 2004 and I am here interviewing Mrs. Elsie Bullock a former student of the Iron Hill School and we are at the Iron Hill Natural History Museum here in Newark, Delaware. I am interviewing Mrs. Bullock as part of the Iron Hill Restoration Project and at this time I would like to thank her for taking the time to share her memories of attending the school. Thank you.

Elsie: Your welcome.

Roberta: Mrs. Bullock I am going to ask you some questions, if you could just give me your name and your date and place of birth.

Elsie: My name is Elsie Webster Bullock. I live at 1462 Old Baltimore Pike here in Iron Hill.

Roberta: And when were you born?

Elsie: March 16, 1939.

Roberta: March 16, 1939. Ok and can you tell me who your parents were?

Elsie: Emma and George Earl. My mother's name was Emma.

Roberta: Emma?

Elsie: Emma.

Roberta: And George?

Elsie: And George Earl.

Roberta: Ok and what was your mother's maiden name?

Elsie: Webster.

Roberta: Alright. Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Elsie: There was 11 of us.

Roberta: Do you want to give me their names?

Elsie: My oldest brother was named Francis, then Gertrude, Charles, James, Betty, Ernest, Brenda, John Milton and Janice. Do I have 11 of them?

Roberta: That sounds about right. I didn't do a quick count. Did you always live in Iron Hill?

Elsie: When I married I moved to Wilmington.

Roberta: So you were born here?

Elsie: I was born and raised here in Iron Hill.

Roberta: Were your parents born here?

Elsie: Yes. My mother was born in Marshalltown I believe and my father might have been born in Maryland.

Roberta: Do you know what brought them to Iron Hill?

Elsie: I guess - I have no idea.

Roberta: What about growing up in Iron Hill, what do you remember? Activities? Community members?

Elsie: As far as the community, we didn't do much, as a community thing. I don't ever think that my parents or grandparents got involved in any community thing but as kids we had fun growing up. We did things. We fished, during the summertime we fished and we picked berries and we did all kinds of things like running through the woods. There wasn't many things to do you know.

Roberta: Did you fish yourself?

Elsie: Oh yes.

Roberta: Do you remember when you first learned how to fish?

Elsie: Yes, I was about 7.

Roberta: What was that like?

Elsie: We used to go up here to Cooches Bridge. We used to walk up to Cooches Bridge.

Roberta: Hey, catching fresh fish, that's great. Do you remember who taught you?

Elsie: Myself. Maybe brother – he was 4 years older than me. I mean as far as putting the worm on the hook I did that myself because I am not afraid of worms and I am not afraid of snakes. I pretty much did that myself. My brother was always there.

Roberta: Which brother was this?

Elsie: Francis. My oldest brother.

Roberta: You mentioned one other thing – you picked berries. What kind of berries? Blackberries? Huckleberries?

Elsie: Blackberries.

Roberta: Were they pretty abundant?

Elsie: Oh yes.

Roberta: Where did you go to pick those?

Elsie: We used to go up Iron Side Road into the woods which is all built up now.

Roberta: Now from the direction of the school where is Iron Side Road?

Laura: The second one I think. The first one is Whitaker Road as you head west towards Elkton, the second one is Iron Side.

Elsie: That big hill, we used to go up there sledding in the wintertime. The sled would come down that hill.

Roberta: Did anybody ever get hurt that you remember? You didn't have to worry about traffic problems did you?

Elsie: Oh no. There wasn't no traffic. Dirt road.

Roberta: What about your family. Where they lived. Did your family own the property and the house where you lived?

Elsie: Yes, my grandfather owned the property.

Roberta: Ok.

Elsie: Right next door to where I am now.

Roberta: So your grandfather owned it. So your grandfather was here before your parents or ?

Elsie: No. We used to live in a big house up on Iron Side Road. I think they rented that and my grandfather bought property from my husband's father and he built a house and my mother had a house built here.

Roberta: So you all have been here for quite a while.

Elsie: Yes.

Roberta: When did you attend Iron Hill School? What grade?

Elsie: Oh first grade.

Roberta: Ok so you started in first grade.

Elsie: About '40 something. 1949 maybe.

Laura: So you were born in 1939 so it would 1945 right around in there.

Roberta: And you went to the sixth grade?

Elsie: Yes.

Roberta: What about activities that your family members did or other family members did in your community – what were some things. What were some things that people did for either leisure or holiday celebrations? In your case did just your family do them by themselves.

Elsie: Well most of the families got together.

Roberta: Was there one gathering place where they got together?

Elsie: Usually my grandmother, they usually did that at my grandmothers.

Roberta: And she lived?

Elsie: She lived on Otts Chapel.

Roberta: What did you do? What were some of the celebrations I guess?

- Elsie:** Well we did celebrate Christmas and we celebrated Thanksgiving. We would have Family Day, which they still have Family Day. The kids would be there with things like what you call hopping in sacks, rolling in the barrel, throwing the beanbag and that sort of thing.
- Roberta: Can you tell me a little bit more about Family Day? Is that something that is done through the church or is that something that several families do?
- Elsie:** No it's just something that's gotten together.
- Laura: Like a family reunion kind of?
- Elsie:** Kind of.
- Roberta: Also what I want to do at this point is mention that also here with us is Laura Lee, Director of Iron Hill Museum. What about birthdays? How were birthdays handled?
- Elsie:** Just the normal thing. We would have cake and ice cream.
- Roberta: But they were celebrated. That's good. Did your family or do you remember August Quarterly or was that more of a Wilmington thing?
- Elsie:** That was more of a Wilmington thing but my grandfather, Maynard Earl, he attended all those kind of things. Sometimes he would take me and Evelyn, his daughter, along.
- Roberta: Is Earl with an 'e' at the end?
- Elsie:** No.
- Roberta: E-a-r-l? Ok. So you never went?
- Elsie:** Yes he would take me and his daughter Evelyn. We were the two who would go with him most of the time.
- Roberta: What do you remember about it?

- Elsie:** Oh my goodness we had so much food and there would be so many people. I just remember the activity part of it because that's what we kids would be doing. We would never be involved in anything, just to go and play with the kids and have fun. Have cotton candy and stuff like that.
- Roberta: Do you remember how old you were?
- Elsie:** Oh my goodness, I would think between 8 and 10 when I first started going.
- Roberta: How important was church to you and your family?
- Elsie:** We attended church. I came out of the church when I was 13 mainly because we had a little disagreement with the minister. We didn't agree on some of the things in the Bible so but up until that point church was like Sunday School every morning you know.
- Roberta: Now when you said when you came out of the church due to a disagreement with the minister was that an individual choice of yours or did other family members?
- Elsie:** Everybody else stayed. That was my choice.
- Roberta: Just out of curiosity and you don't have to answer this if you don't want. Mrs. Bullock do you think religion and church influenced your life and I guess for you it's kind of like a two time period that you would be addressing, you know.
- Elsie:** I don't think that that particular church influenced my life in any way at all because once I came out of it I didn't go back to another church until I became a Jehovah's Witness.
- Roberta: How old were you then?
- Elsie:** We were married...I guess I was about 20.

Roberta: So you were out of the church for about 7 years? During that time did you do anything for yourself to continue or sustain your spiritual development?

Laura: What church did your family attend?

Elsie: This little church up here.

Laura: O'Daniels?

Elsie: Yes.

Roberta: I guess most of the people in the area did, didn't they? What about jobs? Do you remember what jobs a lot of the adults had in this area? Do you remember?

Elsie: A lot of women did cleaning. Railroad.

Roberta: Oh really? What work did they do?

Elsie: My father and grandfather worked on the railroad but there was a mill. A lot of men worked at that mill.

Laura: Dayett?

Elsie: No, no, Paper Mill on Paper Mill Road.

Laura: Curtis.

Laura: Mr. Grinnage also was there.

Elsie: That was my uncle. Donald Grinnage.

Laura: Donald Grinnage was your uncle? Ok, we've talked to Robert Grinnage.

Roberta: Was that a brother of his?

Laura: Donald Grinnage you said was your uncle, is he still living?

- Elsie:** Yes.
- Roberta: Do you know what they did at the railroad? You were kind of young, I guess you didn't need to know that.
- Elsie:** I don't really know what they did but I know my grandfather, if there was a wreck or something like that he would have to like get up in the middle of the night and go out. I think my father had something to do with the tracks or something.
- Roberta: What about you? Do you remember what your first job was?
- Elsie:** Yes I used to help a lady, her son had polio and I used to go to her and help her to give him exercises.
- Roberta: How did you come to that? How old were you then?
- Elsie:** I was about 10. She needed help because she couldn't turn him and she just asked me to come along.
- Roberta: So was that something that you did on a regular basis?
- Elsie:** No.
- Roberta: Or did she just call you periodically?
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Roberta: And she paid you for that?
- Elsie:** Yes, she would give me a little something out of what she made. It wasn't that much.
- Roberta: Was it somebody here in the community?
- Laura: Do you remember the family name by any chance?

Elsie: No I don't. I know they lived in Brookside. I can't think of it.

Roberta: Did they know your family, is that how they asked you?

Elsie: I don't know how she gave me the job.

Roberta: What were your interactions with the white community within this area as you were growing up? What were race relations like? What do you remember?

Elsie: We had to pass one another going to school. It was not always a good thing because someone or another would start a fight to the point where they would sic dogs on us. But then later on things got better. There were some of the white children that lived down by us. The McCormicks. We were always friends with them and the Nelsons that lived right up this road here, Whitaker Road. We were always friends with them. There were just so many other ones coming through from down this end.

Roberta: So down at this end, and correct me if I am wrong, there were not as many of the black students?

Elsie: No. Mostly they all lived in the other direction, down towards the Maryland line and Otts Chapel, Pleasant Valley.

Roberta: So for the most part that immediate community that you lived around everybody seemed to get along for the most part?

Elsie: Yes.

Roberta: How did sometimes the fights start. You said sometimes they would sic the dogs on you.

Elsie: I don't know who would start the fights. I don't know whether it was the whites or the blacks that started the fights. You know how boys are mostly. It would be the boys.

- Roberta: So it was the type of this thing that was just ongoing contention?
- Elsie:** Yes. Of course the parents would get involved at times.
- Roberta: How long did you stay in the Iron Hill area and the reason why I am asking that is that as you got older do you remember any experiences with discrimination you know as got a leader in the Iron Hill community or if you went to Newark for shopping or anything like that?
- Elsie:** No. As we got older, I mean you know, everything just got better. It just got better.
- Roberta: So for the most part with your experiences growing up the segregation of the times didn't adversely affect you?
- Elsie:** No.
- Roberta: Did people in the community here have businesses? Were there any people that you remember that had their own businesses of sort? It could take any form.
- Elsie:** I don't know if anybody had their own business.
- Roberta: What about politics? What do you remember about when folks would either register to vote or they would prepare to vote? Do you remember any people, any activities, any incidents around voting or campaigning?
- Elsie:** As far as voting I know that they would come around and pick up people that didn't have transportation.
- Roberta: Now who were the people that would be giving – that would be coming around – do you know who would be coming around and picking folks up to take them to the poles?
- Elsie:** My grandfather used to be one that would go and pick up people. It was just people in the neighborhood that had a car because everybody didn't

drive. A lot of older women didn't drive. My grandmother didn't drive a car.

Roberta: Do you remember anybody every pay for trying to get people to vote?

Elsie: As far as I know, yes they did that. I know my mother used to say that.

Roberta: How did they pay people? What did they use to pay people?

Elsie: Just gave them the money.

Roberta: Do you remember how much it was?

Elsie: Seven dollars, ten dollars. I'm not really sure. Some where around there.

Roberta: Ok so your grandmother was telling you this?

Elsie: And my mother.

Roberta: And your mother.

Laura: That was a lot of money.

Roberta: Then. It is. It's a lot of money now. Now did you yourself or anybody in your family go into the military? Join the military? Anybody get drafted?

Elsie: My brother did, Francis. My oldest brother. They didn't keep him, they sent him back home.

Roberta: Oh really? Why?

Elsie: I guess because, I mean he just didn't want to be there for one thing so he just didn't do what he was supposed to do.

Roberta: You've seen changes in Iron Hill from when you were a child and now, what are some of the things that you remember that were good that aren't here now? Because of all the changes?

Elsie: Well the fact that you didn't really have to lock your doors because my grandparents never locked their door. That was a good thing. We used to play outside till dark and didn't have to worry about anybody you know. Those were just some of the things, I mean like if you were going walking, say by yourself, sometimes people would stop and try to give you a ride even with [inaudible]. We would just take off running and just go. That's about it because you never knew their motives were.

Roberta: They weren't from the community, is that it?

Elsie: No.

Roberta: What are some things that you have seen change and you are glad that they changed?

Elsie: Just the fact that everybody in the neighborhood gets along with everybody. That's a good change.

Roberta: So it sounds like your time, your life growing up in Iron Hill was pretty comfortable. You were pretty happy.

Elsie: Yes, really. It was good. We didn't have the worry the kids have today.

Roberta: Along those lines of questions did you have any comments that you might want to make that I haven't asked before we kind of jump into the school bit. We will kind of start with the school day. When was the school year? What were the months? When did school start?

Elsie: September, just after Labor Day.

Roberta: Ok and then it went on into?

Elsie: To June. The middle part of June usually.

Roberta: What time did you have to be to school?

Elsie: 9 o'clock.

Roberta: And the end of the day was?

Elsie: 3

Roberta: How did you get to school?

Elsie: Walked.

Roberta: You walked? It wasn't that far? You still lived in the same general area where you are?

Elsie: Yes

Roberta: What was your day like once you got to school. Kind of walk us through it a little bit. What you remember. What was it like once you left home and you got to school?

Elsie: Well it was pretty much like any school day I mean you had to come in, get our seats, get our papers on the desk, that sort of thing. But mostly we used to have a stove in that corner back there and once we got in and settled down we would like maybe fix breakfast for those who didn't have breakfast. It was just the thing you did and the kids watched because some of the kids didn't have breakfast because they didn't have milk.

Roberta: Ok let me kind of ask a question here. How did that come about? When you say you fixed breakfast and by that I mean who fixed it and who supplied the food? What did you fix?

Elsie: Well for breakfast it would either be like hot cereal or cold cereal. So the teacher would help you know, mostly girls and we would fix the breakfast for those that didn't have any.

Roberta: How was that decided to do that?

Elsie: The teacher would mostly bring in things but then some of the kids would bring in things also [**inaudible**]. Most of the time we would make some sausages.

Roberta: This again was the girls?

Elsie: It was the girls.

Roberta: Did the boys ever help?

Elsie: Oh yes sometimes.

Roberta: Was it sort of like a home economics project for the girls. Did you learn? Did some of the girls – was this the first time they learned how to cook?

Elsie: I think most of the girls knew because at home you did that.

Roberta: Was it the older girls?

Elsie: Yes.

Roberta: 5th and 6th grade?

Elsie: I wasn't in 5th or 6th grade at the time. I did it at home. I used to help my mother with all the children. I was the oldest girl. I had to do a lot of things at home.

Roberta: So it could be any grade? Of the girls.

Elsie: Yes.

Roberta: How was it determined who did the cooking that particular day?

Elsie: Well they would rather be cooking than be ...

Robert: Ah, now we get to the crux of the matter

Elsie: Everybody wanted to volunteer to do something.

Laura: Do you remember when you would make lunch where in the classroom you would actually cut the potatoes?

Elsie: We did that in the little kitchen.

Laura: Back in this corner back here?

Roberta: So with your back to the school to the entrance to the right side of the front part of the room then?

Elsie: Yes.

Laura: Was there a stove back there?

Elsie: Yes there was.

Laura: Do you remember what else there was like did you have a little table to work at?

Elsie: Yes there was a little table and a little pantry and a refrigerator where we kept the food.

Laura: Oh you had a refrigerator back there?

Elsie: I want to say icebox.

Roberta: What kind of a stove was it because I know at one time there was a pot bellied stove.

Elsie: It was a wood stove. The boys mostly got the wood.

Roberta: Two burner? Four burner?

Elsie: It was big, had a big pot there.

Roberta: That's a skill in itself cooking on a wood burning stove.

Elsie: I love it.

Roberta: It's an art. After you would eat lunch what was recess like?

Elsie: We would go out. Some us would play softball, volleyball. There used to be like a dirt field over here. King of the mountain.

Laura: I heard that. Was there a pile still there?

Roberta: This is the end of tape 1, side 1.

Tape 1, side 2

Roberta: I was asking Mrs. Bullock about recreation recess after lunch and she was beginning to tell us about one the of activities, King of the hill. Did the girls play as well as the boys?

Elsie: Oh yes.

Roberta: What was that like? Was that one of the favorite ones?

Elsie: Yes that was one of the favorite ones.

Roberta: What other activities?

Elsie: We played like a said, volleyball, softball, kickball.

Laura: Did you have playground equipment when you went here?

Elsie: Yes.

Laura: Do you remember what you had?

Elsie: We had a softballs we had volleyballs.

Laura: Did you have a swing set?

Elsie: We had a swing set. Jump ropes.

- Laura: A seesaw or teeter-totter whatever they called it?
- Elsie:** Yes there was a seesaw and a thing that went around or whatever that was called.
- Roberta: Merry-go-round.
- Laura: Giant stride.
- Elsie:** Something that went around, yes.
- Laura: And you jumped on it?
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Roberta: Is that what it's called?
- Laura: I think Mr. Smith, no, somebody told us that thought it was the janustride and then I saw it in a catalog of playground equipment and it was called the giant stride. Do you remember anybody getting hurt on that or anything?
- Elsie:** You got hurt but if you tried to whirl it around.
- Roberta: How fast can we make this thing go? When it was time to end recess did the teacher ring a bell or how did that happen?
- Elsie:** Yes she rang a bell.
- Roberta: And how did the students line up to come in? Was there a boy line and a girl line?
- Elsie:** No we just formed a line.
- Roberta: I think I started to ask you this, what was the program like the rest of the day as far as once you came in after recess?

- Elsie:** For 6 grades in 1 room it was pretty organized. We all knew what we were supposed to do and that's what we did.
- Roberta: Now the teacher that you had was...what was her name?
- Elsie:** I had Mrs. Body to start with and Miss Minnie Ryder.
- Roberta: What grade were you in when she came? Do you remember?
- Elsie:** I think 2nd.
- Laura: You don't remember why Mrs. Body left, do you?
- Elsie:** No I don't.
- Roberta: Was there a required way of dressing?
- Elsie:** No.
- Roberta: As long as folks were clean.
- Laura: Were they the only 2 teachers that you had while you were here besides substitutes?
- Elsie:** As far as I remember.
- Roberta: And you did have a substitute?
- Elsie:** Mrs. Roy.
- Roberta: What about a library? Do you remember, was there a library that stayed in the school? Other than textbooks?
- Elsie:** Yes we had books. It had to have been in this room but yes we did have books that we could take out.
- Roberta: Do you remember what kind of books they were?

Elsie: The Swiss Family Robinson. We had books on a lot of different things, I don't remember what they were.

Roberta: When you had class work, did you have a notebook? Each student had a notebook or did you just have individual sheets of paper that the teacher would hand out?

Elsie: We must have had a tablet. One of those black and white things.

Roberta: One of those composition books? Did that go home with you every day or did that stay here? Did you have homework?

Elsie: That went home with us. Yes we had homework.

Roberta: Was there a lot of homework?

Elsie: No not really. Mostly because I guess we had time to do it at school you know when she would be with one of the other grades. We had to be quiet. There was a Mrs. Hanby that used to come up from Dover to collect our homework, our grades – Mrs. Hanby.

Roberta: Hanby? So she would come from Dover?

Elsie: From Dover, yes.

Roberta: Was she like an administrator?

Elsie: Yes and she would come up and collect the grades to be graded. After the teacher graded them she collected them.

Roberta: How often did this happen?

Elsie: I think twice a month.

Roberta: Ok so your teacher had already given you grades and she was just collecting the grades for each student. Ok. Do you remember anybody else coming to the school whether they be an administrator or a nurse?

- Elsie:** We did have a nurse but I can not think of her name. Somebody else might think of her name but I can not. I know we did have a nurse that would come in once in a while.
- Roberta: When you say once in a while, three times during the school year, or four? Every month?
- Elsie:** Not every month. Just once in a while.
- Roberta: So what happened if someone had an injury? Did your teacher take care of that? You didn't have a nurse's office to go to.
- Elsie:** No. We didn't have a nurse's office.
- Roberta: Headache, nosebleed, skin bleed, that kind of thing.
- Elsie:** Mostly call the parents.
- Roberta: Is that what would happen?
- Elsie:** We were basically healthy, we didn't have too many problems.
- Roberta: That's great.
- Elsie:** If you had a headache you would go notify the teacher. You would get over it.
- Roberta: So what else happened during the school day? I'm going to probably jump in and out of here when I was asking when you had your recess and when you had your assignment, class work.
- Elsie:** Clean the bathrooms, make sure the school, the floors was clean.
- Roberta: So that was part of the students responsibility too. Was there someone who was like a custodian who had a bigger responsibility for the maintenance of the building, do you remember?

- Elsie:** I think my grandfather, Maynard Earl.
- Roberta: Maynard Earl was. Were the parents – how involved were they in the school? Did the parents form a sort of PTA and they had input?
- Elsie:** I don't remember that part.
- Roberta: What about tests? You were talking about homework and then the grades being collected. What about tests? Do you remember taking any tests?
- Elsie:** We used to have to take tests.
- Roberta: How frequently?
- Elsie:** Maybe twice a month.
- Roberta: And were these tests on all the topics? History, math, English, spelling?
- Elsie:** Spelling.
- Roberta: What was your favorite?
- Elsie:** My favorite was English and spelling.
- Roberta: What was your least favorite?
- Elsie:** Math.
- Roberta: So many of us struggled with that. Do you remember was there scripture reciting in school? Was that part of the beginning exercises?
- Elsie:** No, we would salute the flag and sing that song.
- Roberta: The Star Spangled Banner?
- Elsie:** That's basically what we did and then the teacher would roll call.
- Laura: You don't remember any Bible verses or anything like that?

- Elsie:** I don't remember.
- Laura: Do you remember where your teacher sat?
- Elsie:** Right over there.
- Laura: Over there, ok. And where you guys sat?
- Elsie:** Right out here across.
- Roberta: They were in rows. How many
- Elsie:** Like, first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth. That's the way we sat.
- Roberta: How many students were there? On an average, each year you went.
- Elsie:** I have no idea, I just know the school was full.
- Roberta: Ok, yes it was always full wasn't it. Was there ever a time when there was more students than there was seats for?
- Elsie:** I don't think so.
- Roberta: Did the teacher ever engage some of the older students to help with the lessons with the younger students.
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Roberta: Did you participate in that?
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Roberta: How was that for you? Did that help you or do you feel like that helped you to learn your lessons a little better?
- Elsie:** I enjoyed it. Helping the younger ones with their work. I enjoyed it. I even did that when I went to Louis L. Redding. When we would have

Parent-Teacher Day they would assign a student to watch the class – I did that.

Roberta: So is that the school that you went to after Iron Hill?

Elsie: Yes.

Roberta: And what grade were you in?

Elsie: Seventh.

Roberta: What was that like for you?

Elsie: Different. Going from a one room classroom – it was different.

Roberta: Were you uncomfortable? Did it take you a while to adjust to it?

Elsie: Yes it did because when I started there the school was not large enough to accommodate all of us so we had to go to a church which was down the street a little ways from the school. That part wasn't good.

Roberta: So where was Louis L. Redding?

Elsie: Middletown.

Roberta: Middletown, ok. It's still there isn't it?

Elsie: Is it still there?

Roberta: Yes

Laura: They call it Redding Intermediate.

Roberta: I wondered if that was the same school. Did the teachers kind of help you to adjust?

Elsie: Yes.

- Roberta: I mean and how did the students treat you?
- Elsie:** Some were ok and some weren't ok. The name Iron Hill I think kind of started the thing like we thought we thought we were big and strong or something. Iron Hill kind of got to some of the students they were trying to take us on because of it.
- Roberta: Is that right? So was it friendly competition or was it did some students really take it seriously?
- Elsie:** Some of them really did.
- Roberta: Is that right?
- Elsie:** Yes. It was mostly the girls, the boys were fine.
- Roberta: No kidding. You want to tell us about that it sounds really interesting.
- Elsie:** Well you know you had like some competition on the playground but they got over it after a while. When they saw we didn't take anything from them they kind of got over it.
- Roberta: Isn't that funny. People use different kind of ways to initiate you so to speak. You have to prove yourself if you are going to come to this school.
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Laura: Was it a lot bigger than this school?
- Elsie:** Yes because we had to change classes and stuff.
- Roberta: How was that for you? I know when I first started it I always forgot something.
- Laura: Like where I was supposed to go.
- Roberta: I always forgot something like a pencil or a pen.

- Elsie:** It was basically getting to the next class on time and since we went to this church a lot of us were going to the church and we had to get back up that road to the school for the class from the church.
- Roberta: So how many classes did you have to go to the church for?
- Elsie:** Two classes I believe. First thing in the morning because we didn't have to go back after lunch.
- Roberta: Ok so you didn't have to break up that time because you were there for the 2 classes and then you went to the school building. That was good. It must have been fun when the weather was snowing or raining, huh?
- Laura: You went there just for 7th grade did you say?
- Elsie:** No, I went to the 10th grade.
- Roberta: Where did you go after that?
- Elsie:** Wilmington. Howard High.
- Roberta: Howard? And was that again a different experience? You went there for 2 years?
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Roberta: So you had to go from Middletown to Wilmington. What was the transportation? What transportation was used to take you and the other students?
- Elsie:** Well my grandfather, Maynard Earl, did take us in on the train.
- Roberta: He took you in on the train?
- Laura: To Howard?
- Elsie:** Yes.

Roberta: What time did you have to?

Elsie: 7:30

Roberta: You had to be at the train station at 7:30?

Elsie: My grandfather worked for the railroad.

Roberta: So you got driven from home to the train station and you had to be there at 7:30 and how long did it take you to get to Wilmington?

Elsie: It didn't take long. It depended on how many stops.

Roberta: What time did classes start?

Elsie: 9

Laura: How did you get to Middletown?

Elsie: Bus. Two buses.

Laura: You had buses?

Elsie: We caught a bus from Iron Hill to – one of them little towns down there and then from there to Middletown.

Laura: Were they big buses, little buses?

Elsie: These buses today are big buses I don't think that was a big bus like that.

Roberta: Was it full like by the time you had to make your first

Elsie: Yes because we had to stop and pick up some in that other little town.

Roberta: What was that like riding the school bus? Do you have any stories?

Elsie: No not really. It was ok. You know how the kids are – just hollering and singing.

Roberta: Let me jump back to the teachers at Iron Hill. Mrs. Ryder, that's who you had for most of the time. Do you remember where she lived?

Elsie: She lived on New London Road.

Roberta: Did she have her own transportation?

Elsie: Oh yes.

Roberta: Living on New London Road, was that her place? Did she rent it? Did she own it?

Elsie: I believe she owned it [inaudible].

Roberta: What was she like as a teacher?

Elsie: She was my cousin. (In a follow up telephone conversation "she was strict when she had to be. She had control. Those were the fun years of my life.")

Roberta: Ok so she was your cousin. What was she like as a teacher also?

Laura: Was she strict?

Elsie: Yes, she was strict I mean you had to do what you were supposed to do. As far as a teacher, yes she was strict.

Roberta: What about the other teacher before her?

Elsie: Mrs. Body was not as strict.

Laura: And if you didn't do what she said?

Elsie: Well you got punished. You had to stand in the corner or come and sit right along side of her.

Laura: Do you remember did anybody ever get spanked or anything like that?

- Elsie:** I don't think she spanked anybody.
- Laura: You would probably get it when you got home anyway.
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Roberta: So that was a pretty good deterrent for most kids. You had 2 teachers and they were both females. Is it safe to say they were both African-Americans?
- Elsie:** Yes they were.
- Roberta: What about funny incidents, do you remember students pulling pranks on one another or something happening that was out of the ordinary during your time there?
- Elsie:** There was an attic up in here and what used to be the boys bathroom me and a couple of girls decided one day when it was recess to come back into the school and go up into the attic.
- Roberta: I think we heard this story.
- Laura: We'll let you tell it.
- Roberta: Yes we want to hear your version.
- Elsie:** Somebody told on us. The teacher came in to the class room and the ladder...and switched our legs as we were trying to come down out of there.
- Roberta: So you were stuck up there is that it?
- Elsie:** We were stuck up there.
- Laura: Do you remember why you went up there?
- Elsie:** Just to see what was up there.

Laura: Just curiosity?

Elsie: We thought there might be something up there like some artifacts or something.

Laura: Was there anything up there?

Elsie: It was dark.

Roberta: And nobody thought they would need a flashlight, right?

Laura: Do you remember who you went up there with?

Elsie: Oh my gosh.

Laura: I can tell you. Lena, maybe one of the Smiths? Lena Dyer Satchell remembers that exactly the way you told it. She seems to remember she went up there to maybe throw little pebbles out the vent at the boys.

Elsie: She couldn't have done that because the vent had like little slats.

Laura: I don't think you could get anything out that - you are right because I went up there with a light. That's funny. Do you think Evelyn Smoot might have done it?

Elsie: It might have been Evelyn or Irene Grey.

Laura: I haven't heard that one. I've heard about the Smoots. We talked to Bill Smoot.

Roberta: Was there a family of Greys here?

Elsie: In Glasgow.

Roberta: Glasgow. So she came from Glasgow to go to school here?

- Elsie:** Yes. Billy too that's where he lived. (In a follow up telephone conversation, "and Evelyn Smoot, his sister.")
- Roberta:** So what happened with that incident? I mean the teacher – you got switched but did you get punishment beyond that?
- Elsie:** Well yes we had to sit in the corner.
- Roberta:** That's so embarrassing isn't it?
- Laura:** We used to have to put our hands on our heads when I was a kid.
- Elsie:** We didn't have to do it that day because Mrs. Hanby was coming in.
- Laura:** So that was why she was especially upset because she was about to show up.
- Elsie:** We didn't know when she was coming. We didn't have a phone.
- Roberta:** So you always had to be on your best behavior.
- Laura:** Do you remember any other incidents? Stuff like boys used to do?
- Elsie:** The boys used to do everything. They were ornery. They were always doing stuff. You mean like prank things?
- Laura:** Did your husband Carl go here when you went here too?
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Laura:** So you've known him since childhood. That's neat.
- Roberta:** Do you care to talk a little bit about what he was like as a student?
- Elsie:** No.
- Roberta:** Ok. What other pranks did kids do? We had an incident with what girls did, what was something the boys did?

- Elsie:** A lot of girls were scared of bugs and frogs. Everything really. That's one of the things the boys used to do. Scare the girls with whatever. I grew up not being afraid of that.
- Roberta: So did they like ever bring, you mentioned frogs, in to the class and stick it in somebody's desk? That kind of thing?
- Elsie:** I don't think they did that. It was mostly outside.
- Laura: At recess?
- Roberta: My son did that one time. He brought a rubber snake into the classroom. Some sometimes people brought lunches, they weren't cooked all the time right?
- Elsie:** Oh no.
- Roberta: How did you bring them? I mean did you have a lunch pail? A lunch bag?
- Elsie:** Most of us had bags.
- Roberta: What kinds of things did you have for lunch when you brought the lunch yourself?
- Elsie:** Sandwiches, fruits, a drink.
- Roberta: I am trying to think back at the time that you went to school and the containers that they had at that time. Were they cartons or were they glass containers?
- Elsie:** We used mostly glass containers. We didn't have cartons.
- Roberta: So you had to be pretty careful. So did you take them home after?
- Elsie:** Yes.

Laura: Do you remember anything about like your textbooks? Whether they were new or whether they were in poor shape or if you shared them year after year?

Elsie: We had to share them. I mean there wasn't textbooks for everybody.

Laura: So you might have shared a reading book? Ok.

Roberta: What kind of condition were they in?

Elsie: They weren't in bad condition. Some of the things were still good.

Roberta: This ends tape 1, side 2.

Tape 2 side 1.

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins, Iron Hill School Oral History Project with Mrs. Elsie Bullock, tape 2, side 1. I forget where we were.

Laura: I had just asked about textbooks.

Roberta: You were saying that the condition was good.

Laura: You were saying some of them were shared. You mentioned there was a wood stove. Was it the job of the students to start up the wood stove in the mornings?

Elsie: Yes.

Laura: Was it cold when you came in the morning when it was winter?

Elsie: No not really.

Laura: Was that mostly the boys?

- Elsie:** Mostly the boys.
- Roberta: So where did the wood come from?
- Elsie:** Out of the woods.
- Roberta: They had to chop it?
- Elsie:** Mostly break it up. The stove wasn't to heat the school we used that to cook.
- Laura: So you had a heater at that point.
- Elsie:** There was a heater in here as far as I know. It was never cold in here.
- Roberta: There was a pump room or something? Is that right? For the water?
- Laura: Do you remember where you got your water from?
- Elsie:** I don't think I ever drank no water here.
- Laura: It's really orange still. There is a lot of iron in it. You didn't have a water fountain or anything like that?
- Elsie:** No.
- Roberta: You brought your own water? Other than playing at recess was there anything like kids have today, physical ed, you know you had special exercise programs or was that just the playing you did out on the playground?
- Elsie:** We had May Day. One school would come here. A little school in Christiana. They'd come here or we would go there. We used to play like sports.
- Roberta: Was May Day the same as Field Day?

- Elsie:** Yes it was the same.
- Laura: Do you remember any other schools coming besides the Christiana school?
- Elsie:** I think it was mostly Christiana.
- Laura: Ok
- Elsie:** There were no other black schools around.
- Laura: Yes, that's the closest one.
- Roberta: Do you know how that came about? What was the purpose of May Day, Field Day?
- Elsie:** It was just the 2 schools get together I guess to interact.
- Laura: Was that usually at the end of the year?
- Elsie:** Yes. Usually in May. It used to happen in May.
- Roberta: What activities do you remember? I know we have been told about something called a corn shucking event. Do you remember anything like that? That was more like Mr. Grinnage's time.
- Laura: The early '30's. Do you remember what kind of games they played at May Day? Was it a lot of the same that you did at recess?
- Elsie:** Yes. We did the jumping in the bag thing.
- Roberta: Sack race?
- Elsie:** Yes. We played volleyball and softball.
- Roberta: That was an all-day affair?
- Elsie:** It was an all-day affair, yes.

Roberta: Did you look forward to that?

Elsie: Yes we did.

Laura: Did they have a cookout or anything like that?

Elsie: I think we did have hot dogs.

Laura: Do you remember if Iron Hill had a baseball team? I know that the kids played.

Roberta: Do you remember if there were like awards, if there was competition, were there competitive events during that Field Day and there were awards or was it just strictly for the

Elsie: It was just for sport.

Roberta: Just kind of coming together? Ok.

Laura: Jumping back to the building a little bit do you remember what kind of lights you had? Do you recognize these lights or didn't you really look at them? I thought I would ask anyway. What about the desks, do you remember if you could move them or if they were stuck to the floor?

Elsie: I think they moved. I believe they moved. Like the same old desk I've got at home.

Roberta: Did you get it from here?

Elsie: No.

Laura: Do you remember them using the classroom for anything outside of school like parties or dances?

Elsie: Yes, we used to move the desks and dance. The square dance thing.

Roberta: So it was like community activities.

- Laura: Or was that during class?
- Elsie:** It was just the school kids themselves had square dances sometimes.
- Roberta: Did the parents at any time have to pay for books or school supplies?
- Elsie:** No.
- Roberta: They all came from the school board? Ok. What about the outside of the school do you remember what it looked like? What color it was? Was there a driveway?
- Elsie:** There wasn't no driveway I know that.
- Laura: There was no driveway?
- Elsie:** Like what you see that is just to drive up.
- Roberta: What about the color of the school?
- Elsie:** It was gray or something I think. I think it was just gray.
- Roberta: It must have been very nondescript because people have a hard time remembering the color.
- Laura: Yes most people don't remember it all. A couple people have said gray.
- Roberta: What about the woods? Was it the same distance that it is now from the school? The wooded area? It didn't come any closer or was it further back or was it about the same? What about the upkeep of the building itself, the structure, the roof? Plumbing? Who was responsible for that do you know?
- Elsie:** I have no idea.
- Laura: Do you remember any pictures on the walls in the school or where the chalk board was or anything like that?

- Elsie:** I believe the chalk board was on the side.
- Roberta: Other than the teacher's desk in the front do you remember what was up here?
- Laura: It's hard to envision it with all the stuff here.
- Elsie:** It is because it doesn't look the same. She sat there, I think there was a map and some other things that had to do with her teaching.
- Roberta: She used a map for geography lessons?
- Elsie:** Yes. I just remember this big map that used to be up here.
- Roberta: Do you remember hearing any talk about the old school building or do you know anybody who might remember the old school building?
- Elsie:** My aunt would know anything about the old school building.
- Laura: What is her name?
- Elsie:** Mary Dorothy Grinnage.
- Laura: She went here too?
- Roberta: Mary Dorothy Grinnage what's her maiden name?
- Elsie:** Earl.
- Laura: Did she used to live up on Route 40 and Pleasant Valley Road?
- Elsie:** She still does.
- Roberta: Do you think she would mind if we interviewed her?
- Elsie:** If she was having a good day. She hasn't been feeling too good for a while.

- Laura: Is she in her 80's maybe?
- Elsie:** Not quite.
- Roberta: The railroad nearby, do you know anything about it? Memories? Is that the train that you would go out on?
- Elsie:** No it was in Newark. On Elkton Road , Elkton-Newark Road.
- Laura: Is that where you got on the train?
- Elsie:** No. In Newark. I don't know if there was a place down by ? 206
- Laura: But when you went to Howard you drove.
- Elsie:** We would catch a ride with my grandfather.
- Laura: Was it Otts Chapel Road because I think there was a train station.
- Elsie:** It's off of Newark-Elkton Road. The station is still up there.
- Laura: I know where you mean it's like a restaurant or something. Do you remember any of the names of the people you went to school with?
- Elsie:** I went to school with the Smoots, the Grays, Lena Satchell Todd.
- Laura: Were any of the Grinnages here at that point? Maybe the Moseleys.
- Elsie:** Moseley. Yes there was Grinnages. Jimmy Money, Williamses.
- Laura: There was a Gladys Williams.
- Elsie:** She was older. I know they were related to her I don't know what they were.
- Laura: There were still some Earls here?
- Elsie:** Yes, Earls. Thompson.

Laura: Do you know if Jimmy Money is still around here?

Elsie: Yes.

Laura: Does he live in Newark?

Elsie: I know he works at that kennel down at Pleasant Valley Road. I don't know where he lives.

Roberta: He works where?

Elsie: At the dog kennel.

Roberta: I wanted to ask you if I gave you a sheet of paper and you used the school as like the hub, the center, would you be able to draw me what you remember the area looked like.

Elsie: I'm not an artist.

Roberta: Squares and just name them. Think about it. There is no pressure I just kind of thought that was interesting because I guess here even though you don't feel like there was a community per se but because people lived amongst one another out here it just seems like there is, I get this picture that there was a group of people who were a community. I just depends on how you define 'community.' I am curious as to what it physically looked like when people lived here. You know some people walked through the woods to go home and come back and I guess there is a lot of folks who lived up and down Otts Chapel Road. Where did most of the people live in this area?

Elsie: Old Baltimore Pike, Otts Chapel Road and Pleasant Valley.

Roberta: Ok so you would have this school and folks would kind of be living this way or southeast. That would be interesting. Think about it. I think it would be kind of fun. I am going to ask some more people to do that to.

- Elsie:** It was basically the same as it is I mean like next door there was a house. In front of it there was a house.
- Roberta: Across the road?
- Elsie:** This one across the road.
- Roberta: There was just that one house?
- Elsie:** Well there was one right straight across here but basically what you see now except its been built up.
- Roberta: So there was just that one house. Was there like an orchard did that house have an orchard?
- Elsie:** Yes it did.
- Roberta: Was it a commercial orchard? Did they sell produce or was it more a family.
- Elsie:** There was a family down there. Leonard is still there.
- Roberta: What was their last name, do you remember?
- Elsie:** Oh my gosh he still lives there. Still lives in the brick house there. There is another house that Shakespeare lives in. Leonard lives right straight across here.
- Roberta: Is Shakespeare the last name?
- Elsie:** No Shakespeare I know that their boys would come play with my boys.
- Roberta: Let me ask you this. I am going to try and ask it in a non-convoluted way and it has to do with segregation. When you were in school and the type of education you got from your teachers what did you think of the quality of that education, you know, how did it feel to you from what you remember as a child, reflecting back.

Elsie: I think the education was basically good. Because when I went into 7th grade it wasn't like I didn't know because we had been taught well enough to go into a bigger school and get by.

Roberta: Do you think your teachers prepared you for the next level of education?

Elsie: Yes I do.

Roberta: Now if that quality had remained the same and segregation was continued, you know there wasn't the integration do you think that quality of education would have continued?

Elsie: I think so.

Roberta: I was just kind of curious you know.

Elsie: I mean you know you didn't just pass because a lot of kids got held back.

Roberta: Ok that's the kind of thing I wanted to hear.

Elsie: No, they did get held back. I never got held back but there were a lot of kids that got held back.

Roberta: So teachers needed to be sure you knew and understood.

Elsie: Like I said, Mrs. Hanby she knew that they knew what was going on so yeah she held back some of the kids that were not ready to pass.

Roberta: Do you think that was a good thing? For the students?

Elsie: I think so.

Roberta: One other question I wanted to ask about moving on from Iron Hill and when it came time for schools to integrate what were your experiences? Did you have problems? Did you have apprehensions before the school? How did your parents feel?

Elsie: Scared. I was going to Louis L. Redding School at the time. Basically our first students were Puerto Rican. Then when we got in with the white students we had Puerto Ricans too.

Roberta: At Louis L. Redding?

Elsie: We never had any white students here.

Roberta: Right.

Elsie: Not when I went.

Roberta: So your transition was alright.

Elsie: It was alright.

Roberta: Did you ever hear your parents when that ruling came down, did you ever hear your parents discuss it in any context in any because I mean it was something that was talked about before it actually happened and I was just kind of curious.

Elsie: No, I mean they were you know like we had Newark High School here our biggest thing was why couldn't I just go to Newark High School but that didn't happen. That was basically it you know because we had to go out of our way to go to school when the school was right there.

Laura: That's a long way to Middletown.

Roberta: Yes it is.

Laura: Today.

Elsie: I mean they were glad you know that it happened, that it changed.

Roberta: So at least they didn't express any concerns to you – I'm kind of asking the question as to whether you would have problems.

- Elsie:** (In a follow up telephone conversation, “no we never heard them say anything. There may have been a discussion at the PTA meetings.”)
- Laura:** You mentioned Mrs. Hanby came to the school – do you remember anybody else that would come on a regular basis. A lot of people remembered somebody like that coming but nobody else remembered a name. That’s pretty impressive because I can’t even remember all my teacher’s names. That was in the ‘60’s.
- Roberta:** I know I don’t.
- Elsie:** She was a nice lady that’s why I remembered her. She would come in and ask all the students questions. See how we were getting along in school and how things were going.
- Roberta:** How long did she stay when she was here?
- Elsie:** Sometimes a half an hour.
- Laura:** Do you remember anybody that went to school here that lived real close to the school like to you remember any house right down there?
- Elsie:** They were white. Most of the blacks lived further down.
- Laura:** Closer to the Elkton side? Ok. Did you have a piano when you were at school?
- Elsie:** I think we did that might have been what was there.
- Laura:** That’s what everybody else said.
- Elsie:** I couldn’t play it so I guess it didn’t matter.
- Laura:** Do you know if your teacher played it?
- Elsie:** Yes she did.

- Laura:** You said you didn't remember anything about the old school.
- Elsie:** No. I know somebody said there was one here but this is the only one I remember.
- Laura:** We've only talked to one person that actually kind of remembered that. Robert Grinnage because he went here in 1925. He lived up in Dunleith. I'm sure he is related to Dorothy and John. He had an amazing memory. Is there anybody you think we should talk to? Do you think your husband would be willing to talk to us?
- Elsie:** I'll ask him.
- Laura:** Ask him and I will call you in a few days. It's nice the more perspectives we get from different people that they remember something different and I will try to find Jimmy Money. Do you know if any of the Williamses still live around here? I don't even know if Gladys is still living. I met her daughter and she is a teacher in Dover. We talked to Ervin Thompson. Haven't met any of the Earls. Do you know if they are still around ?
- Elsie:** I will try and get in touch with somebody and have them give you a call.
- Laura:** Ok. Anybody you can think of and if they don't want to talk to us that's fine but we seem to get a better picture of it the more people we talk to.
- Elsie:** Yes because a lot of us don't remember the same thing.
- Laura:** Right. Exactly. Everybody seems to remember a lot. That's great. How about the Moseleys, do you know if they are still in town?
- Elsie:** I know they sold their house and moved to I don't know where. I do run into the mother once in a while so I can ask.
- Laura:** Where did they used to live?
- Elsie:** On Chapel Street.

- Laura: Oh I know where you mean right down there where I-95 goes over. They had a lot of kids right?
- Elsie:** Yes. Wasn't too many maybe 5 or 6.
- Roberta: It's all relative, huh?
- Elsie:** My mother had the most.
- Laura: I'm trying to remember Mrs. Moseley's first name. You told me but I don't remember.
- Elsie:** Evelyn.
- Laura: Evelyn, that's it. Yup.
- Roberta: Oh, one more question – did you have to during the school day did you have to recite? I mean were there times when you had to recite a poem?
- Elsie:** Yes.
- Roberta: Or something that you wrote? Was there a special place that you had to stand? Or sit?
- Elsie:** You had to stand right in front of the class. Facing the class.
- Roberta: Was that scary?
- Elsie:** As a kid, a little kid, no. As a grownup I would be more nervous than as a kid. I loved literature. I loved reciting poems. I memorized them just so I could.
- Roberta: Did you ever create any poems? Did you ever write any poems yourself?
- Elsie:** Not that I would recite.
- Roberta: Darn, that was going to be my next question.

Laura: Did your kids attend this school?

Elsie: My 2 oldest boy came here for about a year but then the school closed down.

Roberta: So they came in '59ish? That kind of thing?

Elsie: Yes.

Roberta: The school closed in '60? Did I remember that right or was it later?

Laura: I think it was a little bit later.

Laura: What were your children's names?

Elsie: Carl, Terry, Jean, Lorenzo, and Tony. That's it. Did you get Jeryl? Nobody ever spells that right.

Laura: I got Carl, Terry, Jean (who is a girl), Lorenzo, Tony, Jeryl

Elsie: And Arnold.

Laura: Arnold.

Roberta: That was a pretty large family.

Elsie: Jeryl is a girl too.

Laura: Ok, with a 'G'?

Elsie: No, its with a 'J'. Jeryl

Laura: Oh.

Elsie: I knew you wouldn't spell it right.

Laura: That's an interesting name.

Roberta: It is. It's an interesting spelling too.

Laura: Which one of those went here?

Elsie: Carl and Terry.

Roberta: Who was the teacher then?

Elsie: Miss Ryder taught them.

Laura: Minnie Ryder was the last teacher here.

Roberta: They had the same teacher you did. Very interesting.

Elsie: Yes because she stuck it out till the school closed.

Roberta: You know it would be kind of interesting to talk to them.

Elsie: They passed on.

Roberta: I'm sorry to hear that. I'd like to thank Mrs. Bullock for taking the time to share those memories with us and this concludes the interview of tape 2, side 1.