

MATHESON MUSEUM, INC.

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Isaiah Branton

Interviewer: Ann Smith

Transcriber: Ruth C. Marston

March 2, 2006

S: Today is March 2, 2006, and this is a recording clarifying the ancestry chart of Isaiah Branton. My name is Ann Smith, and I am a volunteer with the Matheson Historical Museum of Alachua County. Is your birth date July 25, 1953? When was your Mother, Marietta, born?

B: October 21, 1910.

S: Where was she born?

B: She was born in a place called Holder, Florida, in Citrus County.

S: Do you know when she was married?

B: I have the marriage certificate. It was in 1927.

S: Where was she married?

B: In Inverness, Florida.

S: When did she die?

B: October 22, 1983.

S: One day after her birthday. Where?

B: She died in Ocala, Florida.

S: Now, your father?

B: Rev. Jackson Branton.

S: When was he born?

B: On November 25, 1908 in Tallahassee, Florida.

S: And when did he die?

B: January 10, 1969. Check the gravestone.

S: Where?

B: Gulf Hammock, Florida. That's in Levy County.

S: Your grandmother was Dillie. Is that right? And her maiden name was Brooks?

B: Yes.

S: Her married name was Wooden?

B: Wooden.

S: When was she born?

B: She was born July 16, 1892, in Alachua County. Family reunions were held every July 16 from 1920 on, so I can easily remember her birthday.

S: When was she married?

B: She was married in October of 1910. She didn't want my mother to be born out of wedlock, so she got married early.

S: Okay. And where was she married?

B: In Inverness, Florida.

S: When and where did she die?

B: 1993 in Inverness in the hospital.

S: When was your grandfather born, Dan Wooden?

B: He was born in 1888.

S: In Monticello, Florida?

B: Yes. His mother was a slave on the Magnolia Plantation. Her name was Mary Long. That's where she died.

S: Where is the Magnolia Plantation?

B: That's in Monticello.

S: When did your grandfather, Dan, die?

B: In 1973. He was about 85 years old when he died.

S: And where did he die?

B: Inverness, in the hospital, of heart failure.

S: Before we go on any further, may I go back and ask about your grandmother. Was she a slave?

B: No.

S: Did she work?

B: No.

S: What do you mean by "kept by"?

B: Dillie's mother, Lizzy [Lillian], was a performer. She played piano at the Perryman Club in Gainesville. Lizzie could go anywhere in Gainesville because her skin was so light. [Per my Aunt Margaret, Mother's youngest sister.]

S: Now are you talking about your grandmother?

B: No, this was my great grandmother, Lillian, Lizzy, or Lilly.

S: Did your mother work?

B: No, mother was a housewife.

S: Then, she was a homemaker.

B: She sold quilts because she was a seamstress, too, and she played piano.

S: She was a seamstress and a pianist. Was your father something other than a reverend?

B: Yes, at first he worked for the railroad. That's how he met my mother.

S: What did he do on the railroad?

B: He was a laborer on the railroad out of Tallahassee. He met my mother in 1927, in Holder, Florida, because the depot was right across from my grandfather Dan and Dillie's, house. Then he worked for many years, until he became ill, at Goethe Lumber Co. down in Dunnellon, Florida.

S: What was he sick with?

B: He had leukemia.

S: Did that cause his death?

B: Yes.

S: Do you know what year your mother had a stroke?

B: In 1982.

S: Now, let's get back to Dillie. Was she a slave?

B: No. She was born during Reconstruction in Gainesville but she never was a slave. She was born in 1892.

S: Did she work?

B: No.

S: She was a homemaker with all those children.

B: She sewed and did things like that.

S: That was a sign of the times. What about Dan Wooden?

B: He started working at the phosphate mines in Holder, Florida, when he met my grandmother later in life and worked cutting watermelon for Peterson's Farm in Dunnellon. That is where he met my grandmother, Dillie.

S: Do you know what he died of?

B: Heart attack.

S: What about Dillie?

B: Natural causes.

S: On the death certificate, they'll say "natural causes" and she was one hundred one years old.

B: Yes, a week before she died, I said, "Grandmother, why are you not eating?" She said, "The Lord is feeding me. I don't want no more of this food." She had told us that she was tired of burying her children. She said, "I want to go and see my loved ones." Then, she sat back in her chair, smiled at me, and winked. Grandmother just gave up.

S: Isn't that something about people.

B: We [Paul Dixon, my cousin, from Jacksonville and I] made a video when she was 100 years old. She was jumping all around and everything when she turned 100. She was hopping all over the place and praising God. I've got the video.

S: Did you say it was several days before she died that she stopped eating?

B: Yes.

S: Did she die of natural causes?

B: At that age, you know, [yes].

S: I guess she's allowed. Now, we're up to your great-grandmother, and that's Lizzy Carwell. Is that right?

B: Yes. She was born in 1879? Grandmother said she was born on what we call Independence Day. She'd say that's when we'd know it was her birthday when 4th of July came, so it was Independence Day, 1879.

S: Okay. She died in 1912?

B: She died in Gainesville or Holder in 1912. We may be able to obtain a death certificate there.

S: Yes, and we might even find a census report.

B: Grandma said Lizzie was trying to make it home from Gainesville to Holder, where her daughter Dillie lived, and she might have made it there.

S: Okay. Was William Brooks her husband?

B: Yes.

S: Did she have children with William?

B: Yes. She had Dillie, Manny, Estella, Cherry, Willie Bee. She had Dillie in Dunnellon, Estella [born in 1894 in St. Petersburg], Willie B. [born in 1896 and died in Tampa], and Ike Brooks [buried in Crystal River]. I have pictures of all of them. [1900 Population Census of Marion County, Florida, line 27, shows William Brooks' occupation as phosphate, wife is Lizzy, daughter Dilly at age 7, son Manny at age 6, daughter Estella at age 4, daughter Cherry, born 1897 and age 3, son Willie at age 2.]

At the age of twelve, Manny was hung at Lynch Hammock. He didn't do anything. He went to plow a field across from the Dudleys and when he came back, they said a bunch of Negro boys were stealing the watermelons and the white boys who did it, ran away. They had broken up watermelons in the field. They caught Manny as he was coming back from the field after tying the mules up,. His mother, Lizzy, went out to try to stop the hanging and they beat her real bad. They hung him and this is the guy, Dudley, Jr., [pointing to photo] which had the rope that did the hanging.

(Lisa Auel, the Director of the Matheson Historical Museum, came in at this point and was introduced to Isaiah Branton.)

S: I have one quick question to ask you, Lisa. His grandmother told him that she had been called by someone at the time when the Matheson Museum was in the planning process, somewhere between 1968 and 1970. She gave some kind of an interview over the telephone about her life in Gainesville. Do you think we might have that?

A: We didn't even open until 1894 and didn't even start thinking about the museum until the mid 1980's.

B: She said "the Matheson." She said, "Somebody called me." You see, my great, great grandmother used to work for the Matheson family, so she knew the name.

S: The Matheson family?

B: Yes. She worked at the tourist [bed and breakfast] home. She helped established that. She was the first cook there and managed things. She would sew, do the washing and ironing, make the beds, cook the meals, and plant the flower gardens. The Matheson family was so fond of her that they built her a small house close to the hotel when her marriage broke up. She worked in the main house, also. I can tell you another thing. There was a project that was carried out by the Eastern Seminary [precursor to the University of Florida and located in Ocala, FL]. It was to study newly-freed African Americans who were living on South East 1st Avenue in a small community. They would be observed every morning as they came through the gate and up to the Matheson private home, the Thomas House, the tourist house, or the store. The objective was to assess if they could show up on time and do the job that was assigned. I know that's not in the history of Gainesville because Susie was the only one who knew it. She was working for the Mathesons. She was on the payroll.

S: So, we're talking about your great, great grandmother?

B: Susie worked in the store. She used to get supplies from the store and put it on John Taylor's tab.

S: Who is John Taylor?

B: John Taylor was her common law husband, picking up and taking supplies back to the Haile Plantation to stock the store. People would come in and shop at the store. Everybody would come in from different plantations and different areas or different farms to pick up the supplies and take them back from the main store. This was a big store at one time.

S: I wonder who she talked with.

B: She went to the store and stocked and cleaned the shelves. It was established back in 1905.

A: The Matheson house was a private home?

B: Yes, but let me show you. There was a project where people stayed. I can show you the place. My grandmother came over here one day with me, my grandmother and my aunt, Janie Jackson Plumber, who was born in 1896 – they brought me into Gainesville. We came down a little road, where you could pull up in here behind where the Museum is now. She showed me the house where Susie used to work. I can walk out that back door and show you exactly where the house was. Will you take a walk with me?

S: Yes.

B: I can show you. My grandmother showed me this house.

S: This is Lizzy and her first husband, William Brooks. Her second husband's name was James Goine. And who was that the man in the photo who had the rope and was involved with Manny?

B: A guy named Benjamin H. Dudley, Jr. This is the one right here [pointing]. He drank all the time. He was an alcoholic. My grandmother said it was the one with the beard.

S: This says Benjamin Harvey Dudley.

B: It was his son that did it. Dudley, Jr.

S: And they hung him at Lynch Hammock?

B: That's right off Newberry Road and a split right there where U.S. Route 27 is before you get to Newberry. I could show you where it was because she showed me that, too.

S: How old was Manny?

B: Grandma Dillie said she was 10 years old. Manny was her younger brother by two years. As she told me she started crying and I just said, "I don't want to hear any more of that." She said they didn't have to hang that boy. He didn't do anything.

S: She was still remembered the pain of seeing it?

- B: Then I told her to go ahead and I said, "Let's take a break."
- S: When did Lizzy marry William Brooks?
- B: She married him 1897.
- S: Then she married Goine. Do you know what his first name was?
- B: James Goine in 1905.
- S: She had how many children with him?
- B: One. Edith Mae Goine. They were married in 1905.
- S: Okay. When was Edith born?
- B: 1906 and she died August 13, 1949.
- S: Lizzy died six years afterwards in 1912.
- B: Yes, Edith was about 5 years old. Then somebody else got her and raised her.
- S: So, altogether, Lizzy had five children. What did William Brooks do for a living?
- B: He did logging. He worked in the woods in Fairbanks, but he met my grandmother in Arredondo. She was out there visiting relatives.
- S: When you say Arredondo, you're talking about a plantation or a farm?
- B: Arredondo was a community.
- S: Was it in the same area of Archer Road or Williston Road?
- B: Right in back of Kanapaha. I know where the Kanapaha Indian Tribe lived. I know exactly where they were finished and massacred. Around 1860, people who wanted the Indian land brought them alcohol and got them drunk. They came in, killed some and others ran away. They took some of them over to St. Augustine to prison.
- S: Tell me about, Henry Gaines, Senior, [birth and death dates?] the stonemason, who, you told me, built the fireplace in the Masonic Building and the arch at the entrance to Golfview.
- B: Yes, he had a smoothing iron and he did the fireplace at Morningside Park, the one at Haile Plantation, and the Golfview arch.

- S: Now, James Goine [Lizzy's second husband] – what did he do for a living?
- B: I think he worked in turpentine.
- S: Okay.
- B: You see, Fairbanks had a large turpentine industry.
- S: That was a big industry. All right, now are there stories that you should tell me about Lizzy?
- B: Lizzy graduated from Union Academy at the age of 14. [Union Academy was built in 1868, added a second floor in 1898 and survived until 1923.] At one time, she stayed on Paynes Prairie.
- S: When you say, “. . . stayed at Paynes Prairie,” do you mean she lived near it?
- B: Yes, out there.
- S: Right on it when it was a waterway?
- B: She stayed out there. She was young then. She went to school at the Union Academy. She was born to Susie [Kendricks] and Alexander Caldwell.
- S: Shall we start on them?
- B: Yes.
- S: Now tell me how to spell Susie.
- B: S-u-s-i-e. People around the neighborhood called her Susanna.
- S: Was that her name?
- B: No, some of the relatives there don't know who their grandmother was and when I tell them, they say, “That's Susanna.” I say, “Well, she's Susie to me. I've got the picture.” She had blue eyes.
- S: Now, what was Susie's last name?
- B: Her name, before she got married, was Kendricks. Her mother's name was Chisholm.
- S: And her married name?

- B: Her first husband was Alex Caldwell, then Frank Jackson, John Taylor, and then back to Frank Jackson, again.
- S: Do you know what year she was born in?
- B: Grandmother said Susie was born around 1856. The death certificate says [she was born in] South Carolina. As a 5 or 6 year old, she could remember slaves being whipped on the Stringfellow Plantation. Her mother came from South Carolina with the Lewis, Stringfellow, Dudley, Hall, Haile, and Martin families. They came by wagon train with families and slaves. Susie's first child was born when she was age twenty. [Francis was born in 1876.]
- S: Maybe she was just a baby here.
- B: The death certificate says South Carolina, but her husband gave that information -- that she died on December 24, 1928.
- S: Do we know where in South Carolina?
- B: It had to be Chester County. You see, her mother came here with the Stringfellows, Lewis' and the Dudleys—all of the families, together [walking and with wagons].
- B: First of all, Susie was married to Alexander Caldwell. That was in 1876 before Lizzy was born. Francis was her first child. Lizzy was second.
- S: Then she married Frank Jackson.
- B: She married him two times.
- S: Do you know what year?
- B: She was married to Frank Jackson in 1880. During that time, Lizzy was staying with them at five years old. Then they had a daughter named Annis in 1880 and later on, she and Frank Jackson broke up. She had another daughter named Lucinda Jackson and raised by Lula Kendricks Chestnut.
- S: Do you know what year Lucinda [Lula or Lizzy] was born?
- B: It was c. 1880. Frank's mother was interfering in their business and kept his money, so Susie eventually left him. Then she met John Taylor at the Matheson store where she was working. He would come and pick up supplies from the Matheson store. He told her one day, "If you need [something], I can put it on the book for you." She needed some sewing stuff and different things, so he put it in the book for her and then he started talking to her and eventually they started living together and had three children.

- S: Do you know what year they married?
- B: They didn't marry. I think they just lived together.
- S: Do you know the names of the children?
- B: She had Robert and Etch Taylor. My grandmother described it [the name 'Etch'] as etching in concrete. Then she had Fannie Taylor Perry and Jesse Taylor Willis [both girls].
- S: All right. That's four children with John.
- B: Then she got back with Frank Taylor.
- S: Did she have any more children then?
- B: Yes, she had Frank, Jr., Eddie, Oscar, and Janie [who is buried in Holder]. She had two children by Henry Gaines.
- S: Susie's first husband was Alexander Caldwell; the second husband was Frank Jackson. Then John Taylor, and then she went back to Frank Jackson. Where did Henry Gaines come in?
- B: Henry Gaines came in maybe 1902, something like that.
- S: Okay, so we have some research to do on where we put Henry Gaines.
- B: Yes. That's confusing because I asked Grandmother about it and she said they had a lot of children. She said back then they didn't have birth control pills.
- S: That's right. Now, are there stories about Susie?
- B: Yes. She would smoke a corn cob pipe and give one to Grandmother [Dillie]. They would light the corn cob pipe, sit on the front porch, and they would talk. She would sit with the pipe in her mouth, puffing, teaching her how to smoke. She would tell about where she met Alexander Caldwell. Dillie told me that when she was a little child walking around the plantation, they would take the guy's shirts off and beat them. She told the story about James Monroe. One day James Monroe and Mr. Tench went quail hunting. In those days there were no hunting dogs; people fetched the birds. James Monroe went to fetch the bird, meanwhile Mr. Tench stumbled over something, fell on his gun and shot himself. When James Monroe returned, Mr. Tench was dead. James went for help. At that time, he was accused and hung for Mr. Tench's death.

- S: James Monroe was hung for something he didn't do. He was just trying to get help for Mr. Tench. Now, let's talk about Susie.
- B: Susie was a young girl. After slavery, during reconstruction, in order to travel about, a pass/permit had to be obtained. Susie had to go to a place called East of Eden/Freedom town to get this pass. This place is now called Louise and is located near Waldo.
- S: So they had to get a pass if they wanted to travel anywhere around?
- B: Yes. After she got the pass, she got on the train, and the train carried her on down the Tamiami Trail.
- S: Oh, she went a long way.
- B: She went to Bradentown. Alexander Caldwell's dad [Francis] lived in Bradentown. They went to Waldo and got on the train and took it all the way to Bradentown. Back then it was called Bradentown. Now, it is called Bradenton.
- S: I didn't know that.
- B: On the back of this wedding picture it says Braden Town. They got married there. She had her dress, but he didn't have any good shoes. He had a pair of boots. She had to go and borrow shoes, a vest, and a coat for him to wear.
- S: I keep wondering where they had a photographer.
- B: In Braden Town. She went there and they took the picture before she got married in 1876. Then she had a picture made for his daddy, Francis Caldwell. She said you could take that train all the way down to Liberty City, which was in Miami, where a lot of free blacks lived. She said they went down and that her husband was friendly with the Seminole Indians and with how they went into the Everglades and fought off the troops. She said his name wasn't Seminole. She said his given name was Miccosukee but it was not the original name. She said some of her people lived in Everglades.
- S: Sure, and they were very well received, I think, by the Indians. Now, when did Susie die?
- B: December 24, 1928, the day before Christmas.
- S: Where did she die?
- B: A place called Dunnellon. She was picking greens early on the cold morning of the 24th of December and had breathing problems. She was rushed to the doctor with pneumonia.

- S: Do you know the dates of the other children? We have Lizzy's birth date, and we have Annis born in 1880, but Lucinda or any of the children of John Taylor?
- B: Lucinda was two years older than Annis, so 1878, something like that.
- S: What about the children she had with John Taylor?
- B: I've got pictures of Aunt Jessie.
- S: Who's that?
- B: Fannie Taylor. I think Aunt Jesse died at the age of 100. I'm going to get her obituary. I can get that from my cousin. I can get Fannie's, too.
- S: What about when she got back with Frank, Frank, Jr., Eddie, Oscar, and Jamie?
- B: She had these children in Citrus County, I think.
- S: Do we need to say anything more about Susie?
- B: Susie worked for the Matheson family here in Alachua County. She worked at the tourist house.
- S: We just walked outside to point out the Matheson house that was donated to Alachua County by the Matheson family. You pointed to the bed and breakfast [next door to the Matheson Museum, currently the Sweetwater Branch Bed and Breakfast], and we're making the assumption that it was some kind of rooming house or tourist house, where they had guests. Susie had to clean, make the beds, and do the cooking as well as work at the Matheson home doing the same thing.
- B: Then she worked at the store sometimes.
- S: When you say "the store," what store are you referring to?
- B: The Matheson store where everyone bought supplies and groceries to stock their little community stores.
- S: The Mathesons had a store with general merchandise and food?
- B: Yes.
- S: Was it more out toward their place?
- B: Yes, it was on their place.

- S: But Susie worked in the Matheson store, where it was the general supply store, and she would help keep the place clean and maybe help stock and keep things on the shelves, getting things for customers, not managing.
- B: Not managing. She was over at the bed and breakfast doing the maintenance, keeping the beds made and making sure the place was clean.
- S: When you were telling me about that, it was outside. Why don't you tell about it, again for the tape recorder, that it was an experiment with the Eastern Seminary, (which was the precursor to the University of Florida), to see if the black people from over there could responsibly handle a job and be monitored to come on time and do the work assigned. I wish we could look up that study.
- B: They also took pictures at each visit. In all those pictures they've got over there, pertaining to my family [at the University of Florida Library], I can name every one of them because Grandmother named a lot of pictures that other people had taken when Susie and Henry Gaines got married. Grandmother had her shirt up and her belly was showing and she got a spanking from Lilly. She was five years old then. My mother said he visited people when they get that old picture. She described every picture to me and told me to tell them to give me her relative's pictures. She was upset.
- S: You still have the characteristics from the bone structure. Now, we've got Susie. Who was her mother?
- B: Susie's mother was Eliza and her husband was Clayborn Kendricks, a cowboy. Caroline was Eliza's mother and Adeline and Rosaline sister.
- S: Eliza's married name?
- B: Kendricks.
- S: Okay. Do you know Eliza's birth date?
- B: 1834.
- S: Where was she born?
- B: In Chester, South Carolina.
- S: She was married – or jumped the broom. Do you know when that was?
- B: Her first child was born in 1846, so she had to be about twelve when she had her first child, and her name was Louisa. Clayborn Kendricks was considered white, but he was mixed. He was so colorful that they let him do everything. He had brought her here to Gainesville.

- S: That's right. You said that he was the scout that helped the plantation owners come down from South Carolina with both the families and the slaves from Chester and Camden. What families came down?
- B: The Lewis family, the Stringfellows, Hall, and there was another family – the Hailes and the Dudleys.
- S: Do you know why they decided to come down here?
- B: They decided to come down and do some farming, and the property was cheap down here. Before they came, they built a school in Chester. The first school in Chester was built by these people – the Chisolms and the Lewises and all them. The school that they built in Chester was called Liberty Hill School.
- S: Were Clayborn and Eliza married in Chester?
- B: Yes. He bought Eliza freedom, but when they got to Gainesville, they messed it up somehow and put her back into slavery.
- S: But he was a free black man?
- B: Oh yes. Clayborn Kendricks got around everywhere.
- S: Now, tell me about their children.
- B: Louisa.
- S: Born in 1846 and then who next?
- B: Lula, then Susie. Then Jeffrey and Penny. Now Penny's momma's name was Dinah. Eliza and Clayborn broke up and then he stayed with Dinah and had Penny.
- S: Penny is a stepchild.
- B: Yes, but Penny is still kin through Clayborn and lived in Daytona.
- S: Clayborn's second wife was Dinah. Where were they married?
- B: Gainesville.
- S: They had Penny as their child?
- B: Susie stayed with him—Dinah and Clayborn. Louisa was his oldest daughter. Grandma said he treated them like dirt and they left. Louisa came there to see

them and said he was mistreating Susie and she stayed there to take care of her and she told her daddy, "I'm getting my sister away from here." She [Dinah] would just throw food at her and say, "Get it off the floor." So Louisa came over there and saw Susie dirty and everything and she told her daddy, "I will not let this lady mistreat my sister," so she told Eliza. Eliza wasn't allowed [to see them] after they broke up. They broke up because when they bought the property in 1867 in East Gainesville, 681 acres . . .

S: Who bought it?

B: Ned, Dudley, and William Chisolm and the children. Eliza worked six months because they had to go back to South Carolina to get ex-slaves to bring them back because they knew how to pick Sea Island cotton, so they went back and got some of their relatives – brothers and their children. They brought a lot of them back to work so they could pay the one that they purchased the land from. His name was Colclough.

S: Okay. Did Eliza remarry or have children with anybody else?

B: She was married to Dan William. She had four children: William, Fannie, James, and Dan William. She told me everything.

S: You retain so much of this.

B: She told me that Fannie married William Duval. He had a shoe shop and also worked in the print shop.

S: Did you tell me what Clayborn Kendricks did?

B: He was a cowboy. He used to stay with Mr. Reason out there in Waldo, Fuzzy Place. That's where they broke the horses and he would join the Annie Oakley show, down from Waldo. When the show was coming through [one time], the train broke down. He got with them and went to New York. He would ride in the show. [Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show began tours in 1883.] He changed his name and was a famous cowboy that roped steers while biting his lip and tie them up. I think he changed his name to Bill Whitney or something like that. But a horse threw him and killed him. He had a son, Jeffrey, and he had a son named Romeo. Jeffrey married a lady out of a place called Kendricks in the Ocala area. They named their son [Romeo] after the play, *Romeo and Juliet*, and they came up here and moved in. A bunch of black people settled there and they named the community Kendricks, after my people.

S: Eliza raised these children. Was she ever freed when she came back down to Gainesville?

B: When she came to Gainesville, she and Clayborn broke up and she went out to the Stringfellow Plantation.

S: As slaves or free blacks?

B: They were working as servants. Clayborn got mad and went out and asked the Stringfellows where Eliza was. They had sold her and later on Eliza started working for the Dudleys. She helped to grind the cane and things like that. Then eventually she moved back into town to Morningside Park. The old house out there is her house. They say it was brought from Micanopy, but it wasn't. It was Eliza's house. They said that a transient came by and took over the house so it now belongs to the City of Gainesville. The house at Morningside is named for the transient who was on the property after she died there.

S: Who owned it when Eliza was out there?

B: That was Eliza's house, left to her by her Uncle William Chisholm. She owned it. Lawrence Chestnut, Johnson Chestnut, Thomas Chisholm and Henry Gaines built the house and he has his mark in it – a smoothing iron and an "S" similar to the one at Haile because he built their fireplaces, too.

It was William Chisholm's land [Eliza's uncle]. The three brothers were Ned, Dudley and William [Ned was Eliza's father]. But when he died, I don't know whether Eliza began to inherit it or [if] she stayed in the house. That was her uncle. She stayed in the house and before she died, a rail company tried to buy it. They tried to get her to sell her land, but she didn't sell it. Later on that year, they found her dead in the house and they buried her. Evidently, the rail company or somebody bought it. They said that the son that she might have had put down was Pinky McKnight [Pinky was last child?]. They said it might have been one of her children. He tried to sell it.

S: And he was probably Eliza's child?

B: Yes, from William Powell McKnight.

S: What year did they find her dead?

B: I think it was in 1912.

S: And that was out at Morningside?

B: Yes.

S: Because she was found, do we know the cause of death or what happened to her?

B: I think she was about 78 years old. She had been ill.

S: Now, tell me who was Eliza's mother?

B: Caroline.

S: You say these like they're just living down the street, like you know them so well.

B: Well, she put it in my head.

S: Caroline's maiden name was?

B: Greer.

S: And married name?

B: Caroline – she had a child for Chisolm, but I don't know if they was married. They jumped the broom, I think. Back then they wasn't allowed to marry.

S: Do we know when she was born?

B: Eliza was her first child, and she was twelve years old when she had Eliza so that means she was born in 1822.

S: And she was born in Chester?

B: Yes, Caroline was born in Chester, South Carolina.

S: Shall we say that she was probably married or jumped the broom in 1834?

B: Sometimes they picked the slave to mate with certain women and they would keep that slave mating so they could produce more of a commodity.

S: Chisolm was the plantation owner?

B: When a Lewis married a Chisolm they combined slaves or she was loaned to them for projects.

S: Lewis was a plantation owner?

B: Yes. His name was Samuel Lewis. What happened was William Stringfellow, Samuel Lewis, and Thomas Chisolm and William Burkham was all working together. They were all on one plantation in South Carolina. I think the Stringfellows came from Virginia, which was originally North Carolina and later became Virginia.

S: So, Samuel Lewis – what were you telling me?

B: They would loan another plantation owner slaves or divide them as needed. The Stringfellows wound up with some of the children.

S: Okay. They inherited or obtained.

B: Later on, when they came to Gainesville, some of the children belonged to the Stringfellows as property. Caroline had a sister named Rosaline. Her mother's name was Nancy Greer.

S: And she had Caroline.

B: Nancy had Rosaline and then she had Adeline. I think Adeline might have been the oldest one. Then Caroline had some more siblings: Perry and Amanda and then she had infant little boy – I don't know what his name was.

S: Okay. Now, Caroline jumped the broom with Chisolm. Did we decide when?

B: It would have been 1834 or around that time.

S: Because Eliza was born in 1834 so she was born in 1822.

B: She jumped the broom with Ned or mated or bred or whatever you may call it. That's how Grandma told me. That's how they kept the family tree and the line. They were named so they could match her children with the same line, so it could be in her line. Caroline. "Oh, that's my daughter." Rosaline. "Oh, that's my daughter." Adeline. "Oh, that's my daughter." They had their own last name. They're sisters.

S: That was very inventive, don't you think?

B: Yes.

S: That was a way of maintaining some independence even though they couldn't have their own name and had to take the slave owner's name.

B: If they were sold off and were taken away some distance, she would always have a way of looking for them and recognizing them from their first names.

S: Your grandmother told you all this?

B: Yes.

S: She said that was the system they used.

B: Okay. What year shall we say? Was Caroline twelve when Eliza was born or am I getting my stories mixed up?

S: Grandma used the word twelve.

B: And it was told to Grandma by Rosaline, who was born in 1811.

S: So she was much older, wasn't she?

B: Yes.

S: She was eleven years older than Caroline.

B: When she moved to Gainesville in 1855, she was 44. She was called Rose Stringfellow during that time. That's who told Grandma all of this that I'm telling you now. She kept my grandmother. She was taught to make African woven baskets and that bought her freedom. Her husband Abel died on the trail. In 1891 when she was about ninety years old, she would set Dillie on a hamper and then she would tell the story about Adeline and Caroline. She would sit there and tell them every night. They would take all the little kids around to Rosaline, which was Rose Stringfellow. She would watch them, sit them down and tell them, "I'll tell you about Chester in South Carolina tonight. We're going to tell you about Adeline, Caroline, which is your grandmother, and blah, blah."

S: In every culture, that's so important to pass down family stories. That's how the Seminoles did it.

B: Rose told me her name was Stringfellow because she said that her dad [grandfather?] was Captain Stringfellow, Capt. William Stringfellow. which was one of the slave owners.

S: I was just going to ask you if that was a married name or a plantation name.

B: Plantation name. Now, her dad, Captain William Stringfellow was white. She was a mulatto. Rose loved her family. She cooked at the Stringfellow Plantation [in Alachua County], but during that time she worked for Sarah Stringfellow, she had a daughter named Sally. William Hall Stringfellow had a wife named Sarah, and she had children named Dugan, James (Jimmy), Joseph, Thornton, Robert E. Lee, Clarence, and Sally.

S: Who had these children?

B: His wife. But that's who Rose worked for a long time, cleaning house and cooking. And when our cousin got killed because Sally got pregnant for him — they were courting in the field at the Haile Plantation out there in the woods somewhere and Sally got pregnant and he wanted to marry her. I've got his picture. They murdered him in the house, in the Stringfellow Plantation house,

and they buried him on the Haile Plantation. Serena Haile allowed for him to be buried on the Haile Plantation by the sinkhole.

S: Is there any marker?

B: I can find it. It's by the sinkhole.

S: Is there anything to designate it?

B: Yes. There are some houses in a subdivision. But in that subdivision they've got a sign at the sinkhole.

S: Now, Caroline was married or jumped the broom? Was that also in Chester?

B: In Chester.

S: So she was married in Chester. Can you tell me Caroline and Ned Chisolm's children?

B: Caroline's children were Eliza, Cecilia, and, I believe, Butler. Then when he came to Gainesville, he married somebody else. She told me who he married and he had a son named Thomas Chisolm. Thomas was Eliza's brother. He had a bunch of kids. I've got the whole thing in a book, so we can get that book and go from there. Cecilia had a daughter named Celia.

S: Okay. Caroline then had three children total.

B: They say Rose never had any children.

S: Which Rose?

B: Caroline's sister. She had some back at the plantation. At one time, when she was twelve years old, she was married to a guy named Abel, back in 1825.

S: But that was probably in South Carolina and then when they came . . .

B: They sold them off, I think.

S: What about the children?

B: They were in Chester probably and were sold to another plantation. They had three Indian attacks. The wagon wheel fell on Abe when he was changing it and he was killed. That's how Abe died. I just remembered she said they tried to lift it up off of him but when they got it up off of him, he was dead. They buried him on the trail and then Adeline was pregnant and the slaves had to walk from South Carolina to Florida. They didn't ride. They were behind the wagons. That made

them too tired to run. I think one of them hemorrhaged with the baby and they put her in the wagon. Stringfellow made them put her in the wagon – one of the ladies. Grandmother talked about those ladies as nice ladies.

S: The wives?

B: She said they would sneak and do things. She said Sarah left something in her will for Rose to have, but the Stringfellows decided they weren't going to give it to her. Rose had worked for the Stringfellows since 1822. Rose died when she was about 100 years old. She had worked for them since she got about 80. William Hall and William Stringfellow, Sr., died she continued to work for Miss Stringfellow, which was Sarah. One day Sarah told her she wanted her to take some money, go into town and get you a house. I want you to stay in it and I will leave it to you in my will, but they say when they read Sarah's will that the Stringfellow boys weren't giving her nothing and she never received that and she died at 100.