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## Voices of New Philadelphia: Memories and Stories of the People and Place

### ABSTRACT

A project of collecting and recording oral histories related to New Philadelphia provided a valuable avenue for understanding facets of racism, and played an integral role in establishing a community-based archaeology program that emphasizes civic engagement. These oral histories also provided details of the historical context of the town, and revealed information that aided archaeological investigations. Several interviews supplied valuable data concerning the likely locations of structures, residences, and businesses that once existed within the town site. Oral histories further contributed data for meeting the challenges of analyzing cultural, ethnic, and class differences in artifact assemblages recovered from each house lot.

*The struggle against power is the struggle of  
memory against forgetting.*

—Milan Kundera

### Introduction

It is often stated that history is written by the winners, the lead actors. What, then, of the many lesser-known characters? How do they remember the past? In the summers of 2004 through 2006, a National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates program was conducted at the New Philadelphia archaeological site in Pike County, Illinois. New Philadelphia is an important archaeological as well as historical site because it was the first town legally founded and platted by an African American, Frank McWorter, in 1836. McWorter, a former slave, worked hard to free his wife and himself from bondage. He continued to pursue freedom by selling lots in the newly platted town in order to pay for a total of 16 family members' liberty from enslavement. New Philadelphia prospered as a multiracial town before the Civil War, in a time of intense racism in western Illinois.

During the 2004 and 2005 field seasons, 18 interviews were conducted with the descendants

of town residents and with local community members to understand how they remembered New Philadelphia. Potential interviewees were identified through members of a local nonprofit organization called the New Philadelphia Association, or through interviewees' own expressed interest in the project. Due to the interviewer's additional activities in helping to supervise the archaeological field school, those interviewed were limited to accessible individuals within the vicinity of the New Philadelphia site. Nearly all descendants of New Philadelphia's African American population have left the area. Consequently, the vast majority of participants interviewed are of European American heritage, and one, Ron Carter, is African American. This set of voices comments on a racial history and how it has impacted a rural community that is now predominantly white, and how memories of New Philadelphia have continued to evolve locally. Six people described themselves as descendants because their families had lived in New Philadelphia. Twelve interviewees were considered to be members of the local community, as they and their family lived near, but not actually in the town of New Philadelphia (Table 1).

The interviewer met with the memoirists (to use an alternative term for "interviewees") before each interview, and generally asked them what they remembered about New Philadelphia. After this initial discussion, the taped interview began, giving both the interviewer and memoirist time to expand on questions and answers. All the participants signed an informed consent form before the interview, allowing the use of their names with their quotations in New Philadelphia reports. The oral histories were recorded on a Panasonic pocket digital recorder and then uploaded to a laptop using the Panasonic recorder software, Voice Studio. Through Voice Studio, the interviews were converted into MP3 files, burned onto audio compact disks, and then transcribed verbatim. Each verbatim transcription was edited for reading clarity, and copies of both verbatim and edited transcriptions, along with the audio disks, were given to the New Philadelphia Association to archive for the Pike County Historical Society.

TABLE 1  
 NAMES OF THE MEMOIRISTS QUOTED IN THIS ARTICLE AND THEIR CONNECTIONS  
 WITH THE COMMUNITY OF NEW PHILADELPHIA

Quoted Memoirist	Gender	Age at time of interview	Association with New Philadelphia	New Philadelphia Connection
Janita Metcalf	Female	80	Local community	Town of Barry historian
Carol McCartney	Female	66	Local community	New Philadelphia Association treasurer
Pat Likes	Female	68	Local community	New Philadelphia Association board member
Ruby Duke	Female	63	Descendant	Lived between Baylis and New Philadelphia, her great-grandmother was midwife to area, her family was close friends with the McWorters
Chris Hamilton	Male	63	Local community	Farms old McWorter land, grandfather a Barry banker
Mary Jo (Welbourne) Foster	Female	86	Descendant	Her Welbourne and Baker ancestors owned land in New Philadelphia bought from Free Frank, family was close with the Washington family
Glen Ralph	Male	73	Local community	Attended Shaw school
Grace Hughes	Female	83	Local community	Father farmed near New Philadelphia and knew McWorters and William Butler
Clara Alexander	Female	66	Local community	Family lived in the old New Philadelphia schoolhouse owned by Frank McWorter (Free Frank's grandson)
Robert Gleckler	Male	72	Descendant	Owens the Washington's land, Lemoyne Washington cared for his great-grandfather
Nancy (Johnson) Mills	Female	Unknown	Descendant	The Johnson family lived in New Philadelphia, bought land from Free Frank, Nancy's grandfather was New Philadelphia justice of the peace
Ron Carter	Male	71	Descendant	Descendant of New Philadelphia African American settler, William Butler
Elmo Waters	Male	82	Local community	From Hadley, attended New Philadelphia schoolhouse

When the interviews were finished, five themes emerged among the memoirists: Frank McWorter as a romantic image, the memory of the Underground Railroad, conflicting images of both community cooperation and racism, and the community's involvement in the archaeology

project. Many local residents associate New Philadelphia's history with Frank McWorter's story because they value his determinism and entrepreneurship in freeing his family members and establishing the town. Many people further romanticize Frank McWorter and the surrounding

area by claiming the existence of several “safe house” locations from the antebellum period that served the networks of escaping enslaved laborers that are referred to as the Underground Railroad. Two conflicting images arise, one in which descendants and local residents relate stories of pastoral and community cooperation, while another has racial and social tensions lying just beneath the surface. All the participants supplied information about the locations of buildings that could assist archaeological excavations, and they expressed a considerable interest in the continuation of the archaeological project.

### Frank McWorter’s Image

The story of New Philadelphia begins with Frank McWorter in Kentucky, as he used his earnings from his own saltpeter mining operations and other resources to buy his wife, himself, and one of his sons out of slavery. In 1836, Free Frank laid out the plan of New Philadelphia, which included 144 lots, and subsequently sold them to both African American and European American settlers. He used the money from the land sales to purchase freedom for additional family members (Walker 1983:41–63). Frank McWorter’s story is appealing because he worked hard to realize his dream of freedom for his family. As early as 1876, William Grimshaw, giving the nation’s centennial address at Pittsfield, Illinois, described the McWorters as living “exemplary lives,” and “by industry and economy” leaving behind a valuable farm and “a large and respectable settlement of their descendants around the old home” (Grimshaw 1876). Jess Thompson, in his *Pike County History* of 1935–1939, referred to Frank McWorter as being “remembered in the early settlement as a reputable, worthy citizen, kind, benevolent, and honest,” who “labored hard on his Hadley acres” (Thompson 1967:152). McWorter the self-made man, overcoming slavery, is often viewed as an heroic figure, and reminiscent of an aspect of the “American Dream.”

The oral history interviews echo this “American Dream” sentiment. Janita Metcalf, a local historian, observed that “Free Frank McWorter is really history,” and she stated further that the McWorters “were very highly respected. Free Frank had no education, but he used his brain and he was a successful businessperson.”

McWorter’s story is sometimes equated with Abraham Lincoln’s life, as that president also had overcome an early life of relatively low social and economic status. Carol McCartney, treasurer of the New Philadelphia Association, described her first impression of McWorter’s life as being “like Abraham Lincoln’s story,” where “Here, was Free Frank being a slave and becoming a rich person and being able to buy his family” out of enslavement. Pat Likes, also a member of the New Philadelphia Association, observed, “I think what catches people’s interest is the story about a man who bought his freedom and bought his family and more and more people are becoming aware of that.” It is also the emotion that McWorter’s pursuit for freedom evokes in people that makes his story among the most significant lessons related to the history of New Philadelphia. Likes envisioned McWorter’s life as a “love story,” in which “[t]he love of a man for freedom first and then, he loved his wife and unborn child that he would buy them before he bought his own freedom.” Frank McWorter’s story, as an agrarian Horatio Alger, is important to the existing agricultural community because it serves as a poignant allegory. McWorter, a least-likely success story with his beginnings as an enslaved laborer, illustrates how hard work and fortitude—ideals the current agricultural community values—can lead to success. From these oral history interviews it became obvious that Frank McWorter’s story of freedom evoked emotion in those interviewed, and that his story of courage, determination, and hard work was one that members of an agricultural community readily embraced.

McWorter’s story does not end with his death in 1854. His descendants carried with them his story of determination and freedom. Thus, many of those interviewed in the local community mention how they or their family knew the McWorters when they still lived in Pike County. Ruby Duke, a New Philadelphia descendant, said, “The McWorters worked for them on the farm in order to get money to help bring more of their relatives to Pike County.” Duke also related that her great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother were talented cooks, and “taught my mother and the McWorter girls.” Her mother and she had both kept her great-grandmother’s rolling pin. Duke recalled that when visiting her mother either Festus or

Cordell McWorter mentioned, “I remember that rolling pin because it’s got a warped place on it. Every time I cut the cookies, there was always a warped place and I always had a lopsided cookie.” Again the connection to Frank McWorter being made through his descendants can be seen when Janita Metcalf, a local historian, made a parade float and wrote a pageant for the United States’ bicentennial, and the town of Barry’s sesquicentennial. She stated, “Thelma played Lucy and her brother, Cordell, portrayed Free Frank.” Thelma McWorter Kirkpatrick and Cordell McWorter were both great-grandchildren of Frank McWorter. Even after the family had left the area, their presence was felt by those interviewed. Chris Hamilton, a local community member, recalled that the McWorters’s return to the area was a familiar event: “There used to be some McWorters who came down to Barry each year. I do know from some of the people I work with that they used to come back occasionally, some of the descendants of the McWorter family.”

The story of Frank McWorter bringing himself and his family out of slavery and into freedom and economic success has stayed with the local area. When asked when he had first heard the story of Free Frank, Hamilton responded, “Oh, I don’t recall. I mean I can remember knowing it as far back as I can remember, but not a lot of detail.” Even if the details of McWorter’s story are sometimes lost, the idea of the self-made man coming up from slavery remains the most romantic image at New Philadelphia.

### **The Memory of the Underground Railroad**

Another romantic image, that of the Underground Railroad, is also associated with the McWorters and the local area, especially since Pike County lies along the Mississippi River, just east of the slave state of Missouri. Several people interviewed recall many possible locations for stops on the Underground Railroad and stories associated with them. In her book, *Free Frank: A Black Pioneer on the Antebellum Frontier*, Juliet Walker (1983:149–150), Frank McWorter’s great-great-granddaughter, recounts her family’s oral tradition that the McWorters were connected with the Underground Railroad, and assisted escaping slaves on their way to Canada. Ellen McWorter Yates, Frank’s great-

granddaughter, recalls the oral tradition that Frank built his first cabin on a site underlain with granite so he could build a cellar as a hiding place for fugitives.

Locally, the Eells House in nearby Quincy, Illinois is known to have been a place where escaping slaves were aided on their way to freedom. When asked if she had heard any stories about the Underground Railroad, Mary Jo Foster, a New Philadelphia descendant, recalled that as she traveled towards the town of Baylis that, “There was a big house that Jim Corey lived in. There were holes in the basement, and I read about the Eells House in Quincy.” She added, “That’s where they took them from here and brought them north to Canada, getting them away from slavery.”

Glen Ralph, a local resident, remembered being told about an old shed located in the town vicinity that was used as part of the Underground Railroad: “I looked at it and all it was then was kind of a slumped hole in the ground.” Ruby Duke, a New Philadelphia descendant, described a cave along the edge of a nearby creek where runaway slaves hid: “It was in the side of the hill and they used to hide them there. Out in the middle, there’s a big open-hole cave.” She explained that they filled up the large cave in the middle of the hill when they built a roadway overpass. She said, “That’s where the slaves used to hide if you go on down and follow that creek. If you go east past New Philadelphia, maybe half a mile, I don’t know it’s not too far there.” The knowledge of such activities, and the involvement of Frank McWorter and the landscape of New Philadelphia in the Underground Railroad is based on oral history accounts, and researchers continue to seek additional, corroborating evidence.

A mythology of secret places and hidden cellars and rooms is perpetuated in the area. John Michael Vlach (2004:108) states that exotic trapdoors, crawl spaces, and storage places are normal features of a 19th-century house that give rise to these legends. Most fugitives were given refuge in existing rooms, and Vlach (2004:109) comments that Levi Coffin, operating a safe house in Indiana for over 20 years, simply had them sleep on bedrolls in the kitchen. As with other perceptions of Frank McWorter, people feel a need to connect with this successful story of enslaved persons striving for freedom. In

addition, such stories likely represent a way for members of current communities to hold onto an idea of a past time of interracial cooperation (Glaude 2004:304).

Ruby Duke told of how her great-grandfather helped enslaved persons escape and hide when bounty hunters came looking for them. Her great-grandparents had a large dog that would bark if people came down the road, and then the fugitives would run to the creek to hide in a cave, or hide underneath the chicken coop. She said, "Then, my great-grandparents would let a chicken out and that dog would kill the chicken. So, when the bounty hunters got there, that's what they thought was all the commotion. The dog was just killing a chicken. My great-grandpa never did lose one of the blacks then, even though they had a lot of people looking for them."

David Blight (2004:239) believes that many people claim the Underground Railroad as history for their family or local community because of the romantic idea of heroes who did not play by the rules, who resisted the institution and regulations of slavery, and who pursued a higher cause. Scholars have found that much of the Underground Railroad was actually operated by free African Americans, however, and that attention should also be given to fugitive slaves as self-reliant individuals (Blight 2004:243). Thus, it would be African Americans living in or near New Philadelphia that would be the most likely to give aid to runaway slaves. Milton Sernett (2004:263) perceives the perpetuation of Underground Railroad legends as a way a community can promote itself or be "counted among the righteous." The proximity of New Philadelphia to the Mississippi River and the slave state of Missouri would have made the local area more favorable for fugitive slaves. It seems that local residents believe that interracial cooperation extended outside New Philadelphia, and that neighboring communities also fought the good fight.

### **New Philadelphia and Interracial Community Cooperation**

While the perpetuation of Underground Railroad stories implies past interracial cooperation, the oral histories of New Philadelphia also directly comment on the existence of interracial cooperation in an agricultural community.

Memoirists seem to define this idea of community as a sharing of the burden of agrarian economics by "pitching in" with farming activities or neighborly needs. In her oral histories of East Tennessee, Melissa Walker (2000:344–348) noted that the themes of rural self-sufficiency, community mutual aid, and relative economic and social equality reverberated through each interview. The community memory of mutual aid creates a sense of idyllic nostalgia. Most of the interviewed New Philadelphia descendants reminisce about blacks and whites helping each other out. Grace Hughes remembered, "Well, Frank and Arthur [McWorter] both would give us rides home. We'd be walking and they'd stop and ask us if we wanted a ride. We hopped in." When Clara Alexander, whose family lived in a New Philadelphia schoolhouse, was asked if Frank McWorter (Free Frank's grandson) worked throughout the community, she responded, "He'd help anybody that needed help." Several interviewees also remembered New Philadelphia residents hiring out or volunteering their labor for seasonal farm activities.

Robert Gleckler recalled a story about his grandfather and one of the McWorters: "Oh, my grandpa hired one of the McWorters to help him put up hay and they were stuffing loose hay in the barn next to a metal roof up there. And he says, 'Harry [Gleckler], if it ever gets any hotter in Hell than this, I don't want to go there.'" The idea of mutual aid and sharing labor added to the nostalgic memory of an agricultural area.

Within these memories of an integrated agricultural community, stories exist of unusual events. Barbara Allen (1984:10) believes that such punctuated events in the course of everyday life are often retold in oral histories to help provide texture and depth to the remembered experience. Grace Hughes recalled that several of the African American men helped her father, and she particularly remembered a story about the strength of a man named Butler. As they were replacing a wagon wheel, "They had to replace it or repair it and this Negro held the wagon up all by himself, while they fixed the wheel. Then, he took a sack of wheat in his teeth, the edge of it in his teeth, and flipped it over in the back of the wagon."

Unusual, yet well-remembered events can be passed on even without the firsthand experience.

Ruby Duke recalled a story Festus McWorter told her about when he was talking to Duke's mother. The events followed Festus attempting to find Duke's great-grandmother, who was a midwife. Ruby repeated Festus's story:

One time one of the girls was going to have a baby. Festus McWorter said it was just raining and it was muddy. He said, "I was little, bitty tiny boy," and he thought he was about five or six years old. He asked mom if she remembered that and Mom did because she had a good memory. Festus said he had to walk all the way to their house in the mud and in that terrible storm to get my great-grandmother to come and deliver that baby. They got in the buggy. It was him, my mom, and my great-grandmother. They got in there and got just a little ways up the road when the buggy went all the way down to the axles. He said, "There we were in those itty-bitty short things. She was carrying this lantern. We had to walk the rest of the way." He said, "I will never forget that experience until the day I die." He said, "I hope I never have to walk through the mud again."

The punctuated events that occur throughout the oral histories of New Philadelphia give a depth to the social interactions and the agrarian community nostalgia.

The idea of a cooperative community persisted in Pike County. New Philadelphia residents continued to help their neighbors later on. The Washingtons were an African American family that had married into the McWorter family. LeMoyné Washington was the last remaining member of the family until his death in 2000. The way in which Robert Gleckler spoke about LeMoyné was the best testament to the recurring theme of community as family. Gleckler recalled of LeMoyné Washington, "Oh yeah, he took care of my great-grandfather when his wife died when he [LeMoyné] was in high school. He moved in with them and cooked and took care of them while he was in high school. He also did that with Burdick, Virgil Burdick." In turn, Gleckler said, "Mary Burdick took care of him [LeMoyné] when he got older. Mary Burdick took care of him in her home down in Pleasant Hill. They never put him in the nursing home." The statement "They never put him in a nursing home" accentuated how important the idea of community as family is in these oral histories.

The residents reciprocated support and never simply left someone to seek help elsewhere. Nancy Mills, a New Philadelphia descendant,

recounted that when she attended MacMurray College and needed a job, her father told her to see Irene Butler Brown, who was head cook at MacMurray. Irene Butler Brown was the daughter of William Butler, one of the African American settlers at New Philadelphia. Mills continues, "Of course she knew my dad, Frank Johnson, and she thought that was just wonderful." Ron Carter, a descendant of William Butler, often would go to reunions with the McWorters. He added, "At the time, they would say these are your cousins. These are your cousins." The importance of New Philadelphia as a community and family is a recurring image in most of the oral histories (Figure 1).

### **Racism in a Multiracial Town**

Contrary to these images of an integrated and cooperating community, several New Philadelphia descendants recounted stories of racial prejudice and events of racial strife in the area. Although her mother warned her against hurting the Washington children, African Americans, or else she would "blister her," Mary Jo Foster recalled that the Washingtons "had to toe the mark pretty well." Foster also indicated that racial prejudice existed at community gatherings. For instance, when Sophie Washington would bring food, people would take special notice of what she brought because they did not want to eat what an African American woman made. Foster recalled:

When we went to school there, once a month, we'd have community meetings at night and people would take refreshments and then on the last day of school, we just had a regular big blowout. Sophie Washington, LeMoyné's mother, was such a nice woman, and they lived in the neighborhood. She would bring food just like the rest of us did, and some people would go around looking to see what she put out because they didn't want to eat anything a Negro woman made. I'd be going around asking what the recipe was because she was a wonderful cook, but that was the attitude.

Both Glen Ralph and Nancy Mills also recalled that the local community suffered from forms of racism. Ralph described the undercurrent: "There were different ways that there was discrimination. Depending on who you talked to, there was some discrimination against the Washingtons." Mills admitted to this as well, as she recalled that some fellow classmates in high



FIGURE 1. SOCIAL REUNIONS IN THE NEW PHILADELPHIA AREA HAVE BEEN A CONTINUAL FOCUS OF DESCENDANT AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES. HOMECOMING, SEPTEMBER 1948, SHAW COUNTY SCHOOL, HADLEY TOWNSHIP, PIKE COUNTY, IL (COURTESY PIKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY).

school refused to sit next to Juanita Washington. She remembered, "I mean we didn't have a large class, but some of them in Home Ec. wouldn't sit by her, but I rather enjoyed it." These non-overt, "different ways" of discrimination created an image of integration, but still maintained a social order in which the African Americans were considered to be different and outsiders.

Stories of overt racism and prejudice also existed in the oral histories. Ruby Duke commented that the town of Barry was a "sundown" town. "When the McWorters used to go into town, they wouldn't let them go after dark." Ron Carter, a descendant of William Butler, related a more disturbing and blatant story of racism he had heard from one of his family members. Butler "married a lovely full-blooded Caucasian woman named Catherine Wright, whose father had brought her from Missouri to Illinois" (Mateson 1964:35). Carter recounted, "Now, this lady obviously doesn't look Afro-American. And she had a child, could have been this child right

here [pointing at a picture]. The baby got sick. This was back, maybe in 1900s. ... Anyway, she called the doctor for the baby and the doctor was a white doctor. He went in the room and said, 'I got to shut the door.' So, he shuts the door and they stayed outside." Carter continues, "I don't know why he said, 'Stay outside,' but the baby died. It is suspected that he might have killed the baby. I don't know." Carter dismissed it, but offered the explanation that the doctor did not like a black man married to a white woman.

These incidents of overt racism towards the local African American community offer a stark contrast to the image of a community working together that is presented in other oral histories. Even though the stories about existing racism seem to clash with the previous idea of an agrarian community, both images supplemented the historic and social context by presenting these two perspectives.

In addition to these memories, many descendants remember Ku Klux Klan activity in the

area. Three people recalled the same story of the Ku Klux Klan disrupting the building of old Highway 36 during the 1920s, where they had African American women cooking for the men. The *Barry Adage* also mentioned the incident under local items in 1925 as, “The Ku Klux Klan gave a scare to Negroes of the grading crew on the hard road” (Freeman 2008). Mary Jo Foster saw the event firsthand when her father, who was told about it by his cousin, took the family down the road to a neighboring farmer’s house. Foster recalled, “Anyway, we were in there visiting and Dad looked up and said, ‘Well, there they come,’ and they were coming out of Barry. The Ku Klux Klan was coming out because they’d moved in a big tent with women, about 28 to 30, to cook for those men who were putting the highway through. They had horses and lights and sheets all in front of things. Oh, it was scary looking.” Foster further commented that the “next morning there wasn’t a Negro woman there.” The incident was so etched in the community’s consciousness that Foster said that the daughter of the local farmer “always remembered when they were burning the cross down there on her dad’s farm.”

Likewise, when Elmo Waters was asked what he could remember about growing up near New Philadelphia, his first response was the story of the cross burning. He even questioned himself, “I don’t know why I remember that more than anything.” Kathleen Blee (1993) observed that when she conducted oral histories with former members of the Ku Klux Klan, many would refer to their involvement as uplifting, and found no need to explain why they found the Klan appealing. To them, it was normal to have a life in the Klan. This empathy with the Ku Klux Klan did not exist in the oral histories of New Philadelphia. To those interviewed, like Mary Jo Foster and Elmo Waters, the memory of the Klan appeared to lurk uncomfortably below the surface in the community. It inspired a kind of fear and awe in the children of the 1920s, who probably did not quite comprehend the intended meanings of a burning cross. The retelling of the story might have had more to do with what events people, especially children, remember, rather than as evidence of the contours of local social norms. By the repetition of this story in the oral histories, it did seem that the Ku Klux Klan cross burning near old Highway 36 made

a lasting impression on more than the African American women who were cooking for the road laborers. The image of the burning cross was etched in the minds of the local residents, and the extent to which it affected social and racial interactions is unclear.

Ruby Duke, whose family was close to the McWorters, admitted that she also had two great-uncles in the Ku Klux Klan. Her mother had never told her about that side of the family, and she had wondered why both families never liked one another. Duke commented, “I loved them to death, but I didn’t like it, I didn’t like it because I had two uncles on the Ku Klux Klan.” It seems that the contradiction of community cooperation and racial tension can be envisioned within the families of the New Philadelphia residents themselves. Families had to exist in both worlds, and in a sense create an uneasy balance. Mary Jo Foster made an interesting comment about the Washington family, who lived less than half a mile from the cross-burning incident. Foster acknowledged that the Washingtons, especially LeMoyné, who she knew quite well, were severely frightened that night. She says of the Ku Klux Klan, however, “They didn’t bother them at all because they were natives, but they were scared anyway.”

The idea that the Washingtons were safe because they were “natives” to the community, but were still scared for their lives, illustrates how thin the line was between both worlds. Foster’s reassurances that established African American families were spared from violence failed to recognize the fear felt by those African Americans in the face of Ku Klux Klan violence. The complicated stories and memories associated with the Ku Klux Klan in these oral histories failed to answer fully questions as to how much racism existed in the supposedly multiracial town, but they indicated a more complex social situation than the agrarian community image.

### **Archaeology, Oral Histories, and the Community**

Oral histories can provide an historical context and reveal information that can lead to further places for archaeological investigations. Several individuals interviewed for the oral histories provided locations for structures they



remembered when those buildings were still standing in the town. As a young girl, Grace Hughes remembered her father taking plowshares to the New Philadelphia blacksmith shop. She recalled, "It would be east of the road that goes alongside where you're digging. It would be south of the blacktop." Matteson (1964:19) reported that in 1964 the foundation of the blacksmith shop, which had been operated by Squire McWorter into the early 20th century, remained visible on the town site, which was then part of neighboring farmlands. She commented that the blacksmith shop remnants were the last of the original businesses in New Philadelphia. The location of the blacksmith shop has yet to be fully excavated, but Hughes's description, along with the other information, can lead to a clearer interpretation and historical context.

The archaeological findings at New Philadelphia are far from being completed. Some difficulties arose when it came to identifying African American material culture as different from that of other town inhabitants. When comparing early-19th-century sites in Illinois, Mazrim (2002:268) concluded that many forms of material culture become homogenized and earlier cultural differences become indistinguishable. When attempting to distinguish between the material culture of African Americans and European Americans, problems arise with the archaeologists themselves. What appears to be similar material culture may have been defined or seen with different symbolic values by blacks and whites. It is also difficult to distinguish artifacts with regard to class at New Philadelphia, because most of the residents participated in an agricultural economy.

Considering the difficulties associated with determining cultural, ethnic, and class differences in the assemblages recovered from each house lot, the oral histories became increasingly important. White (2005) concluded that the oral histories were essential to developing a clearer understanding and picture of the Butlers as an African American family living at New Philadelphia, and supplied a richer perspective that the archaeological record alone could not provide. Ron Carter, a Butler descendant, reported his family history, and other participants told stories that presented how the rest of the community viewed the Butlers. The New Philadelphia oral histories offered a

way to help historical archaeologists understand race and racism where the material culture did not readily offer a full story (White 2005).

In addition, the oral histories helped to establish the idea of a community-based archaeology program. Every person interviewed was asked what he or she thought of and desired from the archaeology project, and each one of them was enthusiastic about its potential. Elmo Waters commented, "Most people don't have any idea where it [New Philadelphia] is, but they will before long. Then, they will really know about it." The memoirists are also excited about their own contribution to the history by being part of the oral history project. Mary Jo Foster stated, "Well, I'm glad I could tell you those things because they need to go down in history. If it doesn't get down by our generation, it won't get down because my son doesn't know any of this."

As for the potential future development of the New Philadelphia site, people have different ideas, from a museum and visitors' center to a town reconstruction. Shackel (2004:11) has emphasized the importance of archaeologists including communities in the decision process: "By practicing archaeology and recognizing its potential for creating heritage, archaeologists can embrace the various and diverse histories found in any one place or community." Ron Carter wanted "some nice recognition, something that's probably unique like a former slave founding a town." He commented, "To have a community that's as diverse as it was and the fact that it was during the time of slavery and for a man to be able to do it, that's beyond expectations for anybody." It seems that the passion of the New Philadelphia descendants and local community members for this heritage, and their embrace of the archaeology project will lead them to a shared stewardship.

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