



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies*

Title: *Interview with Mary Crozet Wood Johnson*

Date of Interview: *December 18, 1992*

Location of Interview: *Unknown*

Interviewer: *Patricia Knock*

Transcriber: *David Silverman*

Abstract: Mary Crozet Wood Johnson was born in Alexandria and lived in a house near the corner of Quaker Lane and Woods Lane. She tells of the neighbors who lived in that area. She also talks about the one-room schoolhouse she attended at Fort Ward, which she knew as, "The Fort," and the clothes she wore and the games she played. She tells of the occupations of her parents and grandparents as well as the churches her parents attended.

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Introductions	
Patricia Knock:	This is a recording of Crozet Woods Johnson.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No “s” on it.
P.K.:	No “s.”
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah.
P.K.:	Wood Johnson. Okay. And it’s December, 18, 1992, and this is for the development of an African American neighborhood on Fort Ward Park post-Civil War and also for the study of the Seminary Hill African American neighbors. Crozet, hi.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	[laugh] Hi.
P.K.:	[both laugh]
Area Around Quaker Lane and Woods Lane	
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Hi, I hate my voice. I sound like a frog. The people who lived on King Street. On the other side, on the other side of T.C. Williams?
P.K.:	Uh-huh.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	In that part of land on north Quaker Lane and you have that dry cleaners? That section in there?
P.K.:	Right.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And the people who lived there.
P.K.:	Let me show you. I have a map.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Really.
P.K.:	Yeah.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Okay.
P.K.:	And you’ve made me a list of the residents of the community.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Including the people who lived on the other side.

P.K.:	Of King Street?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah. On the west, no, the east side of King Street beyond, off Quaker Lane.
P.K.:	And on which Lane?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Near Quaker Lane. I thought I might be able to...[inaudible] I don't think I will be able to say all the names.
P.K.:	Well, you gave me a long list here of peoples' names.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	'Cause this goes back to, this goes back a long ways.
P.K.:	Do these include people that lived on Fort Ward?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No, I mean people who lived here.
P.K.:	Okay. These would be the people who lived on?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Lived in this immediate area.
P.K.:	In this immediate area.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Not Fort Ward. I have some of those names, but I didn't write all of them down.
P.K.:	Okay.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I did that. I did not do that because you called and told me that they were looking at Charles [inaudible].
P.K.:	Right.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	So I thought that would be duplication and that means that I did not put down their names.
P.K.:	Well, there's really...Seminary Hill started with the development of the Fort Ward neighborhood, but as I started talking to people I realized that before, it seemed like before there were people living there, there were people living here. On Quaker Lane and Woods Lane. That this is maybe even an earlier neighborhood in Alexandria. Do you know if people were talking about that?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. I just—it's just that my father told me, particular, that this was the older of the two areas. And I never, I hadn't heard that.
P.K.:	Your father lived up, where did he live? Up closer to King Street?

Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	You know the house on the corner?
P.K.:	Behind the apartment buildings?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. Right on Woods Lane, on this side. There's a corner house. And it was on that plot there that this house was.
P.K.:	So that house is there now?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. It was rebuilt.
P.K.:	It was rebuilt, but it's the same plot of land?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	It was the same plot of land.
P.K.:	Okay. Here is the Oakland Baptist Church, and here's the old Seminary Public School. This is from 1956. And now here's Quaker Lane coming down...
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	1956, you say?
P.K.:	Uh huh. This is Quaker Lane coming down here, like here's King Street and here's Quaker Lane coming down here. Here's the apartments, and here's Woods Lane. Are you talking about this first house here?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	On this side. He was born right across the lane here, and that's where his parents lived.
P.K.:	Across from where the school is?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. Right up here where my neighbor is. Near his property. It extended over close to the Adams land.
P.K.:	What was his name?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	James Adams.
P.K.:	Your father's name was?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. My father's name was William Wood.
P.K.:	William Wood
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And my grandfather was Douglas Wood.

P.K.:	So William Wood was your father?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah.
P.K.:	And Douglas Wood was your grandfather, your father's father.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yes.
P.K.:	Were you a relation to the Johnsons or was your husband a relation to the Johnsons?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No.
P.K.:	Because a Johnson gave property for Oakland Baptist. He was not related to them?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No, my husband is from Texas.
P.K.:	Okay. I didn't know if there was a connection there or not. This is the map from 1891, and it has the names, up here, of the people who lived on Fort Ward: the Shortsers, Millers, Falls, Jacksons, and Adams. But then down here across from the Theological Seminary, where there's the high school, the Theological Seminary, and this would be Quaker Lane, I have all these houses here, but no names, so what I'm thinking is maybe that was Douglas Wood's house, and I think Adams' house was here from what I hear from Julia Bradby.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Which direction is this going toward?
P.K.:	Here's King Street going downtown, King Street going this way, and here's Quaker Lane coming down here, and this would be Quaker Lane coming across. It made a jog there, I guess, but this is King and here's Braddock, so this would be going into town and this would be like where your house is now, and we are going up the street and we could turn right onto King Street or go over here to Braddock. So, maybe, this first house coming down here, you think that might have been...
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	It was almost in front of the...not almost in front but very close, on this side, to the gate.
P.K.:	To the gate up beside there.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	On the high school.

P.K.:	Okay. Okay. That's right here, then. That would be here. It might be that, or it might be this one, 'cause this is the high school. This is where you go into the high school, and this is the driveway. This is old map now.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yes. It was on this side.
P.K.:	This side.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	But this property, after about the time I was five years old, [inaudible; sounds like the lord or the law] took it.
P.K.:	To where?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Right down here from Woods Lane. His father and mother had property on the other side of Woods Lane.
P.K.:	Okay. Well, I haven't got...
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And on the other side the Adams lived. I mean the Bradbys live now, they were Adams, and her parents lived there.
P.K.:	Okay. I know where that is.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And right next to that is his orchard and his gardens and then the next area had his house in it, and then came the lane that divided my grandparents' property, which part of it went down to King Street.
P.K.:	Okay. Now that lane, did that lane go through this place that we call Oak Hill?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Well, I would have to know just what place. I thought Oak Hill was over in the back somewhere.
P.K.:	I have Oak Hill back by where T.C. Williams is, like behind the church and then more east, more closer to going into town. I only have people telling me that. I don't know it. I haven't found it on the maps. Where would you think it would be? Would you tell me in your own words?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I thought it was farther to the right maybe.
P.K.:	Closer to Janney's Lane?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I thought it was closer than that. But that doesn't have to be. That is my perception. So it certainly is not Gospel.
P.K.:	No, but when I have three or four people telling me about where they think it is I get a better idea.

Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Uh-huh.
P.K.:	I don't have a map. What I need to get is a topographical map that shows me the hills, and then I could come back and show you. This doesn't have that on it. Well, it does a little bit. This is a hill here. And this is a hill down here. But I need to get a better map to tell me. Do you know Bush Hill?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I've heard of it. I don't know.
P.K.:	Do you remember Fort Ward being called Fort Hill? Did you hear it called "The Fort"?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. Let me see. Just "The Fort." That is all that I knew, until later, till I came back around here, and found out that it's being called Fort Ward.
P.K.:	When you grew up in this area, did your mom have a midwife, do you remember?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I guess so. I don't know about me. I know that my sister [inaudible].
P.K.:	Do you remember the name of the person?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	The person was Jenny Wanderzer [possibly Wanzer ¹].
P.K.:	That's the name of the person?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And she lived over there, I don't know. As far back as I know, she lived on Braddock Road where those new houses are built, um, at the stoplight. Where that stoplight is.
P.K.:	On West Braddock?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Uh-huh.
P.K.:	Over the townhouse condominiums there?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	They are there now. There were three that were built along that side street that takes you into Fairlington or to T.C. Williams.
P.K.:	I know that.

1 See Oral History of Elizabeth Douglas.

Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And her house was in that area.
P.K.:	So you grew up in this house that was actually on Woods Lane, on Woods Lane and Quaker Lane?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yes.
School at Ford Ward	
P.K.:	And what age did you start going to school? Did you start at first grade? They didn't have kindergarten.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No, but I went to school, to teachers, before I was old enough to go.
P.K.:	You did.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah. She took me in hand with her.
P.K.:	Where did you go to school? Who was the teacher?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Um, Mrs. Town. Beatrice Town [possibly Terrell ²].
P.K.:	So she lived down here by you?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No, she lived on, for a while, she lived with her in-laws, and there they built their house down on King Street. And, I guess, I can't say just where, it wasn't too far down. But if it were...[asks another person in the house] Emwan, do you remember the exact location of Ms. Beatrice's house?
Emwan:	Can't hear you.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Do you know the exact location on King Street where Ms. Beatrice's house was, approximately, before this place was all torn up?
P.K.:	Was it down across from Chinquapin?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Um, no, it was on this side, on the south side. You know I get my north and south mixed up pretty well. When you go to the river, you're going...
P.K.:	East.

² See Oral History of Elizabeth Douglas.

Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	East. Then you would go this way and that's west. And you go to Washington and that's north, and this is south. I think I'm always doing that.
P.K.:	So she was on the north side of King Street?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	She was on this side. Here's King Street here. Her house was on this side.
P.K.:	Yeah, you were right. The same side as the church is on. So were you four when she took you to school?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I was four years old.
P.K.:	And you walked down to Fort Ward?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yes.
P.K.:	How many kids were in your class?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I couldn't begin to say.
P.K.:	Was it two rooms?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I don't know. One room.
P.K.:	A porch out front?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. I don't recall it. I can't recall, no. It seemed to me that, um, you just went up steps and on in.
P.K.:	Was she the only teacher?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Uh-huh.
P.K.:	Beatrice Town. Before they had the school built, do you remember if they were meeting in a house? Were they meeting in somebody's house for school? Where was the school before there was a schoolhouse? Do you remember that?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	You mean the one up before? I don't know. Even if I [inaudible], it was too far to remember.
P.K.:	As long as you can remember the school it was at the fort. These are some pictures from the fort from the overhead view, and I think...[silence] That's better. I think I have to talk to Sergeant Young,

	because he lived there, and I think that might be the school. Do you think that might be the school?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	[yawn]
P.K.:	That's made over into a house. I guess it's harder to tell then.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I can't tell.
P.K.:	You can't tell? That's okay. That's okay.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	'Cause the way I remember, it was sort of straight up.
P.K.:	Just like a little child's drawing of a house.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	The door. It was big enough to hold, but it was very simple.
P.K.:	I think that's Claire Adams' house.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And I don't remember.
P.K.:	You don't remember?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Uh-uh.
P.K.:	How many years did you go to the school at Fort Ward?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I guess till when...It might of been before fourth grade. Fourth, because I've been trying to decide whether or not when I came back when I started going here. I was in the fifth or sixth grade. I must of been in the fifth?
P.K.:	Do you remember what year you started school?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I guess it was around 1920.
P.K.:	That school was one room, so that meant that all the grades were all in together?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And there weren't that many teachers.
P.K.:	Did you have brothers going there with you?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	They never went there. They went to the hall.

P.K.:	Liberty Hall?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Liberty Hall. It was used as a temporary place to go while the school is being built, and I can't remember all the detail.
P.K.:	Well, I wouldn't be surprised if they went there. I think they were changing boundaries, or something. I think it was a confusing time.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Something was happening, and the younger children were down there.
P.K.:	At Liberty?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	At Liberty.
P.K.:	When you went to school, what would you wear? What would be an appropriate clothing for school?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Well, it would be...I remember dresses.
P.K.:	Long dresses, short dresses?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Just regular.
P.K.:	Just regular dresses.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	At that time I was wearing high-top shoes.
P.K.:	You were?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Uh-huh. And white stockings.
P.K.:	Like with a garter hooked up onto your waist?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Well, no. You put your foot in and cover the knee, cover the whole knee, but by the time it got here [inaudible]. And a bodice. [inaudible]
P.K.:	I see, so did you have laces on your shoes or buttons?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I had both but mostly laces. I do remember, though, the small buttons. And a buttonhook.
P.K.:	A buttonhook. So when you went to school, would you take your lunch with you there to school?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah.

P.K.:	You spent the whole day in school? And do you remember going out, playing at recess?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	If the weather was good.
P.K.:	Did the girls and the boys play together?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Generally they played separately, as long as I remember. It's been a little while.
P.K.:	Were those graves down there then?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah. They were down there, but not so many people as are buried there now. And I guess we never thought anything about it.
P.K.:	So you didn't tease about it or try to scare each other about the graveyard?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No, I kept it calm.
P.K.:	What did it look like? Were there trees around there then? Were there a lot of trees around the school? Was it shady or...
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I don't remember any trees. I cannot visualize all of it. I know there were trees throughout on the ground adjacent. But how close to the school I don't remember.
P.K.:	Do you remember any of the games that you played? When I talked to Mrs. Elizabeth Douglas, she was telling me about making some dolls. Taking a jar and somehow making the doll. Did you do that?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No.
P.K.:	Did you skip rope?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Oh, yes. I forgot all about that. Oh, yes. I loved to skip rope. And we played tag after we got older, not when we were very small. And we played jacks.
P.K.:	I'm pretty good at that.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	And I loved to shoot marbles. I wore a hole in my thumb shooting marbles.
P.K.:	That was a boy's game, though, wasn't it?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah. I used to shoot marbles.

P.K.:	Me too. I used to get all my cousins' marbles and make them mad. Twin boy cousins.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	But after I wore a whole in my thumb I had to quit.
P.K.:	You must of really been flinging them out there.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I did, I got good at it.
P.K.:	You make a circle right? You do a circle, and then you put the marbles in and you get to shoot from the side, and you shoot them out at yours, right?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah.
P.K.:	I did that same game. Ohio and Virginia, same game.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	So, uh, I wasn't great but I wasn't bad at it. I made a depression in my thumb and wore my nail down. So that was it. I had to quit. Of course, by that time I was older and it wasn't the only thing I had.
P.K.:	Did you have doll babies, that was a fun thing to do, right?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Oh, yes, we had dolls every Christmas, and doll clothes. And my mother at times made extra doll clothes.
P.K.:	It's hard, it's hard to sew those tiny things.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	But she did it. And then that gave us a change of clothes for the dolls.
Parents and Grandparents	
P.K.:	Doll clothes are hard. Those armholes and tiny little seams. What did your mom and dad...What was your father's profession? You said he had an orchard.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	That was my grandfather.
P.K.:	That was your grandfather.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	My grandfather worked for Mr. Daingerfield, and I think he was more there then anywhere else.
P.K.:	More what?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	There.

P.K.:	[laugh] Did Daingerfield have a farm? Did he have land?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	He had a large area down near Janney's Lane. You know where that church is at the corner of [inaudible] and Quaker Lane?
P.K.:	Uh-huh.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	It sits back in there, by that church, in that general area just beyond Duke Street. I don't know if any of that land is incorporated. That corner and that church property.
P.K.:	Do you think your great grandfather worked for Daingerfield?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I wouldn't think so because, um, I was only ten years old at the time. Great-grandfather was about seventy-something.
P.K.:	So that would have been before the civil war that he was alive?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I don't know, I don't think so.
P.K.:	If you were ten years old it would have been about 1920, so he would have been born around the civil war time.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I guess so, but I don't know the years.
P.K.:	Yeah. I will have to look it up for you. I have census reports with "Wood" on it to look it up for you. A lot of the people were connected with the seminary in this neighborhood.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yes.
P.K.:	A lot of them worked over the seminary.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	That's right.
P.K.:	There was a man from Ohio—I just noticed because I was from Ohio—that worked, who was a brick man, that did brick work, you know, a bricklayer, probably built some of the buildings over there, and different people I have heard have worked at the high school, and different families that had ladies that have done laundry for the high school students. But your family, your great-grandfather worked for Daingerfield, and then your father...
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	My father too.
P.K.:	And your father too. So your mom was a stay-at-home mom?

Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	For a while, but my mother went to work in the government when I was quite young. I don't recall her having another job.
P.K.:	But since you became a dietician, I was wondering if maybe your mom was or maybe there was another medical person in the family.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. She, I think, at the time that she got married, she was working in Washington. I can't remember any details.
P.K.:	Is she from Washington, D.C.?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	No. She was from Leesburg, Virginia. The [inaudible]
P.K.:	Now both of your parents were members of Oakland Baptist church?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	My mother.
P.K.:	Your mother was a member?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Yeah. My father belonged to Third Baptist Church, as did his mother. She belonged there. [inaudible]
P.K.:	I remember there were three ladies, I think, that did belong to other churches that were instrumental at Third Baptist. Third Baptist. Where is that?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	It was up there on Patrick Street.
P.K.:	On Patrick?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	I don't know the streets very well, so I don't know what comes next.
P.K.:	[laugh] I don't either.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	You know where Meade Memorial Church is?
P.K.:	Yes.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	It was on that corner. Third Baptist is not at that corner anymore. They just enlarged that church.
P.K.:	I know where it is. One block down from the flower shop. I went to Meade one time to talk to the pastor. I have to see what else you gave me. You gave me a list of the neighborhood.
Farewells	

Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Did I give you that?
P.K.:	There's your copy. I have the original. This is great because...
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Sorry, I don't mean to criticize, but the way I answered some of your questions...
P.K.:	I'm so amazed, and I thank you so much, You wrote the answers.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Oh, well, I tried to pare them down some and not get too wordy, but my daughter's been saying that she wants specifics. Specifics, she says. [inaudible]
P.K.:	You have good handwriting, too.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Thank you so much. [inaudible]
P.K.:	Thank you so much for this.
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	[inaudible]
P.K.:	If I have any questions can I call you back?
Mary Crozet Wood Johnson:	Okay. [End]