



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



Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies – Freedmen’s Cemetery Descendants*

Title: *Interview with Paula Haskins Williams*

Date of Interview: *June 21, 2008*

Location of Interview: *Not known*

Interviewer: *Char Bah*

Transcriber: *Robert Colton*

Abstract: Ms. Paula Haskins Williams was born in 1952 and has lived in Alexandria all of her life. During the interview, she discusses her family history, recalling how her father’s family lived in the ‘Cross Canal’ neighborhood and later on, ‘the Bergs.’ She remembers her father telling her that their ancestors were buried in Alexandria’s Freedmen’s Cemetery.

Table of Contents/Index

Tape: *Tape 1*

Side: *Side 1*

Minute	Counter	Page	Topic
	1	3	Ms. Williams' parents, siblings
3:30	36	4	Father's life, siblings, death
6:30	73	5	Other relations, father stated unknown family members are buried in Freedmen's Cemetery.

Char Bah:	Today is June 21, 2008, and I am interviewing Ms. Paula Haskins Williams. Paula, can you please tell me your full name?
Paula Williams:	Paula Regina Haskins Williams.
C.B.:	What was your husband's first name, or what is your husband's first name?
Paula Williams:	Theodore Williams.
C.B.:	Where were you born?
Paula Williams:	Alexandria, Virginia
C.B.:	What year were you born?
Paula Williams:	1952.
C.B.:	What is your occupation?
Paula Williams:	Personnel analyst.
C.B.:	Who were your parents?
Paula Williams:	Corrine Johnson Haskins and James Edward Haskins, Sr.
C.B.:	Can you please name your siblings?
Paula Williams:	Peggy Covern Haskins, Emerson James Edward Haskins, Jr., Constance Haskins Ralls, Sheila Haskins Russell, Jeffrey Haskins, Carol Haskins Daniels, Jeffrey[sp.?] Jane Haskins, Roland Haskins, Sr.
C.B.:	Let us talk about the Haskins family.
C.B.:	What year did your father die?
Paula Williams:	1969.
C.B.:	Where is your father buried?
Paula Williams:	Fort Ward Cemetery
C.B.:	Did you know the names of your dad's siblings?
Paula Williams:	Yes, I do -- John, Mabel and George.
C.B.:	Did your dad talk about his background?
Paula Williams:	Yes, he talked about his grandmother, Ella Haskins, all the time. And his aunts. (I knew one of his aunts) And, he talked about his uncle.
C.B.:	Can you tell me some of the things he said?
Paula Williams:	He said that he liked to go to his Grandma Ella's house and Aida (who was his daddy's sister) stayed there. They used to love to go 'round there and visit with them.
C.B.:	For example, where did he live growing up as a child?
Paula Williams:	Cross Canal. What was Cross Canal...is by the Giant [Supermarket] on North Saint Asaph Street. It is no longer 'Cross Canal.' And then they done left there and went to 'The Berg.'
C.B.:	What was your father's occupation?
Paula Williams:	My father was a laborer.
C.B.:	Did you ever meet your dad's parents?

Paula Williams:	His mother (my grandfather) was deceased.
C.B.:	If so, where were they living?
Paula Williams:	My grandmother lived in 'The Berg' and then she lived on South Alfred Street.
C.B.:	How often did you visit?
Paula Williams:	About once a week.
C.B.:	What were their names?
Paula Williams:	His name was John Andrew Haskins and her name was Virginia Haskins. And she had a nickname of 'Monk.'
C.B.:	Did you remember the year when your dad's siblings died?
Paula Williams:	Yeah. Well, one of them --Uncle Johnny died first. He died in March of [19]'69; and my father died in November '69; and my aunt Mabel recently passed in 2004.
C.B.:	Are any of his siblings living now?
Paula Williams:	Yes, George Jones --his favorite brother.
C.B.:	Looking at the family chart that I have prepared, tell me whether you ever heard any stories about John Haskins and Ella Miller?
Paula Williams:	Yes, that was Grandma Miller; that was 'Grandma El.'
C.B.:	Did your dad ever talk about his grandparents...?
Paula Williams:	Yes, he did.
C.B.:	Did he talk about his childhood growing up?
Paula Williams:	Yes, he talked about his childhood, where he grew up.
C.B.:	Who did he grow up with?
Paula Williams:	His favorite friend was...his name was Walter Johnson, but they called him 'Mr. Shanky Boy.' He grew up with Mr. Henry, Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Bennie Armstrong, Mr. Harris, Mr. Sherman Harris, and all those gentlemen.
C.B.:	How many generations can you go back with your Haskins family?
Paula Williams:	About three and a fifth[?]
C.B.:	Did your dad ever talk about his uncles and aunts?
Paula Williams:	Yes, he did.
C.B.:	Which one was his favorite?
Paula Williams:	Aunt Ruth.
C.B.:	What did he say about Aunt Ruth?
Paula Williams:	That they just loved her. She came to their house every other day.
C.B.:	What church did your Haskins family belong to?
Paula Williams:	Oakland.
C.B.:	Oakland. So, they were living down in the Bergs...Then actually, how did they get to Oakland?
Paula Williams:	I don't know. My father went to Ebenezer, but after he married my mother...he joined Oakland.
C.B.:	Do you have any pictures of your dad and his family?
Paula Williams:	[Looking at photo.] There's my grandmother right here, my father

	right here, my brothers and sisters.
C.B.:	I'll take a picture of that one...Is this your father's mother?
Paula Williams:	My grandmother.
C.B.:	So, that's Virginia Holmes.
Paula Williams:	Right.



*Virginia Holmes Haskins (Paula's father's mother)
(Courtesy Paula Haskins Williams)*

C.B.:	Could you give me a physical description of your father's parents? You have a picture, but you don't have one of his dad?
Paula Williams:	Oh, no. No.
C.B.:	Did your dad every mention that he had family buried at the Freedmen's Cemetery?
Paula Williams:	Yeah, he did. But he said they were right[?] on the south side.
C.B.:	Did he know who?
Paula Williams:	No, all he said, "That's where they used to put everybody." [Inaudible]
C.B.:	Outside of your siblings are there any more Haskins relatives living?
Paula Williams:	[Inaudible]
C.B.:	And they're living?
Paula Williams:	And they're living, right.
C.B.:	Are they still in Alexandria?
Paula Williams:	Yes, down Richmond Highway. I think both of them said they were Richmond Highway. Let me think who else had children. Aunt Mabel didn't have any children. Regina Haynes[sp.?], Sign[sp.?] and Saul. But his oldest son John, they had out of marriage, but John still uses Jr.

	His wife wrote to Bossy[sp.?], and two children Gerald and Marian. Gerald is dead, but Marian is still living, as far as we know. Otherwise, fill in the obvious...[We] have a little Mabel (Regina's daughter) and Ronnie, his son. Their surname name is Applewhite.
CG	What was their last name?
Paula Williams:	Applewhite. Those were his children, we visited with them.
C.B.:	[Inaudible.] If so, would they like to participate in there in the Freedmen's Cemetery?
Paula Williams:	I doubt it, because they're up there, you know, like they have been up there. They've been gone a long time.
C.B.:	What about the ones on Richmond Highway?
Paula Williams:	I doubt it.
C.B.:	You doubt it
Paula Williams:	Yeah, well they're older, they're our age. [Inaudible] had a hip replacement. [Inaudible]
C.B.:	When you found out you had an ancestor buried in Freedmen's Cemetery, what were your feelings about having relatives that were buried there in the years 1865 to 1866?
Paula Williams:	To me it proved the point that we were from here. That's what it proved to me.
C.B.:	Did your dad ever say how you all got to Alexandria?
Paula Williams:	No.
C.B.:	He said you were always in Alexandria?
Paula Williams:	As long as he could remember, when he was a child, they may always have been, and all the relatives were always around, you know.
C.B.:	Would other family members be interested in being contacted by the City, which I already asked you and you said no, but what about your siblings?
Paula Williams:	Not them, no.
C.B.:	Could the City inform you of activities and maybe you would share it with them?
Paula Williams:	Yeah.
C.B.:	Okay. If the City of Alexandria wants to do a follow up interview with you, would it be okay with you?
Paula Williams:	If I can work it in, sure.
C.B.:	I want to thank you for sharing your family history with me. This is Char Bah, signing off.