

Calobe Jackson Interview

July 24, 2019

Interview by Jim LaGrand and David Pettegrew

Juniata Room of the Pennsylvania State Archives

Transcribed by Rachel Williams

Calobe Jackson, Jr., is a Harrisburg institution, known and appreciated by many for his work as a postal supervisor, his service on the Harrisburg school board, and his indefatigable work as a historian of his city. A native and life-long resident of Harrisburg, he knows Harrisburg like few others. Jim LaGrand and David Pettegrew interviewed Mr. Jackson on July 24, 2019 in the Juniata Room of the Pennsylvania State Archives. Rachel Williams transcribed the two-hour long interview; Joshua Reid and David Pettegrew edited the transcription.

Mr. Jackson speaks about his experiences at school, in his neighborhood, among friends and classmates, his work as a postal clerk and local historian, influential figures in Harrisburg's African American community, the City Beautiful Movement, and the Commonwealth Monument Project. An excerpted section of this interview was edited and published by the interviewers in the winter 2020 issue of Pennsylvania History, "[Harrisburg's Historic African American Community: An Interview with Calobe Jackson Jr.](#)" (pp. 212-224). This is available for [free download](#) from the PHA website. The full version, edited slightly to improve readability, style, and flow, is available below.

Dr. James (Jim) LaGrand (hereafter, JL): This is Jim LaGrand and David Pettegrew speaking with Mr. Calobe Jackson on July 24th, 2019, in the Juniata Room at the State Archives. And we are very thankful and pleased that you are able to speak with us and talk with us this afternoon.

Calobe Jackson Jr. (hereafter, CJ): Yes, my pleasure! My pleasure to meet with you.

JL: So, we have a number of things, as I think you know—as I think you might be able to guess that we'd like to hear from you about. Both your—as we were preparing for this we were noting that we're both interested in hearing about *your* life, the way in which you're an *eyewitness* to all sorts of things, in your neighborhood (you were just showing us a picture of a block that you knew very well), schools, organizations of which you were a part, but we also certainly, fully recognize that in recent years, and even decades, you have become a prominent local historian, so we'd also like to talk to you as the Harrisburg historian and Harrisburg scholar—but we

thought we might start with some questions about your own life and growing up. So, just for the record, could you tell us when and where you were born?

CJ: Well, in Harrisburg, April 20th, 1930. And, of course, I just missed the 1930 census by 20 days, 19 days I guess, because that was taken April 1st. I was born there at the old Harrisburg Hospital, but my dad lived at 10 Aberdeen Street at the time, where he had a barber shop and a pool.

JL: And, what were the members of your family when you arrived on the scene in April 1930?

CJ: Actually, I was an only child.

JL: Alright. Did you have other relatives, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents?

CJ: Yes, lots on both sides. Actually, my father and mother both came from Georgia.¹ And my father was in World War I, and he was discharged probably after... Well, he was in World War I—he did not go overseas. He was prepared to go overseas but the war ended in November 1918, so he was discharged, I guess, early in 1919. But by the 1920 census, he's in Harrisburg... So he managed [chuckles] to get to [Harrisburg by January 1920]—if you don't know this—the 1920 census was taken on January the 1st.

CJ: It's the only one—it's the biggest mistake they ever, probably ever made. They took it on the night they said that the farmers would be home, so they took the census January 1st, and the farmers were home, but unfortunately a nor'easter hit the east coast on January the 1st. It was very difficult to complete the census, which they did, but that was the only time they did a census in the wintertime.

JL: But you know as a result of this detail that your father was actually in Harrisburg by, on, or before January 1st.

CJ: Yeah, yeah, right! I was surprised at that.

JL: Yeah.

CJ: Exactly. In Harrisburg.

JL: Okay. And, at the time that you were born in 1930, or in the years before, were any of your extended family in Harrisburg or...?

CJ: Yes! Actually, my mother and her family came from South [Georgia]—they were from Pavo—but dad was from Milledgeville, Georgia. Which I visited—Milledgeville was the old

¹ Calobe Jackson, Sr., and Lena Jackson.

capital of Georgia. When [Union General William Tecumseh] Sherman marched through Georgia, he did not burn Milledgeville, for whatever reason. He did not burn Milledgeville—so, I’ve visited Milledgeville, and a lot of the old records and things are still there, because it was the former capital. And Milledgeville is really not too far from [Atlanta]—it’s about 80 miles from Atlanta. Whereas my mother’s home was Pavo, Georgia, which was down near Thomasville, down near the Florida line. But actually, she came to Harrisburg around 1924, and when she first moved here, she and her family, they lived in Shipoke, on Race street, which they didn’t seem to like, and within six to eight months, they managed to move into Cowden Street and actually into a Black neighborhood, as we would call it.

David Pettegrew (hereafter, DP): Where was that, did you say? The subsequent move?

CJ: She subsequently moved to Wallace Street. She moved probably to Wallace and Broad, which that area, the 7th ward, now, that was predominantly an African American ward in the 1920s and 30s and thereafter.

JL: Alright, so tell us—we’re interested in what you remember, what strikes you now about all of your growing up years. What are the most vivid, important, influential memories and experiences?

CJ: Well, going to school, during the Depression, they discontinued kindergarten, and I didn’t realize this until years later, so, we started school in first grade. We didn’t have kindergarten. We started in first grade, and that was in—it would have been in 1936. And some of the Black kids in the area went to Wickersham School, which was segregated, or Calder School, which was in the 6th ward on Calder Street, which is segregated, but I was sent to Boas Building, which is still standing; it’s an apartment house now, it’s on the corner of Green and Forster Street. It’s called “Boas”, and there were at that time, only maybe three Black children in the school. I was one, Dr. Oxley’s son was one,² and Scott Warrick, who is still living, was another. In fact, Scott Warrick is Marian Dornell’s half-brother. Now, she just passed.³

DP: Yeah.

CJ: So there’s that connection. And I’m not sure why I was sent to that school. It seemed like it was a more prestigious thing to go to that school; at least somebody thought I should go there, so that’s where I went. And, it was quite an experience because of two things: I got to meet a lot of very smart girls and different ethnic groups. Some were Jewish, Greek, Italian, a lot of ethnic groups and when I had the chance to, growing up with them after school, I’d go to visit their

² Dr. George Leonard Oxley, the Harrisburg doctor, whose son was a pianist and conductor of Broadway musicals.

³ Marian Dornell passed away on July 19th, 2019.

houses and things and one of the things I noticed was that most of them had encyclopedias. Even though they probably didn't have liberty [?] better than I did, at my home. By the way, in those days, in Harrisburg, not all houses had indoor plumbing. Now, my house had indoor plumbing. We had indoor toilets. Some houses did not have indoor; they had outhouses. So, [in] the houses with the indoor plumbing—it was much more convenient. But I did notice that some of these other children [speaking unclear] they had encyclopedias, especially *The Book of Knowledge*. I don't know if either of you have seen or heard of *The Book of Knowledge*. It's not like an encyclopedia: *The Book of Knowledge* is a group of stories. Maybe ten, twelve pages. But what makes it so convenient is it's indexed. So what you do, at your leisure, if you just want to read about explorers or something, you can read about astronomy, but if you really want to find something specific, you go to the index. So, my mindset started with this thing of checking indexes and directories, and so from there on, I was always inquisitive about books. If a book's not indexed, I'm not ready to look at it. [JL and DP laugh] Now Michael Barton and I told George Nagle—now I don't know if you know, George wrote these great big books— but he didn't index them. And I said, “George, if I want to find something, well how am I gonna find it?”

DP: I was just looking at his book yesterday, [JL laughs and CJ chuckles] and I was like “Ah there's no index!”

CJ: Well, that was the great experience of reading this *Book of Knowledge*. I think it was probably the 1939 edition of *The Book of Knowledge*, and they were outstanding, outstanding books. Another thing we did a lot: music. Almost everybody learned-played some type of instrument. Now, I played a clarinet, very briefly, and go to Jay's troupe [spelling?] and take music lessons. Many other members of my class, I knew one particular boy named Bobby White, who was-lived across the street from me and was a butcher's son, and he was a white boy, but he had one of those big xylophones, you know, the old wooden ones, which was as long as this table.

JL: Right.

CJ: Well, he became very good at that. And on Saturday mornings, the Rio Theater downtown would have amateur hour.⁴ That was a big thing in the 30s, amateur hour, everybody wanted to go to Hollywood, you know, wanted to be another Shirley Temple or Our Gang Kids,⁵ or whatever, you know. So they'd have tryouts and we'd go to the Rio Theater and see the amateur

⁴ The Rio Theatre started as the Majestic Theater in 1908, at 323 Walnut Street, and then became in 1938 a movie theater, the Rio Theater, which was torn down in 1955 for Strawberry Square.

⁵ A comedy series of short films about the adventures of children in a poor neighborhood.

hour. And of course after that you'd have Western movies and sometimes you'd even have Gene Autry⁶ in person or Roy Rogers in person. That was a very big thing, Saturday morning. I think it was a person that was Smith, something like Bob Smith or something's amateur show. And some of the old clippings in the newspapers—you can pull that up. The Rio, as you probably know, was formerly one of the theaters that Lenwood was looking for—what was it called—the Majestic.

DP: The Majestic!

CJ: Yes. But that had been refurbished, I guess they closed it up—it was actually across the street from the 8th ward! Now, maybe the Majestic at one time was on the other side of the ward. I remember—it being on the south side of Walnut Street, and I'm not sure if it was ever actually in the Old 8th ward or not. But—

DP: There were signs for it in the Old 8th ward.

CJ: Right. That was eventually torn down, but that was—that's where all the kids went on Saturday mornings, especially, you know. It had double features, you know. Abbott and Costello⁷— and Westerns and so forth. So, it was fun growing up in elementary school. We didn't have a lot, but kids had fun. They made their own scooters, made their own things, they put on plays at the school, we'd have plays. We sometimes, if we were interested in going to the high school, we'd sign up and they would take us up to the high school, up to William Penn and we would watch some performances, maybe of the Harrisburg Community Theater, would put on plays for children and things like that. Have either of you ever heard of Capalbo?⁸

DP: I don't think so.

JL: Nope.

CJ: Capalbo was—it probably would have been about 1942, he was like in 7th or 8th grade, he started writing plays. And he eventually, if you Google him, he eventually was the one who brought to Broadway the famous play "Mack the Knife." He's gone now, but he's—a lot of these came out of the young community theater that was working in the high schools at that time. And, like I said, the elementary schools were privy, privy to all that.

Now, at this time, Harrisburg had six 1 through 6 elementary schools, and then we had a junior high school 7 through 9, and high school 10 through 12. Now, I found out later (I didn't realize

⁶ Of "The Singing Cowboy".

⁷ A comedy duo from the mid-20th century.

⁸ Carmen Capalbo was a young theatre director famous in Broadway.

this at the time) that around 1919-1920, Harrisburg started admitting students in the Fall and in the Winter. They had a class that entered in September and a class that entered in February. And they continued this from first grade all the way up, and consequently in 12th grade they had two graduations. They had a June graduation and a February graduation. I don't know if you realize that. Well, the last class I think was 1942. Apparently, when I started school, we just missed that by maybe a year or two.

JL: Hm. Interesting, from your research, did you get a sense of why they did this? Was it just numbers?

CJ: Well, they felt that children grew on half-year increments! You know, sometimes—if your birthday falls, say, in November or December—then you have to wait—

JL: A whole year yeah, but not with this system. That's interesting. So you went from Boas—that was elementary—

CJ: Yes, that was elementary.

JL: —what was your junior high?

CJ: Camp Curtin.

JL: Okay. And then to William Penn for high school.

CJ: High school, yes. I remember distinctly in 6th grade, they gave us a lot of tests. They were testing pretty vigorously for where we were going to be placed to be with the 7th grade. And I was lucky, I was placed in the first section. They would number 7-1, 7-2, 7-3, back up to 7-14. The first 3 or 4 sections were all academic, maybe the 5 through 8 or 9 were commercial—and the other ones basically were called shops or industrial. And one of my friends I met in 7th grade (in fact I met him at the camp we had a band camp that started maybe in August, before the 7th grade) [was] my good friend George Gegis who's still with us. I don't know if you know George—

DP: I don't think I do.

CJ: A U.S. Congressman?

CJ: Yes, he still comes to our class reunions and so forth. So I met some really great people in that 7th grade, 7-1. Yeah, George is one of the ones. Now, he went to school, I think, up at probably Steel. See, the grade schools all fed in, uptown all fed into Camp Curtin. On the hill, the grade school all fed into Edison. So, in junior high, you had this Camp Curtin uptown, and this is the old Camp Curtin building, not the building that's 6th [Street] and William Penn now.

The old Camp Curtin building is where the Camp Curtin Y[MCA] is now [on 6th Street between Woodbine and Forrest]. And we have pictures of that building. There are plenty of pictures around of it. It covered that complete block, same as the Y does there. But it was higher, it probably had five or six stories to it. It seemed to me like it was a much bigger building—

JL: Really? Wow.

CJ:—than the Y. Much bigger building.

DP: And all this time, you were living on Aberdeen?

CJ: No. Well, we moved. Yes, back about—I was probably about four or five—I can basically, hardly remember living on Aberdeen, very faintly. My dad moved his barber shop, I think, for whatever reason, he moved to Sixth and Boas —not exactly Sixth and Boas. If you look at Sixth Street now, Sixth and Boas on the corner is Sixth and Boas is the old Curtis Sternerholm [spelling?] building, which is still standing. My dad’s barber shop is still standing, next to it, it’s vacant now.⁹ Next to that is Jackson House.¹⁰ So that whole block and the side of Jackson house is where the mural is. And the rest of the block is where the church had burned down. But that is basically the block that I really remember—from about ages 5 through 6 and 7.

I remember playing in that area, going up on Boas Street. Now one of the things in going to school, I’d go down Boas Street and—I don’t know if you’ve heard of Sylvester Jackson—C. Sylvester Jackson, was not related to any of these Jacksons [JL and DP laugh], they’re not related, but they all lived in the same area and they were all influential in Harrisburg history. C. Sylvester Jackson lived on the 400 block of Boas Street going down the hill, and I remember his wife was from—she was a Black woman but she was from England, she was born in England. And she had a different accent [fire alarm starts going off in background], which English people do and as you can tell, you can remember that. They’re speaking English, but it’s different.

JL: Right.

CJ: So, you could tell the accent. And I don’t know if she was influential in getting me to go to Boas School or not, I often thought about it.

JL: Ohhh.

CJ: But C. Sylvester Jackson was at that time was very involved—first of all, he was an accountant, and he was in charge of the Boyd Estate, [voices calling out in the background] and, he was on the Harrisburg Planning Commission and the Harrisburg Authority [voices in

⁹ Marvelous Hairstyling Salon at 1002 N 6th Street?

¹⁰ 1004 N 6th Street

background become louder]. He was one of the ones when they built the William Howard Day—is that a bird?

Woman from the Archives: Hi! I'm sorry to interrupt, but if you could come out, this is an evacuation situation. [Woman lightly laughs and CJ chuckles]

DP: Oh, okay!

JL: Well, alright.

Woman: Sorry! [Other voices in background, one mentions, "Fire drill"]

CJ: Well, everything's for real. [Laughs] Everything's for real. If we have to evacuate, we have to evacuate!

Man from the Archives: We haven't had one for months and months. [CJ laughs, the group continues ahead and talks about evacuating people, "Just follow everyone out to find somewhere to hang out..." and the Juniata Room door closes]

[20:40-22:22 Beeping noise continues with the newfound quiet, receding footsteps and distant voices (Timestamps taken from LaGrand audio file). At 36:56, a man says "All come back to work" and distant voices, footsteps, and doors opening and closing resume. Group approaching the Juniata Room at 40:20]

DP: And the recorders are still recording.

CJ: There's going to be a long gap in there.

DP: [Laughs] Yes, there is going to be a long gap. [Door opens and shuffling as the group enters]

JL: We are back after a delay prompted by an alarm that sent us outside to enjoy some sunshine and take a few photos, but we're glad to be back and picking up where we left off. I think you were telling us, at least, according to my notes here, about C. Sylvester Jackson, an accountant and a prominent city figure.

CJ: Yes, he was on the Harrisburg Authority—he's one of our [100 Names](#)—on that pedestal—and he was also on the Harrisburg Authority, he was the one that named the William Howard Day Homes, when he was on the Authority when they built those buildings in the late 1930s, and he named it for William Howard Day because he remembered William Howard Day. He was a graduate of Harrisburg High, I think, 1904 or 1905.

JL: So, you mentioned, going back to your memory of going to Boas elementary, I think you said—

CJ: And then to Camp Curtin.

JL: And then to Camp Curtin. But at Boas you said you were one of three Black students in the class?

CJ: Yes. And I was the only one in my grade. There was one in the grade behind me—

JL: Oh, in the whole school? Sorry, I—

CJ: Yes. And then there was one in the grade behind him.

JL: So, what was that situation at both Camp Curtin and then eventually, we haven't gotten up to William Penn—

CJ: Well, at Camp Curtin, it was different because the students coming out of the Black elementary schools, Wickersham and Calder. When they went to Camp Curtin, all the schools fed into Camp Curtin, and on the [Allison] Hill they fed into Edison. So, once you went to Camp Curtin, then you had Black students in every grade, and almost every class—and same thing on the hill. And one thing, we didn't have any Black teachers at that time. And that's probably worth noting. Now, at the Black elementary schools, they had Black teachers. But at the so-called, basically white elementary schools, there were no Black teachers. There were no Black teachers at Camp Curtin or at William Penn at that time. There were some later. But not at the time I was going there.

JL: As you moved through the educational system, and by the time you were at Camp Curtin, more African American students, what do you remember about how others responded to that? Did that seem to be important or not important?

CJ: Yes, it seemed to be a little important. In fact, junior high school is nice because you have sports, and I started—I wasn't a football player, but—they had track, they ran by weight. Same as they do wrestling. So, track was run by weight and I was in B class. I remember, there was another Jackson there, his name was Sam Jackson and we competed against each other. He'd win sometimes, I'd win sometimes. Cause years later, maybe fifty or sixty years later, one day I saw him, I hadn't seen him for a while, and he'd been drinking and he came over to me and says, he says, "Calobe, I remember you," he said, "You're mother sent you to Boas but I had to go to Wickersham," and I'd never realized all those years that he'd resented the fact that he didn't go to Boas. He didn't say anything—early on, but years later he said that. And he said "Oh, I'm sorry, you know," but evidently something stuck in his mind, you know.

He's deceased now, we were friends, but he realized, or at least he thought that he didn't have the opportunity I had, which may or may not have been so. I mean, because, he did in his field and I did well in my field but that's something that he felt as if perhaps he should have been able to go to Boas too. So, you're gonna have that. If you don't—everybody's going to get the chance to go to the same-type school, and sometimes I see that when we started the Math Science. I was on the school board there when we started SciTech. When you start, you pick out special ones, and the ones who don't make it, they resent it.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

CJ: They resent it. And sometimes, I hate to say, sometimes they don't do as well because they didn't make it, you know. They were that close, somebody selected them—and they didn't make it, so one of the things I had wanted to see was that they expand the [Marshall] Math Science [Academy] and expand SciTech, and I don't know, maybe that'll happen, but I don't know. I thought that that should—that was a starter program to expand, especially the Math Science at the middle school age. That they should have expanded. So, that's another story. [Chuckles]

JL: Yeah. Tell us about what stands out in your memory from your years at William Penn, your high school years.

CJ: Well, again, we continued with sports, probably with better track at William Penn. We had great track teams. In fact, we were third in State; we went to Penn relays [which] were a bit event—to run in.

JL: What were your-what were your events? What did you participate in?

CJ: 100 yard dash-100 yard sprint. 100 yards, the 220, and the 440—relays. In fact, we finished third in the State in...1947.

JL: In the relays?

CJ: In the relays. 4 by 4. And, being on the track team, it helps with—if you're involved in sports in schools, everybody knows who you are. Now, we didn't have girls—what's that title? Nine or whatever.¹¹

[Girls] had intermural sports, like this class plays this class—like basketball, but they didn't have academic sports where one school—William Penn was playing Reading—like the boys were. And I noticed, talking to, years later, some of the girls that were in high school at the same time that I was, they felt like nobody knew who they were. They felt neglected. Where, as I, being on

¹¹ Referring to Title IX, passed in 1972, which prohibited discrimination based upon sex in federally-funded education programs.

the track team and everybody's talking about "Well, Calobe, you did this and this happened," it's a big difference in it....

DP: In respect to the sports specifically?

CJ: Yes. So, it made a difference when that Title IX came in...

JL: So you mentioned some teachers and family members and certainly schools that you remember as being important in how you were formed and shaped here. Any other people or groups or organizations that you think played an important role in your growing up years in your early life?

CJ: Well, as far as history goes, growing up in a barber shop. I got to see—like Sylvester Jackson, I saw him in the barber shop. You get to see a lot of prominent people in a barber shop. And you hear them speak and talk: the ministers, the doctors, Andrew Bradley. You hear discussions about politics and history and just different things so, a lot of things I picked up just from being around in a barber shop. Hearing the elders talk, hearing the men talk about things that they did when they were in school—years ago. So, we'd get an understanding of the perspective, of an appreciation of what had happened before you. Dr. [Charles] Crampton... lived right at 6th and Forster—right next to Messiah [Lutheran] Church on Forster Street, over here—which was probably the 600 block of Forster. Well, every morning he'd have my dad come down and shave him. Now, no Black lived like Crampton did. He had his own chauffeur, garage... Big Buicks or Cadillacs, but he had—my dad would shave him every morning.

JL: Not at his shop?

CJ: No, not at his shop, he would go to his house. And we'd cut his hair. So, a lot of times when his chauffeur wouldn't be there, for any reason, I would go down and sweep the pavement, especially in the summertime, sweep the pavement, hose it down, and he was particular about his doorknobs being shiny. [JL chuckles] He had brass doorknobs. So, I would do that, it would take maybe an hour and a half to two hours and he'd give you a five or ten dollar bill which was a lot of money.

But I did get to talk to Crampton. He was quite a historian, he talked a lot about, sometimes about old Harrisburg. But he eventually talked me into going to Lincoln University by giving me a senatorial scholarship. See, I took all the academic subjects, and I really liked Math and Science more than anything else, but I really, probably just intended just to be a barber, and Crampton says my senior year, he said "You ever think about going to college" and I said, "No, I never thought about it," and he said "Have you studied academic subjects?" and I told him "Yes," so he said "I'll get you a senatorial scholarship." Now, a senatorial scholarship is given

from the state senator. I don't know if they still do that or not. But a senatorial scholarship pays all of your tuition at a college—at a state college.

Now, Lincoln is one, probably Cheyney,¹² whatever, these group of colleges. Well, as it turned out, Harvey Taylor was the Dauphin County senator. But, apparently at that time all the ones he had had been given out, so Dr. Crampton said, "Well, don't worry about that. I'll get you one from Senator [George] Wade." And of course, Senator Wade was the senator in Cumberland County. So, I don't know if that was illegal or not, but anyway, I got one. [DP and JL laugh]

JL: You got one!

CJ: I got one from Senator Wade and of course, you know the bridges are named for Wade and Taylor. They were big-time politicians and so forth. But the senatorial scholarship was nice because at that time the main thing at college then was tuition. The room and board was not that expensive. And, I still have some of my books, I have books that-you're looking at \$2.10. There was a Math book, \$2.10. That was some money, but, you know, not like it is now.

JL: Right.

DP: \$200.

JL: Yeah, that's right, probably. [CJ laughs]

DP: [Laughing] Yes, I know how much they cost.

CJ: Yeah!

JL: So, was Dr. Crampton a medical doctor—

CJ: Yes.

JL: —in the area? Okay, alright, alright.

CJ: Well, he's the one that's quite a story. You know the book *The Blue Orchard* was written about him.¹³

DP: Ohhh.

JL: Oh, of course!

¹² University of Pennsylvania

¹³ *The Blue Orchard* was a historical fiction of the life of Dr. Charles Crampton published in 2010

CJ: See, that's another [Taylor]. Jackson Taylor¹⁴ came to the Midtown Scholar to talk about *The Blue Orchard*. And that's when he was saying there are too many Jacksons. [JL laughs and DP chuckles] See, because you had my dad, and then Sylvester Jackson, and then you had the Jackson House, his first name was German. German Jackson.

JL: That's a whole different line of Jacksons, the Jackson House?

CJ: Yes. None of them are related, different parts of the country. But in his book he doesn't call German Jackson "Jackson," he calls him another name. So I asked him why he called him "Mr. Harris" or something, and he said "It's because there are too many Jacksons around." [JL and DP laugh] And his name was Jackson Taylor, you know, there are too many Jacksons around.

JL: That's funny, that's funny. Let me ask you, over the course of your life, what's your view, your experience, your sense of the relationship between Blacks and whites in Harrisburg? What do you see? What stands out? What patterns?

CJ: Actually, growing up in the 20s and 30s there were some things, were probably discrimination against. Well, some people now, for instance, I mention going to the movies. And supposedly, the Blacks would tell you, "Well, if a gang of eight of us go down to the movies, they won't let us in. But if I go down with a group of three or four white guys, nobody says anything." So, there's that type of thing. Some of the stores, Pomeroy's for instance, they'd say "Well, Blacks couldn't eat at the lunch counter and couldn't—" Well, if one probably went in he probably could. Groups of them would be denied—for whatever reason. Even though they knew it was wrong, it was denied.

Things started to change, though, during the Civil Rights Era. Pomeroy's, for instance, put in a special restaurant on the bottom floor where they went out and hired all Black women to work. In other words, they'd hired at a lunch counter with all Black women working, then all the Blacks knew they were very welcome to go to that lunch counter. And also, I remember they hired Oliver Rowland as a buyer in the boy's department. He was probably the first African American I know to be a buyer for in Pomeroy's department store for the boys.¹⁵ Doutrich's—see, the young men dressed a lot differently than they do now. [CJ chuckles] And it was common for almost everybody to wear suits at least once, even twice a year, you got some type of suit. Especially for Easter.

Doutrich was a very famous store for boys. Doutrich's had a boy's department on the second floor where they not only sold boy's clothing, they sold Boy Scout's equipment, they sold model

¹⁴ The author of *The Blue Orchard*

¹⁵ Oliver is related to James H. Rowland for whom Rowland School is named.

airplanes, hobby shops, and things like that, so a lot of us, were people that, buying different types of kits, building airplanes and things like that. And there, we saw no discrimination, at least not that I saw.

One of the problems I see now[is] there are groups that want to reflect back on things that can't be changed, that happened. We know a lot of bad things happened in slavery times and happened years ago, but they keep bringing it up, and I realize that we don't want to forget it, but there are some people that that gives them a chance, an opportunity, to make their living, you might say, to push their thoughts. And I see that happening—it's not a good thing. I think we need to all sit back and say, well "All races came through different things, and the thing is now, we've got to get along together." And social media is pushing hard. [CJ chuckles] Social media, you get on Facebook and you see some of the things that—that people are putting on.

DP: An instrument of division? Yeah.

CJ: Yeah, instrument—that's a good way to say it, yeah. Instrument of division.

JL: Partly, I think, because it's an instrument of these, sort of, really small micro-clusters.

CJ: Yes, yes! Not only clusters, they're using it as an instrument of division.

JL: So...I was just this, not that I've talked with a lot of people, but when you're outside in a city in a big four corners, you're seeing, sort of, people coming and going, you at least have a feeling of being in public. And social media is *not* that, right.

Well, you actually anticipated another question I was going to ask you. This is kind of a big, broad one, but given all the life you've lived and experience and perspective, I'm curious about what other things, as you think back on your life, what aspects of life in Harrisburg, in particular, would you say have remained more or less the same? So, sort of steady, looking like this. And what areas of life do you see, perhaps, dramatic change? From the time you were a boy going to elementary school to today?

JL: Well, in fact, today, this morning, I went to the barber shop to get a haircut, and I've probably been going to Black barbers all my life. The Black barbers, lawyers, undertakers, especially undertakers and barbers and ministers, the churches have somewhat remained the same.

[brief pause] I'm trying to pinpoint some things here. Maybe I don't see discrimination that other people see. I don't know. Maybe it's because of my background and the things that I've done, and I don't see the discrimination they see. And maybe for whatever reason it wasn't exposed to me the way it was with others. I'm curious about that. I'm curious, because, for

instance, being on the school board I worked well with—I don't know if you've heard of Brian Wagner from Messiah¹⁶—he and I worked well with the Math department, he was partly in charge of the Math department at that time, when I was on the school board. He and I worked well together, and once the teachers—probably really most of the Math teachers were white, there were a few Black, but once they saw that Brian and I were getting along, even though they had problems with Dr. [H. Major] Poteat for whatever reason, the teachers saw that and they'd invite me to come out.

The Math teachers all had a trailer at the John Harris and they'd invite me out to lunch, and we'd sit and talk about different methods of teaching—and so forth. So, things went well, and Dr. Poteat did not like that at all. He seemed to think, well, the school board members over there eventually did remove him, for various reasons, but it wasn't about—my reasoning being there was about the education of the students. But he saw me as a threat because I was talking to teachers—and, particularly maybe in a field that he didn't understand.

JL: Hm.

CJ: One of the things that happened, when I participated in the board, Outen was superintendent.¹⁷ Now, Outen was a graduate of a Black college. He was a chemistry teacher...he was from Salisbury, Maryland, and he was really into science and math, so once he knew I was into math, he started talked about starting the Math Science Academy, and I was able to convince the school board to put the money into it and some other things and send teachers to training and so forth. Unfortunately, Outen got sick, and he had to leave, he resigned, and we didn't know at the time, he died maybe six months later. When Poteat went in, Poteat had been the assistant superintendent and he didn't have that experience. In a sense, Poteat's background was sports.

JL: Yeah, I remember that.

CJ: He was a graduate of Chester High School, and he actually had a plan, they were going to build this new high school, which was never built, and it was going to be a sports academy. [JL chuckles] I mean...sports or not, I love sports, I loved track and field, but you can't put all your money into sports.

JL: Right, right.

¹⁶ Referring to Messiah College.

¹⁷ Randolph Outen was Superintendent of Harrisburg School District.

CJ: [Chuckles] You can't, sports can't be everything. And that's how—a lot of us disagreed with Dr. Poteat. In fact, he even said a couple times, "Well, I'm not worried about kindergarten because when they graduate if they go into the NBA or NFL, they're gonna do okay." And we'd say, "Well, yes, but how many are going to do that?" How many are going to do that?

DP: Yeah, small number.

JL: I just realized, one aspect of your life that I haven't asked you about yet is your work for the postal service. Tell us about that.

CJ: That was quite an experience. I started there in 1955. Really, I didn't have a job for whatever reason, so I got a temporary job at the post office, just like a temporary mail carrier, not to be-not to work more than a year. So I started as a mail carrier, and at that time the mail carriers, the substitute mail carriers did everything. I mean, you carried mail and in the evening, you'd go and make all the routes and go around and collect all the mail from all the boxes and take it into the main office and then put them on a sorting table and if then if there was not mail there you'd go into the cases and start sorting mail. So, once they saw that I was a very good mail sorter, they said "Well, if you want to become a permanent clerk, we'll transfer you over." So I transferred over and became a permanent clerk. And then, a few years, about six years, later became a supervisor, and I was the second Black supervisor at the post office.

JL: And which branch was this?

CJ: This was at the main office in Harrisburg. When I first started, the post office was located where the Federal Building is now, the Federal Building is still there. Is it 3rd and Walnut. The building there, it's the federal courthouse—that's where the post office was. And then, in 1963, they built the building on Market Street. In fact, that was one of the few post offices that was open while Kennedy was president. And one time there was a plaque in there that we think Mayor Reed stole [chuckles]—this post office was -founded under the presidency of President John F. Kennedy, because that's a treasure and all. So that was a state of the art. And at that time most of the mail was hauled by rail train, so that's why it was built there. It was close to the train station.

And they had belts that ran from the train station to put mail on that ran directly into the post office and vice versa. They weren't using as much air mail, primarily mail was by train, and we didn't have zip codes. That's before we had zip codes. So, the mail was sorted alphabetically. We had pigeonholes of assorted—primarily with your big cities and then the smaller cities in Pennsylvania were sorted alphabetically like A, B, C, D, and that mail was taken to a secondary case. And then there was the A-B case had all the about 80 cities that started with the letters A

and B, so there's a lot of memory work to it. You have to be good, really good in memory, and that's primarily how this is how you worked at the post office. You either became—for instance, I was a city clerk, so I had to learn all the streets in Harrisburg and the carriers—that carried those particular streets. And every year you'd examine your case examination, and 95 was passing.

JL: Phew, wow.

CJ: So, those guys really had to be good.

JL: Good skills for a historian/researcher as well.

CJ: Yes. One of the things that happened when zip codes came in, in, I think, 1975, there was a big fire in New York City and Morgan Station building burned down. And that was, you know, New York City is big, so, what they did, the mail coming on the trains from the West was taken off at Harrisburg and they would sort it by zip code because they had zip codes, so you could hire temporary help, anyone that could read numbers, and they could sort mail by numbers. And they could break it down in Harrisburg by zip code numbers and then send it into New York City so that it would go directly to the smaller offices. And I remember that very well because they said that was one of the great advantages of having zip codes. Because you could sort California mail in, you could sort any mail anywhere in the world just by numbers and then send it to the next place, to a smaller unit, by numbers.

DP: So this is one of the main ways that you got to know Harrisburg? And at a certain point, you became this person that everybody knows as the historian of African Americans in Harrisburg. And when did that begin? With the research...

CJ: Only after I retired from the post office. Then another thing that happened: I ran for City Council. I didn't make it. It was about...[speaking unclear]....when Jim Pianka was our manager, and we actually walked every ward in the city.

And we really got to know where the wards were—and which wards voted. Now, the Fifth ward and the Fourteenth ward are highly voting areas. The Fourteenth ward is everything above the Division Street: that's the riverside. And the Fifth ward is Midtown. And the people in those wards vote more than some of the other ones. So, you start concentrating on the areas that people are going to vote. Where people come out. Now, it's surprising in Harrisburg, probably 20-25% of the registered voters actually—especially in the primary—actually come out and vote. But those are certain areas—the wards that are heavy voters. So we got to walk the streets, and we learned those things

But somehow when I retired, I started doing things and the next thing I know I become Harrisburg's historian [CJ chuckles, DP and JL laugh]. In fact, this book here—and I worked with these great guys, I don't know if you know, if you have seen this book

JL: So, you're showing us *African Americans of Harrisburg* by [John Weldon] Scott and [Eric Ledell] Smith.

CP: Yes, now Eric Ledell Smith worked at the State Archives. In fact, when we came through here,¹⁸ when we came through here, his office used to be over by those little offices over here. And he was called a “trained historian.” He had a degree as a historian. And he one time worked in the African American museum in Philadelphia. In fact, he died about 12 years ago now, very young. And he's from Detroit and he and Ben Carson were in the same room in the 7th grade.

JL: Really?

CJ: Yeah, Ben Carson went and became a lead surgeon. And John Scott, of course, is the grandson of the famous teacher, John P. Scott. His primary interest in this book¹⁹ is just to tell the story of the Scott family. Because John P. Scott and William Marshall were the first two Blacks to graduate from the high school in 1883. And I started going down to the Historical Society—of course, I was on the board for a while—and I worked with Ken Frew, and before Ken Frew, the other librarian that was down there. And you get to meet a lot of people. I worked with Mary Bradley; do you remember Mary Bradley?²⁰ See, back in the days when everybody was going into the library, before everything was digitized [DP chuckles] you'd get to find out what this person is looking for—

DP: Oh, yeah.

CJ: —like Dave Houseal is there and he's looking for fires,²¹ and Mary Bradley's looking for this, and Paul Beers is looking for this,²² and I'm looking for this, so if we see something that the other person would like, we tell each other.

DP: And there's a little community of historians doing work together, right?

CJ: Yes!

¹⁸ Referring to the location of the interview just left of entrance at the State Archives.

¹⁹ Referring again to *African Americans of Harrisburg*.

²⁰ Mary O. Bradley, d. 2009, served as journalist of *York Daily Record* and *Harrisburg Patriot News* and frequently wrote columns about local history.

²¹ Houseal is a historian of Pennsylvania National Fire Museum in Harrisburg.

²² Paul Beers was the late reporter for the *Patriot News* and historian and author of books about 20th century Harrisburg.

DP: Yeah, the city's small enough that you get to know people.

CJ: Digitization spoiled a lot of people because they think everything is digitized, and of course it's not yet. It may be some time.

DP: So, can I ask you a question that kind of goes between the digital and the analog, but also your own experiences? One of the things we're celebrating in the Commonwealth Monument Project is the 100 Names,²³ and as I understand it, you're the architect—the primary architect of this list of people. So, some of these people must have been alive when you were a kid, a lot of them.²⁴

CJ: Yes, yes. Some of the people I knew, like Sylvester Jackson, Harry Burrus, some of those people I knew....The initial idea [originated as] Lenwood was going down to the riverfront.... There are a lot of little monuments out on riverfront, just little things saying “this is dedicated to so-and-so,” “this is dedicated this and that,” so he counted like seventy different little things, and he said “There's none of them mentioning African Americans,” so he wants to do something to honor African Americans on the riverfront. So he gets the idea of putting these four figures up and the three, well the two, [T. Morris] Chester and [William Howard] Day, are very, very prominent. [Jacob] Compton is not that well known, but we all know that the commissioner likes Compton, so he puts Compton in.... And then they wanted to get a woman on, so, I wanted to pick somebody—he picked somebody Harriet Frances Harper. I wanted to pick Agnes Kemp. And, of course, Agnes Kemp is a white woman.

CJ: And he didn't like that.

DP: Okay, I see.

CJ: Agnes Kemp was an abolitionist, in fact, she's one of the 100 Names. She was an abolitionist, we have a book on her at the historical society—she's very famous. She was born in Harrisburg, her father owned most of northern Harrisburg. Her father was Antoine Ninninger. And he owned all the land from the [Susquehanna] River to Wildwood Park, and all that. And he was very wealthy, and she was an abolitionist. She graduated from medical school when she was 59 years old. She was on the circuit with Susan B. Anthony and Julia Warde [Howe] and all those and even with Sojourner Truth. And then later on she was on the circuit with Frances Harper and so forth, so I wanted to use her and—actually we did, she's one of the 100 Names.

²³ See <https://digitalharrisburg.com/100names/> and <https://thedigitalpress.org/100-Voices/>

²⁴ For what follows about the Commonwealth Monument Project, visit <https://digitalharrisburg.com/commonwealth> and the chapters in the 2020 special issue of *Pennsylvania History* on Harrisburg's City Beautiful Movement, which was cited at the start of this interview.

So initially, the people, the 100 Names, would be bricks and perhaps somebody would pick out a name they knew and would buy a brick in honor of that person. So, it was a fundraiser. And, then the city told us that if you build this monument, you have to have a fund to maintain it. You can't just build it and let it go; if you accept this gift you have to maintain it. Same as somebody maintains the Holocaust monument. So then, we changed the idea, but I already picked 100 Names, primarily from 1850, starting with Joseph Popel, who was involved in the riots, the fugitive slave that was at the courthouse and so forth, up through 1920. But then when we decided to put it in the Eighth ward, somebody-somehow it happened-somebody says, "Well, all these people lived in the Eighth ward" and I said "No, they did not live in the Eighth Ward."

DP: So, the list preceded the interest in the Old Eighth Ward.

CJ: Yes. Now, a lot of them did [live in the Old Eighth]. One of the things I was looking for because of the 15th Amendment, I went through the [city directories] from 1870 to 1913, I looked at the people that were elected [listed in the city directories]. The people who were elected to council and so forth, I picked out as many African Americans as I could by name, and most almost all of them were in the Eighth Ward. Now, I didn't do a definitive study, there could have been somebody, in another ward, that had a name that I had never heard of or a name that I didn't remember, maybe an African American that I missed, but I picked up the ones like [Benjamin] Foote, [John] Simpson, Dr. William Jones, there's a whole list of them. I picked those up, because, the Shipley Act of 1912-13 changed the third-class city code. Instead of the council being elected by wards, they were elected at large, and once that happened, Harrisburg did not have an African American councilman until Stanley Lawson in the 1960s....

That happened I think at all the second and third-class cities. That was a big change, and that happened around 1912-1913. About the same time, they started tearing down the Old Eighth Ward. But it's very obvious to me that a lot of these people were prominently known in the Eighth Ward, but they didn't live there.

DP: The selection itself, when you were looking through it, were you combing through City Directories?

CJ: Yeah.... Rachel [Williams] and I were going through it, and she was like, "Well, where do these people live?" and I would find an address for them and it's obvious to her that these people didn't all live in the Eighth Ward. See, they've been pastors at Wesley [Union A.M.E Zion] Church, they went to the churches over there [in the Old Eighth Ward]. For instance, the one, [J.] Steward Davis is an interesting one. He's the one that lived on Derry Street, and he went to Wesley Church. He went to Dickinson College around 1910, and after two years, he went to the law school, which you could do, and he graduated from law school, and supposedly he was the

first Black valedictorian from a law school. And I guess you've probably seen more things on him. He was in World War I; he became a lawyer; he went to Baltimore, practicing law, and he was an officer in World War I; and he came back to Baltimore and practiced law and was very prominent. In 1929, he disappeared. He's never mentioned, nobody's ever heard of him. I don't know what happened. [CJ chuckles] Understand, he has a daughter that's still living. There's a prominent historian by the name of Merrell in Baltimore that's come up here a couple times, trying to find information about the history of Steward Davis and some other things. But, he disappeared. But, we have pictures of him. And you know, some of the other things we've done with the Eighth ward, some of the ones that you wanted to talk about, [Walter] Hooper was one, Thomas was very prevalent—

DP: Yeah, Joseph Thomas.

CJ: And we talked about the ones that were census enumerators.

DP: Mhm...Did you already have the list kind of in your head when you came up with just because of growing up in Harrisburg, so you knew these people—

CJ: I knew these people, yes.

DP: Did you aim for representation of different occupations?

CJ: I was sort of aiming-yes, I was aiming for the whole city and not just the Eighth Ward.

DP: So, covering space too, covering space, time?

CJ: Because you had these famous baseball players, you had Clarence Williams. See, the Sixth Ward was a very popular.²⁵ Verbeketown. Do you know much about Verbeke?

DP: Yeah, a little bit. That's a pretty significant [Black] community, I know that.

CJ: He's a person that nobody has written a definitive biography on. A lot of us think it's because he was held in high esteem by African Americans. Well, Verbeketown was—he went and sold houses to anybody and everybody at so much a week or whatever you could pay and so forth, and I know the Grand Army of the Republic post marched at his funeral. He was very well-known in the African American community, Verbeke. And that's the Sixth Ward primarily.

²⁵ African American neighborhood in current Midtown district.

The streets over there are named for his children, Marion and William.²⁶ Yeah, they were named for his children.

DP: Yeah, I want to show you a map here in a minute that really draws—that really highlights Verbeke town. But, can I ask you: so you had all these histories just through talking to people on the one hand, and also your work at the county archives, but then, you've been using Newspapers.com like crazy. You know, finding articles. What have you learned that surprised you in your research into these 100 people that you didn't know or that you weren't expecting? Anything really catch your attention?

CJ: Yeah, I'm trying to think about it. There's a couple things that come up there. Well, an awful lot of them are graduates of the old Harrisburg High School. A lot of them—two or three of them, see—Horace Payne, for instance, he went to Harvard. He was, I think, fifth in his class at Harrisburg High, and he was admitted to Harvard, he graduated from Harvard. Aubrey Robinson was a Harrisburg High graduate, he was a great football and track star. He went to Cornell [University]. So, a lot of these students were going to—and of course a lot went to Dickinson [College]. We have [Luther] Newman went to Dickinson, [J. Steward] Davis went to Dickinson, and Esther Popel was the first Black female to graduate from Dickinson. And so, along with the Black colleges, Lincoln and Howard [University] and the others, a lot of them are going to a lot of the prominent Black colleges—I mean, white colleges. The two doctors went to the University of Pennsylvania. [A. Leslie] Marshall and [Morris H.] Layton.

DP: Yeah.

CJ: Now that's a family that's—they're all related. The Marshalls and the Laytons, they're probably at least six of that family in the 100 Names. And we've contacted some of their descendants. What's the one's name... Tree.

DP: Yeah. Tree Layton, right?

CJ: Yeah, his first name is Tree.

DP: Yeah.

CJ: And did he graduate from Clarion [University] this year?

DP: He's working on his degree from Clarion, yeah.

²⁶ Marion Street and William Street goes North-South; Marion is between Fulton Street and Margaret Street, and William is between James Street and Margaret Street; Verbeke goes East-West, and they both meet with Verbeke Street.

CJ: Yes. Because I've talked to him on the phone and with email.... In fact, he's working with his grandfather to see if he can find some of these old documents. In fact, somebody- in his family wrote a history of Wesley Church in the first hundred years, and they're trying to find that book, which they would let us look at.

DP: So, most of these 100 people are pretty accomplished?

CJ: Yes. That's one of the criteria.

DP: Yes, so they may not be typical of the broader population in the census. There are probably a lot of ordinary-more ordinary citizens, but they've done good things. Is that what's significant about the list?

CJ: That's it, yes. And you talked about Frisby Battis.

DP: Yes.

CJ: Well, now, both his sons became physicians. And Frisby Battis, he was always in trouble. [JL and DP chuckle] He had a pawn shop and a pool room or something. He was accused of stealing votes, this type of thing. In fact, he left Harrisburg. I have his obituary. He died in Philadelphia, in like the 1920s. But, he was one of those old political tsars. I had the chance to see the play, "The Eighth Ward."²⁷

DP: I never had the chance.

CJ: That was a very interesting play. And...I don't know why somebody doesn't redo it. I mean, there's scripts there.

DP: The script is still available, you say?

CJ: Yeah.

DP: Yeah? The script is still available?

JL: Who's the playwright of that? Who wrote the play?

CJ: What was his name? Phil Howze, or...?

JL: Local, Harrisburger?

²⁷ *The Bloody Eighth*, a musical of 2003-2004 produced by Capitol Dinner Theatre and following the publication of Barton and Dorman's *Harrisburg Old Eighth Ward*, 2002. A new play—*Voices of the Eighth: Rhythms of Resilience*—written and produced by Sharia Benn was performed in 2020 at the Gamut Theatre in Harrisburg, based on research of Calobe Jackson, Jr., Messiah College, and the Commonwealth Monument Project.

CJ: Yes! I don't think he's still here, though.²⁸ In fact, Michael Barton gave me a copy of the music book.

DP: Oh yeah.

CJ: I have the CD with it.

DP: [Intrigued] Oh, really?

CJ: It has original music.

DP: Oh, that would be interesting to bring out as we commemorate the Eighth Ward.

CJ: You haven't seen it?

DP: No, no, I haven't seen it. No, I think it showed before I started researching.

CJ: Now, it's just the music, but it still gives you an idea of what was going on.

DP: Yeah. Can I ask you about the—I want to show you this map, which is Rachel Williams' meticulous work. [showing a distribution map of Harrisburg in 1920]

CJ: [chuckling] Yes! A hundred people, I figured somebody would make a scatter plot to show that, yes.

DP: Yeah! So these are African Americans' households that she traced out of the Old Eighth, and she, I think she—from what I understand, she picked a hundred families that basically she could trace at all. So, it's somewhat of a random collection of people who moved on, but there are Russian Jews, there are people of white European descent, and then African Americans. And here's the gray showing you the displaced community, and the dots showing the population. Does this make sense in light of what you know about African-American communities in the 1930s?

CJ: Well, it does. Well now, this is 1920?

DP: This is 1920, yes.

CJ: Well then, the Eighth Ward's gone?

DP: Yes, exactly. So, these are the people who were living in the Eighth—

CJ: The Eighth Ward, yeah.

²⁸ He was in Brooklyn during late April of the year of the interview, 2019.

DP: —and this is where they ended up.

CJ: Where they ended up. Oh! Okay.

DP: Yeah, so you can see that a lot went to Verbeketown—

CJ: Yes, a lot went to the Seventh and went to the Sixth [Wards]. I see that.

DP: Yeah, so they go into this area around Sixth and Seventh Street, right?

CJ: Mhm.

DP: And then-but there are a few dots to the east of the railroad tracks, I wonder if some of these represent Sibletown?²⁹

CJ: Well, Sibletown's probably up in here.

DP: Yeah, so maybe those three...

CJ: But over in here, well that would be about...Let's see, there's State [Street], that would be the Eighth ward...is that an Elm Street community out there? Now, speaking of that, I meant to mention this, did you see the article on [E. M.] Horstick?

DP: No.

CJ: It was 19th [Street] and State [Street]. Something on either TheBurg [magazine]...or PennLive [magazine] had something.³⁰ Horsticks is an automobile repair at 19th and State. They've been there since 1904...It's their 115th anniversary. So, they would have been in the Eighth Ward, that would have been the Eighth Ward in 1904. And, I was wondering, they said they had pictures of what's developed through all those years. That's what you might find if you go out and talk to them.

DP: Yeah! I'll take a look, Horsticks...But the migration makes sense in that most of these families end up fairly close.

CJ: Yes!

DP: They're not for the most part in the newer parts of the city, they don't go up into the Tenth Ward, Fourteenth Ward, Thirteenth Ward, they're mostly in the Midtown area—what is today's Midtown, slightly east of Midtown, very few go south.

²⁹ Sibletown is another historic African American neighborhood.

³⁰ According to an August 7th PennLive article, the Friendship Auto Service, which opened earlier this year, 2019, "will now occupy the 116 year-old building formerly known as E. M. Horsticks."

CJ: Because there's the [Broad Street] market right here, so a lot of them are right above the market. You see the market there, the big red in the middle of right here?

DP: Yeah, yeah.

CJ: That looks like the Broad Street Market.

DP: Yeah.

JL: Oh, yeah, yeah.

CJ: That's the Broad Street Market. So that part right above the market, that would be Verbeketown.

JL: Mhm. This cluster here. Hm.

DP: We talked a bit in the past about City Beautiful and the African American contribution. One of the things I think I mentioned this to you before, when you look at the patterns of the precincts that went the most *for* City Beautiful, the Old Eighth Ward is the *most in favor* [CJ laughs] of that urban improvement vote in 1902 that funded the bond issue.

CJ: Yeah.

DP: What was the politics behind this? [chuckles]

CJ: Well, you know, Dr. [William H.] Jones—

DP: Yeah.

CJ: Have you read [George Lauman] Laverty's *History of [Medicine in] Dauphin County*?

DP: No.

CJ: Because he talks a lot about Dr. Jones in there...A lot of the City Beautiful was just cleaning up the waste—cleaning stuff, dumping sewage in the [Susquehanna] River, and so forth. But Dr. Jones was very influential in the Eighth Ward, and I think he was able to convince people [that] City Beautiful would clean up, stop some of the disease and some of the things we had there. In fact, you know, they put a monument up for Dr. Jones [who] fell on the steps of the new Capitol in 1905. He was only 44 years old. He caught pneumonia and he died. About ten years later they put the fountain up, which we never knew what happened to it; they put the fountain up at the entrance to the Eleventh Street park, at Cameron [Street] and Forster [Street]. We have pictures of the fountain, but we don't know what happened to it. It's not there now.

DP: This is Dr. William Jones?

CJ: Yeah, William Jones.

DP: They called him “Pap”?

CJ: Oh no, no, Pap’s the one earlier. Pap is the one with the Underground Railroad.

DP: Okay, alright.

JL: There are a lot of Jones’ as well.

DP: Yes, there are a lot of Jones’.

CJ: Too many, like Jacksons.

JL: [Laughs] That’s right.

DP: [Chuckling] So you think that Dr. Jones may have had some political capital?

CJ: He was at that first meeting, at the Board of Trade in 1902.³¹ He was at that meeting, and he might have had a lot of influence in getting the Eighth Ward—to vote for it.

DP: The final bit of research I wanted to ask you about I know you’ve worked on—you were doing some research on the other big anniversary, which was 2018, which would be the Spanish influenza. And you got interested in—

CJ: I got interested in that, and then I dropped it, yes. I should have kept going with it.

DP: But you’ve done a little bit of work to see who got sick during the Spanish influenza in the African American community, who died...

CJ: One of them was Cassius Brown’s son. The other one—famous one—was James Howard’s son.³² You see, James Howard’s son, his name was Leroy...his name was Layton Leroy Howard. He married Jane Blalock, who was a Harrisburg schoolteacher and the daughter of Reverend Blalock. And they went to Cuba for their honeymoon in 1918. They got married like...April or something, and then November-December he died from the Spanish flu.³³ Whether he caught it in Cuba or not, I’m not sure. But there were other people who also like—that Newman, that young man who went to Dickinson, he died from the Spanish flu in 1918. So, that was three of them.

³¹ The meeting took place in December of 1901 and helped jumpstart the City Beautiful Movement in Harrisburg.

³² This family of three, James, his wife Ella, and Layton, lived at 306 Fifteenth Street in 1910; James and Layton number among the 100 Names.

³³ He was about 30 years old.

DP: Mhm, Newman as well.

CJ: You have Jones, Newman, no...Cassius Brown's son, Newman, and Howard. And they were all basically living on South Sixteenth Street, in that area. Is that on here?

DP: Yeah, it is. But it's east of the cemetery, so maybe on the eastern end of this map.

CJ: Yeah, I saw it. I saw an exhibit on the Spanish flu at the Dauphin County Historical Society about two years ago. I think it was in 2017, and there's a young man that came down from somewhere up in northern Dauphin County, and he really had a great exhibit on that. That was really outstanding.

DP: We have actually a piece within the volume,³⁴ a small, short piece submitted by Sarah Wilson-Carter—you may have met her a few years ago—that's going to deal with Spanish influenza generally in the city and showing, like how it broke out and where it—

CJ: No, no, it didn't break out. Well, we didn't call it the Spanish flu...According to the people who gave the presentation, Spain had nothing to do with it. They were trying to keep it a secret, and the Spanish newspapers were the ones that told about it spreading through Europe and different places. And that's the story they get, and because of that they called it the Spanish flu. Because the Spanish papers were telling the truth about it, it was like a pandemic. And a lot of newspapers didn't want to touch it, they didn't want to scare the people.

DP: In the death certificates for the year, for Harrisburg, a lot of the deaths are listed like, is it "el gripe," you know, which I'm guessing is Spanish for "influenza."³⁵ But yeah, it listed it in Spanish. One of the just really exciting things about getting emails from you is that you're discovering bits of African American history almost every day.

CJ: Sometimes, yes.

DP: And, you know, [CJ laughs] I feel like you're out there and you're just discovering—you're making all these discoveries and Newspapers.com has made available, and a lot of digital resources have made available, a lot of sources that we couldn't access previously. And where do you think we go from here? In terms of writing the African American histories of Harrisburg? You know, what would be your advice?

³⁴ The special issue of *Pennsylvania History* published in January 2020.

³⁵ "La gripe" is the Spanish for "influenza."

CJ: Well, those clippings are good. In fact, at the Historical Society, there's at least, I know three sets of clippings. Have you ever, did Ken Frew ever show you the clippings that are down there?

DP: I've asked for them before! I don't remember seeing very many.

CJ: Well...there was a woman in the 1880s or so that clipped newspapers and she put them into books. Her husband was on the school board. And she had some old books, too. So people used to make scrapbooks, they would paste clippings into books. And there's like, I would say, 10 to 12 volumes that she has. And through the years somebody has indexed them.

DP: Really? They're in the Dauphin County [Archives]?

CJ: Yeah.

DP: Are they down on the main floor?

CJ: They're up on top of the cabinets. You know where the city directories are? Right behind that, they're up on the top. And then we have the Chester family clippings: there are about 70 pages of those. And somebody donated those, and they were just clipped to newspapers. I mean to just ordinary paper. But the idea of just taking a book and pasting the clippings into a book is unique, because it's like a scrapbook. In fact, that's where I picked up on the history of the Sunday School. In fact, I'm going to talk at the Civil War Museum. There's a history of the Sunday School, and as I read it, most of these teachers that were teaching Sunday School were involved in the Underground Railroad. Like the Rutherfords and Agnes Kemp, and [Joseph] Bustill, and some of the others were Sunday School teachers. There are so many things hidden down there sometimes, you just don't see it the first time you go down. But clippings, I like clippings, and I should have a better format of storing them. You know, on Newspaper.com, they store it for you. But I should have just printed them out. There's probably too many to try to print them out now. So, I have over three thousand, so... [DP chuckles] Unless I saved them to a file, which you can do and it's a lot of work.

DP: Yeah. And some of them are public too, right? You've made a lot of them public. Yeah. I think it seems between the resources you are describing at the historical society, the clippings that are available, that some of which you've done, that there's really a lot of ground for new historical work on African American Harrisburg.

CJ: Yes.

DP: And especially because [Gerald G.] Eggert has given us this picture of the Black community in the late 1800s, but there's really not much for the 20th century.³⁶ So, this is ground that—

CJ: You know, in searching those, I've learned some things like, like the word "George" is often abbreviated. Some names, they were abbreviated—George and William are abbreviated more than any other names, probably. If you're looking for "George Galbraith," George doesn't come up. If you look for "Geo.," then it comes up. So you have to start to learn the style that these people wrote in. They abbreviated William, they abbreviated Joseph a lot. I don't know why. You know, certain ones, they abbreviate the first two or three letters, then a period. So, you have to learn how they recorded things.

DP: Good.

CJ: And of course, there's different spellings. That "Galbraith," that's spelled with an "i" and without the 'i' and I put quotation marks around, and then I also search other than just in Harrisburg. I've found that Gettysburg and Lebanon...carry a lot of African-American history. And this Carlisle paper that was recently digitized, the Carlisle *Sentinel*. And, of course, you have the *New York Amsterdam [News]*—the New York agent of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, some of the Black papers had correspondence here that sent clippings—that sent news to the weeklies, so you found a lot of information in the Black papers. They even had a paper in Baltimore—Washington, Philadelphia, and even Chicago, *Chicago Defender*.

DP: Does Harrisburg have a Black paper?

CJ: Yes. Actually, James Howard's paper is digitized, 1882 to 1883, it's about a year-and-a-half. Now, Peter Blackwell's paper (if you've ever heard of the *Steelton Press*?), because Leroy Hopkins is coming up from Lancaster next week, and some others, Barbara Barksdale has a collection of his papers that they're going to [look through]. That *Steelton Press* carried a lot of Harrisburg news. That was published like 1890 to 1905 or something. And, there's a person [Peter Blackwell] that's on the 100 Names that didn't even live in Harrisburg. I picked him because he was on City Council in Steelton, and he came to Harrisburg and talked a lot in different wards to people to go out to vote.

JL: We did want to ask if there was anything else that we haven't prompted with our questions, anything else that you wanted to talk about or share with us that we haven't gotten a chance to touch on yet?

³⁶ A reference to the historian Eggert's work such as the seminal article " 'Two Steps Forward, A Step-and-a-Half Back': Harrisburg's African American Community in the Nineteenth Century."

CJ: I probably can't think of anything now, I'll probably think of something tomorrow.

JL: Alright, alright. [All laugh]

CJ: That always happens, you know.

JL: Sure.

CJ: In the same way, you'll think of something tomorrow.

JL: Right, right.

DP: We should have asked him then. [JL laughs]

CJ: There you go.

JL: Well, you certainly have covered a lot of ground.

DP: Yeah.

JL: We appreciate your time and your flexibility, having to go outside during the alarm...

CJ: Yeah, that was an interesting experience.

JL: It was, it was....We appreciate that you [contributed to this interview]—and we thought it was certainly appropriate that you be part of this volume³⁷ and thank you for allowing us also to include your picture.

[informal conversation continues for ten minutes about this interview; transcription technology; interviews and transcriptions of 100 individuals for Harrisburg's 150th anniversary in 2010; census enumeration and Calobe's experience with census]

³⁷ The 2020 special issue of *Pennsylvania History* on City Beautiful.