



*African American Fishermen
Oral History Project*

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
VOICES ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHANIE ANDERSON
FOR THE
GEORGIA BLACK FISHERMEN

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
DR. DIONNE HOSKINS

PIN POINT, GEORGIA
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Interviewee: Stephanie Anderson

Interviewer: Dr. Dionne Hoskins

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Principal Investigator: Dr. Dionne Hoskins

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Abstract:

As an only child, Stephanie Anderson grew up with a large, close-knit, extended family in Pin Point, Georgia—a small Gullah Geechee community founded in 1896, eleven miles southeast of Savannah, in Chatham County. Ms. Anderson was raised and influenced by several strong, independent women. One of those women was her mother, who was a nurse and loved helping people in the community. Just like her mother, Ms. Anderson loved helping people; however, because of her fear of needles and blood, she became a teacher instead. She also loves preserving Pin Point’s traditions and oral histories that are rooted in commercial and recreational fishing, shrimping, and crabbing to share with future generations.

During her summers off from high school, Ms. Anderson worked in the Varn & Son Crab Factory along with both of her grandmothers. She quickly realized that picking crabs was not for her, but she recalls the experience and describes the working conditions, personality of pickers, and her duties. Growing up in Pin Point she recalls how certain family members, including her grandmother Mrs. Bertha “Berk” Anderson and grand uncle “Bacon”, shared or sold their catch for cheap to others in the community. Only a few of Pin Point’s fourth generation residents continue to fish and sell their catch and Ms. Anderson knows each of them. Their fishing efforts are combined every other year when the community comes together to have a seafood festival to reunite and remember the past and contributions of their ancestors.

Dr. Hoskins 00:03

So, I want to thank you for talking with me, primarily because I just don't know as much about Pin Point, as I would like to know. And one of the things that Dr. Morris and I are trying to do is capture this history of Black fishing communities or Black communities on the water. Because, you know, I go to receptions and stuff and people say, "Oh, you're a marine biologist! Yeah, I want to talk about dolphins," and you know dolphins are fine, but I'm like, I want to talk about something that I want to talk about. So, I decided to focus on our cultural heritage on the water. So, you are from Pin Point?

Stephanie

Yes.

DH

Okay and how old are you?

SA 00:48

Forty-six, I'll be 47 on the 21st.

DH 00:52

Okay. And do you have siblings?

SA 00:56

Half. I'm the only child from my mom.

DH 01:01

Okay. And were you born in Pin Point? Was your mother—were your parents living in Pin Point?

SA

My mom. Yes.

DH

Okay. So, you were born in Pin Point. Okay, so tell me about what, what is being from Pin Point about?

SA 01:17

Oh, wow. Well, you know, for the most part, like you say, we're about the same age, you know. Most people always thought Pin Point was the country part of Savannah and literally, it was like a sheltered community. You know, we everybody knew each other. And, you know, from one end of the street to the other end, and, you know, everybody looked out for each other. One of

my students came in and said that she worked up at the uh...she was volunteering up at the nursing home, and they were playing a game called paqino and she had never heard of it. And I was like, oh, man! I can remember, you know, our whole community having paqino nights on Friday. Where one house was a central location for all the babysitting and then they just go from house to house and, you know, they'd play paqino at our house on this weekend. And then the following weekend, it was Aunt Francis down the street. And you know, they had the whole spread, you know, you didn't have to bring anything because everybody, you know, took care of whatever they were the person—the host of it, then they truly, truly hosted it.

DH 02:17

Now, my mother used to play paqino when I was a child. And so, when you said paqino, I was like, oh, yeah, I remember paqino!

SA 02:23

Nickels and pennies and quarters and everything! I was like, “Y'all have never heard of this?” You know, like all the little games we used to play out in the yards, you know, like the hands of 85 and the little... Girl! They were in here like, “Ms. Anderson, what are you talking about?” I was like, “Y'all have not lived a life. Everything is so technology for y'all, you know, we lived off the land you know.” My grandmother used to tell me stories, because she lived with us from my ninth-grade year of high school until she passed. And she used to tell me the stories of you know, them working and having to get up at you know, early hours and you know, cook just to have lunch because they couldn't afford to you know, go anywhere because they didn't have any means of transportation because Mr. Varn or, or Mr. Sami would come pick them up. I never forget riding on the back of that man's truck. He had one of those campers over it and they would, you know, scoot up in there and you'd be sitting down and you know. My grandma had those little tin pans, always had aluminum foil around the house because they would wrap it in aluminum foil then put the brown paper back over and low and behold when it came lunch time that food was still warm.

DH

Really?

SA

All that time!

DH

Wow!

SA

And I was like, like they'd freeze a drink and wrap it in aluminum foil and it'd stay...

DH

Cold?

SA

Oh man. Yes. And I'm just like, "What are you doing?" She was like, "You'll see a little while." She used to always say, "You just live. You just live. You gonna learn." I didn't never say anything, you know. Because I, you know, in hindsight you learned a lot from 'em, but just, you know, getting up early in the morning and washing the clothes on a certain day and hanging them out and you know. Making sure they were ironed so you didn't have to do all of that at one time. You know, they just prepared their whole week, you know! And because they knew once you got on that truck to go to work in the morning, you didn't know what time you were coming home because you didn't leave down from that factory until after every crab has been picked and every claw has been picked. God forbid if they boiled crabs at night and say you got to stay and clean the crabs that evening before you start the next day.

DH 04:39

Oh, see I didn't know about that. So, it wasn't there were set hours? It was here is the catch for the day the catch has arrived and you pick until that pile is gone?

SA 04:47

Umm humph. They put all the crabs on the table if you were crab picker and all the claws on the table if you were claw picker. You know they had like, what it was four tables, four or six. I can't remember how many it was, but yeah. You'd sit, like the claw pickers were the closest to that back. You know how they have it now? The claw pickers were those two tables right there.

DH

Closest to the back door towards the water?

SA

Yeah. And then you had the other side were all of those were crab pickers. Because it was probably obviously, you know, more crabs than the claws sometimes, because some of them get broken off or whatever, but yeah. And like I was telling you, when I worked down there for that week, I'll never forget, they would come early and my grandmother would leave out the house and she'd be like, "Okay, I'll see you in a little while." It'd be about two hours before I get down the road. By the time I got down there they had cleaned all of those crabs.

DH 05:40

What? Now what time of morning was this that she would say, "Alright, see you" and she's leaving you?

SA 05:45

About seven. Yeah. Walking down the street. All of ‘em would start walking and my godmother was the fastest crab picker.

DH

Now who was your godmother?

SA

Teresa—Hanif’s mama. That was my God mama. Teresa Haines. Oh, honey, my grandma was Bertha Godfrey, but they called her Berk, B-E-R-K. Yes, but they, they were the crab pickers. And honey, when I say my godmother could go through and pick some crabs fast, I was like, whoa! [laughing] Don't even, you can't... I'm talking before you start shucking things off, she already like [sound made to represent quick movement].

DH 06:22

I mean, Miss Sula showed me...now you, you cut the knuckles off with a knife and... Is that how they were...everybody did it that way?

SA 06:29

Well, my cousin John Henry Haines—his mother, they used to call her, her name was Julia, but they called her “Five Cent” for some reason, I don't know. But she never used a knife, she did it by hand. But she, she was one of the only people that I know, she was like, she’d come and go whenever she wants to. She didn't really do it as a profession like everybody else you know. And she would sit down there her hands and she would pull every one of the things off. But she was slow. She was you know, compared to everybody else. And she have all these little stories and these little visionaries that she’d go through it, you know. They'd sit there and they had one little tv in the corner where they’d set up for the soap operas and you know, you gotta be quiet while they are on.

DH

Oh, so there was a tv in there?

SA

Oh yes! Yes, honey! And they, I’ll never forget, I sat in that corner and I propped my foot up, I had my headphones in, you know. My cousin, she just looking across from me—she’s older. Well, my grandmother and them raised her like a real sister, but it was our cousin. And she would be, “Stephanie, you better hurry up.” And I'm like, “For what?” No, I'm like, “Man, I'm just doing this cause I can say I had a job, you know!” After that fir—that week I was like, I

went home to my mama that Friday after I got that paycheck. Because it was like \$1 per container.

DH 07:49

Per container? And the container was like, what a pint? How old were you?

SA 07:54

I think I was 14 or 15, or something?

DH 07:59

Wow! So that I mean that was...wow!

SA 08:04

I can't remember if my check was even \$15 [laughing].

DH 08:09

That's like 1985! That's like Fresh Festival and Bell Biv DeVoe! Well, maybe not, maybe New Edition. This is, you know, recent times that you're this, what third or what generation? How many?

SA 08:20

Yeah, third or fourth generation down? Yeah, cause I'm talkin' bout, I could just imagine them doing this all their lives. Literally and I'm like and they could tell you if their check is short or whatever. Don't let the people back there um weighin, weighin those cans because you know, they they based it off of the weight. Cause um Odessa Famble, um Abraham's wife.

DH

Yes.

SA

Her and um, I can't remember, my mom, my grandmother's youngest daughter, she had moved up to doing that—the weighin parts. See they would have to dump it out, check for bones, and all that stuff, and then put it back in. They had to set it up to be packaged.

DH 09:06

Okay, so they did quality control, basically.

SA 09:09

Yeah. So, you know, if you had a lot of bones in yours, they'd holler off, "Alright now, the scale is full of bones!" Or, you know, and then they like, set it up, like, you know, if back in the day,

they will have like the small meat, which came from the fin part I guess. And then the lump on the top they built from the small meat back up to the lump. Oh, they had special containers or special orders for just lump crab. And they would separate so they know, you know, and then you get, I think you got paid a little more for the lump. Whatever, it just depends. So, you know, it was that type of thing and I'm like, "Man, this thing is kind of intricate here for real". You know, but you know you're not thinking hindsight is like oh, you do this part and you do that. And then I got in trouble. My mom came home and my grandma said, "You know that gal didn't get up and go help us clean them—they used to say 'back them crabs'".

DH

"Back them crabs?"

SA

I ain't never had to do that! I thought it was already done and somebody else did that.

DH 10:08

Oh, does that mean pop the top off of the crab and clean it and everything? So, you just came down to pick and that's what she was leaving at seven o'clock to do?

SA 10:17

Yep! They had to do all that before they even started picking. Know when I say those boilers were huge! It's like they could put maybe about six or eight boxes of crabs in that thing.

DH 10:29

Wow. So, you weren't getting paid, but let me let me think about this with you. You gotta help me with this. If you're only getting paid by the can, you're not getting paid for that time that you backed the crab?

SA 10:40

That's what I told her. That was my thing. I was like, ya'll didn't tell me you get paid for this! Because if it was, I would have came down there, but I don't know if y'all gettin' paid or not for that. And you know, come to find out I don't know if they really—I still don't even know if they got paid to do that or not. You know, I'm like, man ya'll getting' free labor from these people down here, come on now! Yep, so I was like, I told my mama I'm not going back down there not if I got to do all of that and not getting paid for it.

DH

After one week?

SA

One week! Monday to Friday. Like I said, on some Saturdays if they if the crabs were good, and they were coming in like that. It was so funny, how in Pin Point you can smell when they're cooking the crabs. It would be like, in the breeze. So, you'd be like, "Oh, they got crabs down there." Go down there, chile I'm like, act like you goin' to the little candy lady down there in there. You asked, "Can I get a couple of hot crabs or whatever?" You know and of course, you know, they were watching and stuff and was like, "Go down to so and so and then we'll meet you right there or they'd have it sittin' out. [Laughter from Dr. Hoskins] Oh, honey yes! They'd be looking like...how you gonna notice if a half a dozen crabs really missing, you know what I'm saying. It was fun! Yeah, they they, like if you notice that house, Mr. Varn's house right there? Yeah, they'd be watching and stuff and you don't think he watchin'. It was funny. I was like man please. Really?

DH 12:00

So, did you ever meet old man Varn? Algy's daddy?

SA 12:04

I don't remember him. I can vaguely remember his face, but I don't remember, you know, speaking to him or anything. But Algy yeah! Yeah, cause he used to come bring mama fish and stuff like when he go fishing and stuff, he'd bring my mama some fish and stuff. Because if my mama was a nurse, she never really did that. Okay, you know, so yeah. But it was it was fun. And then just, you know, here how, you know, my, my, my grand, grand uncle, which was my grandfather's brother, the one they call "Bacon". You sit in, watch him do the net, the cast nets and stuff. And he get up in the morning, he going out by hisself any and all the time in the day and night.

DH 12:53

To make a net?

SA 12:55

Or to just go fishing and stuff too. Because I mean, that's how he made his money, you know, off of the casting and catching whatever and then, you know, selling his nets and stuff, too.

DH 13:04

So, was he...was he selling...was he selling the fish to people in the community or was he taking it to fish shops and selling it?

SA 13:13

I don't think he was taking it the fish shops. I don't ever remember him ever leaving Pin Point. Because every time you pass by there, he'd be sitting on that front porch he had this pipe and rocking chair. That's all I can remember of him and he always wore overalls. And he could—I'm

telling you how his house was situated. It was like right in front of the hall and he could see down both ends of Pin Point and he'd be able to tell anybody nearby what you did all day. And it's like for some reason his screen looked like it was tinted. And you sometimes you didn't even see him to see him on that porch unless you walked by and you didn't speak, he'd say, "You can't speak!" Like, "Oh, good evening or good afternoon!" You better not go past a old person's house and and not say good morning, good evening you in trouble for that. Oh, you—they demanded respect. And you'd be like, "Man, I'm ridin' my bike I ain't even lookin' up to see you! Now I'mma get in trouble because you gone call down there and tell my grandma that I didn't speak to you. Oh, oh, yes yes. It was him and um...

DH 14:19

So, he he made nets, and he fished and he sold his fish. You said both grandmothers worked at the factory. What, what was—how was fishing and the water seen in your household? Was it...what you did if you went down to the factory, or were there other members of your family that fished just to be fishing?

SA 14:45

Yeah, for the most part, it was just to be doing it um, for my immediate household, you know, other than my grandmother doing it for her, you know, her salary or whatever. But, you know, like you say we knew people who would fish you know, that was the one thing I like about Pin Point too, because like, if you went out and you caught a mess of fish, you know, they're gonna distribute among people regardless, you know. It's like, here, I'm bringing you five fish and whatever for your house and because I caught 30 or whatever, you know. You're making sure everybody's fed, so to speak. Um, like Mr. Neal, you know, he sold insurance, but he had a fishing boat. The, oh gosh what's the people name that stayed down the back road? They built shrimp boats, so you could get shrimp and stuff from them as well. Okay, no, they still they came through the community and they sold it to us, you know, for dirt cheap because they knew everybody and then some of our, you know, relatives worked for them. You know, those type things.

DH 15:50

Was this a white family? Okay. The Neils?

SA15:53

Yeah. Neil Regan. Uh huh. He was an insurance agent, as well, but like I said, as a matter of fact, he still his son still does it to this day.

DH 16:03

Did they live on Pin Point Road?

SA16:04

They lived on Burnside Island. Yeah, but, oh God, what is their last name? I want to Weber's okay. They lived, they live they still live down the back street by the church.

DH

Okay. Sweetfield of Eden?

SA

Umm humm, um they um but I think when their dad passed, they kind of stopped doing it. But there wasn't nothing for us to see them literally building a shrimp boat in the backyard and seeing it come from conception to them hauling it off to go into the water. Because it would be, it would be like towering literally like a modern-day Noah's Ark compared to their house, you know. And you see them start building and then all of a sudden see the the ark of it coming up and they're like, "Wow!" and I think going into high school or whatever, we may have seen them build like three of 'em. Wow. Yeah. So, you know, like I said, that was their livelihood as well. So, you know, it wasn't nothing for anybody to come through Pin Point selling shrimp, fish, conch, oysters, those type things so.

DH 17:08

Now were there any Black families that built boats as well or did they buy them from him or they did they have boats of that style?

SA 17:15

No, they just a regular little bateaus. Yeah. Those type thing that you just put that motor on the back of it.

DH

Oh, yeah the little outboard motor.

SA

Now do you want to hear a funny story?

DH

Yes, I do.

SA

My grandmother, my grand aunt, which is her aunt—that would be my great grandma aunt—and Mr. Wiggins' wife. The man who...

DH

Sammy Wiggins?

SA

Yeah his wife, Miss Bell. They will go out fishin' in the morning on a Saturday morning when I say they go out when it was dark and come back when it was dark. They wouldn't allow no man to get in the boat with him and this the kicker. They never had a motor, they all rowed. They rowed a boat.

DH

A husband and wife?

SA 18:04

No, no, no, no, no. My grand mama, their aunt.

DH

These the women! Okay. Oh, my goodness!

SA 18:12

Yes! Would not allow a man to get in the boat with them at all. And then they never had a fishing rod. They use the rope with hooks on it.

DH 18:21

Oh, they longlined? And they caught a lot?

SA 18:23

Oh, yes! Yes, they did! I can remember sometimes my grandma come back and she give me her bag and she say, "Unload the bag." And that pan still being warm from that aluminum foil and... no, what they did aluminum foil wrapped it with newspaper and then put it in the brown paper bag.

DH 18:41

That is a good idea! You know I'm gonna take that! [laughing]

SA

I promise you!

DH

I'm gonna take that I'm gonna do that before I put it in my little soft side lunch bag. Imma have my little modern lunch bag, but that's a fascinating idea. So, these these are three women, these

three women take their little boat out of that back creek and go out in Moon River. They go fishing with their lines and their hooks. Now, why do you think they didn't have, let...?

SA 19:08

I never, I never, she never—cause I asked her one day you know, “Why ya’ll don’t never let a man go so they can, he can row for you?” “We ain’t got time for all that.” [laughter]

DH

That’s great!

SA

I'm like, really?

DH 19:21

Did any other women do that or was that just kind of that was kind of their thing? That was their girlfriend time, that was their thing.

SA 19:29

I never, I've never heard of anybody else being in a boat with them. To be honest with you.

DH

That was just them.

SA

Just them until, until Miss [inaudible] took sick. You know she had diabetes bad and then Miss Leitha might have went with them, I'm not sure.

DH

Who’s Miss Leitha?

SA

She was the lady that lived in a house right next to the crab factory, who just recently passed. I think she was like 96 or 97 or something. Yeah, but her last name was Cruz, but I think her and Mr. Sam were brother and sister.

DH

Okay. Yeah, I know who she is.

SA

She she used to be the candy lady as well. But they just to do things like, I never forget us as the young ones like when it was time for the whole crab season whatever. They you know, they saved the backs and you have to clean them and stuff. And I can remember having them having those huge tin um pans um the wash pan like thing. And they would have them things full of crab backs, boxes or whatever. And, you know, they'll call and say, um ask Stephanie if she wanna make some money. And then I'll be like, Yeah, you know, thinking, "Oh, yeah I'm 'bout to make some money, man!" Get down there and clean them things for four hours, and they give you 50 dern cents!

DH

Stop it!

SA

You talkin' 'bout mad!

DH 20:55

50 cents for cleaning a [inaudible]. And how do you clean it with like with a toothbrush?

SA 21:02

A toothbrush! A toothbrush! Be stanking all day with crabs and Clorox! Yes!

DH 21:10

So that just worked you from all different directions to turn you off from the seafood food...

SA 21:14

Yes! I was like, this is...I'm done!

DH 21:18

Did anybody ever say, "Yes, you ought to work, you ought to do this, you ought to be at the crab factory? Or did they ever say, "No, you shouldn't stay away from this? Was there ever any pressure?

SA 21:27

They never, they never discouraged you or encouraged you. You know, if you wanted to do it, they let you try it. Because literally eating it you learned automatically. Because they weren't they aren't gonna just like I know how to like I said know how to pick and pick the crab and do the claw you know. My God mama, which is one of Miss Olly Bell's daughters, she still does it, um you know um and she sells it. My, my younger...

DH

The crabs?

SA

No, she does, she picks the crab meat. Okay. Her and my aunt used to...before my mom had her stroke, she would be one of the ones who did it um. Who else used to do it? The only...

DH 22:12

So, you, so you just have to know that that's who does it and if I say, you know, "Stephanie, I want some crab meat. Does somebody have some?"

SA 22:18

I'll call, I'll call each one of 'em. Cause like my God mama—her nickname Billy—she may not have any today, but Ann has some or my aunt has some and they didn't get any or whatever and they'd get 'em. You remember Tim, who used to work out here that taught math? We used to, we used to, he used to be like the real handsome white guy that taught math with the salt pepper gray hair.

DH

Oh, that's a long time ago!

SA

Yeah! He still, he's the one who goes out and crabs and that's who they buy their crabs from.

DH

And they pick it? Oh, okay.

SA

Yep. So, they still have a good relationship. You know, they know like you said, they know the people who they will call to say, "You got crabs or we buy them from you, you're our distributor or whatever".

DH 22:58

Now I just bought. I bought a pint from Nancy's yesterday. I paid \$8 for that pint.

SA

Oh, you got a deal!

DH

I did? Because over by my dad's, what do they sell it for?

SA 23:12

Like my, um, that would cost you \$12 or even \$13. And then that's just for the claw meat. Now the white meat run you \$15, \$16 and God forbid if you want lump. That's like \$22.

DH 23:26

Wow. Because that was mixed.

SA

Ooooooh! Oh Ok.

DH

It's fine. It was it was it was white; it was crab claw. I could tell you the mixture. It didn't matter because I was putting it into soup, like, you know, I was making some stew. That's interesting. Yeah. Okay, so you got the factory. You told me, both grandmothers were there. You know, all these other people in community worked there. The different families—the Wiggins. So, then the factory closes. What does that do to Pin Point? What does that do to the people that were working? Were they already just not working anymore? Was it a slow thing or was it a, was it a big deal?

SA 24:08

Well... Yeah. Um, for most of 'em, they still made do cause like I said, they found the people who knew how to crab and bring the boxes to them. They bought, like my uncle um he would be the one who they would call around telling my grandmother like, "Greg around there? We need him to come boil crabs for us." You know and they ordered, like maybe two boxes, which is like four bushels, you know, because there's almost like two bushels in a box. And that you could get a least about 20, 25 containers from that. So, you know, and you sell 'em in that \$10, \$12 container, you you, you literally making more than you really did working down there for a whole week, you know.

DH 24:52

Because it's going straight to you. So now if you sellin' \$20 and \$10 each, you gettin' \$200 out of a box.

SA 25:00

And you only payin' like, what—\$40, \$50 for a box, so you makin' a good profit.

DH 25:05

Okay and folks that I know, a lot of people live on heirs' property. The folks that were doing that, they—were they paying mortgages or was that pretty much...?

SA 25:15

For, for some well, would the heir's property, you know, you always gave that money to that one person who you thought was responsible enough to go pay the taxes. So, you wouldn't lose, lose the property, so to speak. But yeah, they that's pretty much that money they pocketed.

DH 25:35

So that's covering your—we have heirs' property in Virginia and we do the same thing. There's uncle, ours is Uncle Doodle. [laughing] You give the money to Uncle Doodle and before Uncle Doodle was Aunt Punch, you know, and so you really didn't have debt living on that property. Not, not debt related to your home.

SA 25:53

Exactly! And most of the, like you said, most of the houses were already paid for or whatever. So yeah, you just, this passes it down generation to generation. So, we just paying your little utility bills and your groceries and, you know, they always had the little nickel and dime insurance policies. So, you know, those type things. Yeah, they go make sure they pay them insurance policies before they pay a utility bill or whatever, because you know, that's gonna be coverage for somebody.

DH 26:17

Right, so if something happens. So, when the Varn plant closed, now there was another plant before that owned by a Black man. Hanif Haynes was saying. It was before you and I were live, but apparently...

SA 26:36

I never knew about that one. There's still remnants, because it's in front of my cousin's house.

DH 26:39

Yeah, there's that platform. So, you had that and then that didn't get rebuilt and then apparently, you know, the story is that Varn got his property because somebody owed money on a lawn mower or something. But somehow, yeah, I don't, I don't know how true it is.

SA 26:52

Wow! You know that more than I do because I'm like, wow!

DH 26:56

It was, well. What did you say she was your aunt? Miss Sula?

SA

Uun huh.

DH

Ok so Miss Sula told me that story. Now I don't remember it very well, but she said that basically, there was—she—there's this resentment that he was even there. And that he got there, apparently, because somebody had borrowed money to buy a lawn mower or borrowed a lawn mower and owed the money, something like that. And in payment for the debt, got that...

SA

Land!

DH

Got that that strip of property.

SA

Wow!

DH

And then Varn built on it. So, then Varn built his factory generations are working in it. And from what you're saying, just from your point of view, like, people just kept doing the same work, but they did it in their own on their own freelancing, and some are still doing it.

SA

Yeah. Yeah.

DH

Okay. So, what else should we know about Pin Point and the water and just as a, as a Black coastal community?

SA 27:53

It's funny how you said that, because, like, you hear stories, like, you know, but I don't know. It's, it's almost like we never really asked the questions. Until, like, I started asking, once I started hanging around my grandmother and listening to them. And, you know, it's like, well, who is this person to us and, you know. That and, you know, growing up how did y'all, you know? What was it like for y'all to live there? And then, you know, she was like, you know, we were so poor and, you know, always had, you know, huge families. And so, you always had playmates and everything. And I can remember her telling me stories about how they used to take the crabgrass and make dolls out of 'em.

DH

Oh, I heard about that!

SA

And I was like, what! Grass? She was like, “Oh, yeah, you had to be creative.” And like making footballs and stuff or balls out of the pine cones and you know, those type things like. What? Yeah, you learned and I can remember cause my grandmother and her sister they lived back door to back door. So, we had that in between and you better not go from, you better not go further than house to house you know. You can stay outside and play all day and they’d sit that water and stuff out on that porch, cause they you—they didn’t believe in you coming in and out the house all day either.

DH

Oh, really!

SA

Yes! You know, so, you know, we played and, you know. I was the tomboy so like when it was scuppernong season even though I didn’t weigh much they hoist me up in the tree and I’d knock them all down and ‘till I saw a snake and then I jumped down. You know, or we wait until Aunt Francis went home because she had Japanese plum tree that was huge! And she, you know, they had these little wives’ tales that girls shouldn’t be up in trees because they’d kill it and all this stuff. And I never forget and I sometimes think back now I was like, “Did I kill that tree?” Because we waited good until she went to church this one Sunday and baby I jumped up in a tree so fast. Those plums were big and I shook and shook and shook and then all of a sudden, one day the tree was being chopped down because it was rotted or whatever and I was like ooooooh boy! [laughing] So you know, we can’t let ourselves better not say nothing you know. So, but she was the one um she never really worked down there as well because she’s the one got my mom into nursing because she was a nurse as well. Um but and then um...

DH 30:18

Now what did your mom encourage you to do? If it wasn’t the sea...? If it wasn’t the...?

SA 30:23

She always thought I was going to be a nurse like her.

DH 30:24

Okay and that wasn’t what you wanted to do?

SA 30:26

No, I don’t do needles and blood and all that stuff.

DH

Alright, but you like people? Ok

SA

My aunt that lived with Teresa, you know the two sisters. She was a school teacher and so you know I always she said it was something about the even when I was in kindergarten I always all the little crying ones would come and I would be the one to comfort all of 'em, you know. But then I had this mischief side too because I could lure boys to cut plugs out they hair and I will get in trouble for that. [laughter] Because I'd get notes sent home, "Stephanie cut somebody else's hair today." I still remember vision of that where I'd take that little baby blanket and sit them in that corner wrap around their neck and tie it.

DH

And give them a fake haircut?

SA

What! It wasn't no fake because I was cutting plugs out of they hair so they end up having a haircut for real. [laughter] Yes goodness. So, you know, we just sit around even with family reunions, we sit around and we reminisce about you know things that we've done in Pin Point and how Pin Point used to be a dirt road. And you know who got hit by the car and you know, you could you knew instantly if something was going on in Pin Point. Like I say my mom and Aunt Francis being the nurses, you know, anybody got sick they would come knocking at our door [door knock simulation on table]. You know up till matter fact March made three years that my mom had a stroke. Up until that year, people would be knocking at the door, "Peggy, can you come down here? Mama's sick." And this is you know, what can we do or calling on the phone, "My child is sick, what do you think the remedy is for this? And my mom telling them and I can remember one night this drunk white lady got hit by a car or something I still know what ended up happening but I can remember waking up and seeing like blood in basins and stuff and my mom done cleaned up these wounds and then done called the ambulance to come because you know she bleeding when she was drunk or whatever. But I'm like, "What in the world? This is not the scene that I want to be around."

DH

So, you had to be ready for everything!

SA

Everything! Yes. Any and everything. Yes.

DH 32:31

Wow. So, so I'm just gonna go back to fishing one more time. Did you fish? I hear you talk about...

SA 32:36

No! I never liked it. I tried it, but my grandmother used to always they used to always have this thing where you had to be quiet when you're fishing. Oh no! I want a radio because I like music and I want to hold conversation with you. Just sitting on the dock with her and she was like, "Girl, hush your mouth I'm trying to fish!" You mean to tell me, I gotta sit out here all this time and ya'll don't talk!

DH 32:55

And be quiet. Yeah.

SA 32:58

Y'all go from sun up to sun down and y'all say nothing to each other the whole time? Man, no way that's it! And just sittin' there with a fishing line and it may not bite for 30 minutes or so. I'm wondering what if I throw it out there and that fish better instantly jump on that thing or I'm quittin'. [laughter] Not even just to mention that, you know, the crabbin' and the shrimpin' and you havin' to have that technique. Because they did all that casting and you got to hold it with your teeth and then do this and man did you got to throw it a certain way.

DH 33:34

That just wasn't you. Now to go back , I know you right around the corner.

SA 33:37

You know like I go out there like every week and especially like on Sundays when it's time to go to church I make sure I go through and everything. And I've been blessed to be able to acquire a piece of the land out there as well down, but just in contemplation of whether I'm going to build or keep it just in case I decided if I want to build. You know, it's mine so.

DH 33:56

So that's and that's, that's so wonderful. Is yours!

SA 34:00

It's mine. Paid for, I paid it off for my birthday, two years ago.

DH 34:05

Congratulations. You can put another plum tree on it if you want to. [laughter]

SA 34:11

Exactly! A scuppernong everything, any and everything. Yes! You know, we just all got these plans like my family it's like, "Step, when you build your house just make sure this many bedrooms and make sure you know we have that area in the back where we can do cookouts. But we find a cookout or the reason to do a cookout for anything. Winter, spring, summer, fall anything we just out there. And I'm always the big host any house so you know we just plan stuff and oh man when my mom was out there and we did, you know, New Year's always a seafood thing because you know everything is always fresh then. Man, we'd be out there and have these huge fire and bone fires everywhere to keep everybody warm. This table we got oysters and this table you got a low country boil and this table you got a fish fry and just just bringing the community in, in everybody. Yes, yes. Well, you know people have gotten away from all that stuff, so.

DH 35:02

Even in even in your generation, I mean, you have so much enthusiasm. Even the people that you grew up with they're not as they're not as interested as you?

SA 35:11

In Pin Point, you know, you hear a lot of people even in our church say, you know, "We envy y'all because y'all are so close knit." My grandmother always built that in us. Like, if you don't have nobody else, you have family. So y'all make the most of it. I don't care if y'all get in an argument a fist fight a fist fight today, before you leave you better be done made up because you back loving each other. Literally. And this is so even with my grandmother's sisters, you know that side of the family is like when they see us take pictures and people posted on Facebook. Why y'all didn't invite us and this, this and this? Literally we say we ain't got time for that because see y'all 'bout bickering in and all that stuff. We...

DH

We're 'bout joy.

SA

Yes! You know, we'll call—me and my cousin Renee—we'll call and say, "Okay, Dionne you're bringing the fish today, you and so and so. Y'all get together and y'all decide on how much fish or what kind of fish ya'll gonna bring, but y'all responsible for the fish. And we call these people they bring in this because even now we just two weeks ago, we do something every month for everybody for birthday. There's only three of us in November, so you know they'll call us.

DH 36:17

Did you say, "only three of you in November?"

SA 36:21

Everybody's either born in May, September or January, I think.

DH

That's wonderful though!

SA

You know, it's like okay, so ya'll all you know, it's huge for ya'll. But it's only three of us and I'm the oldest so everybody is like I'm 40 something, she's 20 something, and he's 12. You know, so it's a big gap so what do ya'll I want to do? But you know, we just find something to just bring everybody together and say we love you even if it just us eating dinner together you know. But we're gonna do something you know. And they all are just so scattered you know. It's like you gotta find time to bring your families together even you know how they say during death you know; you always have that animosity. Not us. When my mama's oldest sister died in April. I wrote the obituary, you know, y'all pick out this y'all go do this while we do this, you know, we scheduling this. Takes some of the, you know, the grief off of them. They already mourning but and she was the one who had the most kids. I'm an only child. The sister that's a little bit of two years older than my mom and she has only child. My cousin, whose mom died, she's the only child. Then two uncles don't have any kids. And then the last one, she got three. So, it's seven of them. But still, you know, it's like, Y'all got the biggest family but still we're here to support y'all.

DH 37:37

Right. So, in terms of pulling people together, what role as the Pin Point seafood day have? Is that like homecoming for Pin Point or is that something else?

SA 37:48

No. That's totally different. Our church does that.

DH 37:53

Okay, is that a fundraiser for Sweetfield of Eden?

SA

Yeah!

DH

Okay, cool. Because this is my last—this is my first year coming.

SA 37:59

Oh, okay. Yeah, that's that's our church's big fundraiser, but we do the Pin Point Fourth of July reunion. Now that's the homecoming. We do that every other year. So, I think this year coming

up, 2016 will be the next one. Yeah. So, we'll, we'll start planning for that in January, probably. Yeah.

DH 38:20

What about and I appreciate your time. I don't have a few other what I think we really covered a lot of what I was interested in. But there's one thing I haven't heard anything about directly from you. But it I'm hearing hints of it with the women and men. Women and men. Did they...Were their roles different? I think you told me that. [laughter] You can't come, but when we come back and we'll bring our fish! Where there, were there things that the young and the old did? That the women and the men did? Or did it just kind of happen? You did what you needed to do?

SA 38:56

I think is all about the survival. Because you had some houses like, like my the aunt that went fishing—she lived by herself. Well, she had her son that lived with her, but you know you he worked so much that you hardly ever saw him. But you know, she did you know when she needed to, you'd see her out there in her old age raking the yard. She had this huge magnolia tree and you know how they drop leaves. Oh, gosh! She would be out there, that yard would be spotless. She wouldn't ask any of us to come help her or do anything. And I kind of formed a bond with her in her later days. But she just she was such an independent woman. You know, she had one of those old houses that was built up off the ground that you can literally like almost crawl up under you know, and she'd climb those stairs and that porch is gonna be swept that bed was gonna be made that kitchen was gonna be clean and she had breakfast, lunch and dinner made every day. You know, so it was in you know, everybody used to think that she was like the evil lady, but once you started peeling back those layers, she was the most sweetest, loving woman who cared just, you know. She would do anything if you asked her. Because even like, you know, she was known for one being one of the better cooks in Pin Point. But if you go up to her and say, "Aunt Meana, I need to get that recipe." "Here you go, come on let me teach it to you, meet me at my house on such and such day, and I'll show you how to do it."

DH

Wow!

SA

And to this day it's only two people who know how to make her tuna salad and my cousin is one of them. Because she actually went over there and learned how to measure everything based on how many cans of tuna she put in that thing. You'd be like, "How you know how to make this like her?" Because I went and asked her. And for church functions, she was one over the kitchen. And I shadowed her for so long. So now it's like me and my cousin, we're the only two who...

DH 40:51

Know how to do some of the things that she did. Those are some wonderful traditions. That's awesome.

SA 40:57

I got some of our dishes and, you know, just just just like she has so much in her house that was like antique stuff. And I used to always tell her, like, if you ever die, she had this huge post bed. That thing was so pretty. I don't even know if her family still has it. Or if anybody got it out of the hospital as they tore it down after she passed, but because it was such an old house, but you know, the things that were in it, were just immaculate, immaculate conditions. Like Jesus that was the biggest, most oh, it just and you know, the old quilts and all that stuff that you know we in this time and day they don't even think about it.

DH

You can't buy those things. Yeah.

SA

Miss Bradley went to the Pin Center and they had a quilt in the Pin Center and they said that thing was over \$1,000. For a quilt? Wow! Yes, yes, it is. Yes, it is. I was like maybe that's a craft I need to pick up.

DH 41:59

Yeah, you and I went we missed a couple of things. Yes. Yeah, it's amazing.

SA 42:03

And you know, those type things is, you know, not just the fishery part. But you know, just learning how to do those type things helped them along the way as well. Because it's like some of them you know, they will go over to the rich and and fluid houses and do cleaning and ironing and those type things that you know, help them as well. So, they made a way, they did it, they did it.

DH 42:25

So, my last question for you is just if I really besides talking with you, if I really wanted to hear a voice of Pin Point, who should I talk to?

SA 42:36

John Henry Haines. Literarily, I think he's the oldest who really knows the history of Pin Point because it just looking at him he has aged so gracefully, you would not think that this man was in his latter 70s. And when we have funerals and stuff, or when the Pin Point reunion comes. He comes to our opening program and they're gonna say "The Blueprint of Pin Point" by John Henry Haines. He could tell you the first house in Pin Point down to the last house and who lived

where and how many kids they had, and how the couples would fuss and fight about this on this day. Who drank the liquor and got beat up on this day. Oh, he has us rolling in that church every time he comes up to us. And he is like he has it down pat. And you be like, “Who are you talking about?” And then he'll point and be like, “That's your great, great grandmama.” [laughter] Did you say great, great? I wasn't even born yet. He knows. He knows every one of 'em and what they did. So yes, they called him “Pig”. So, if you haven't talked to him, yes, you definitely need to get him. And he's, I mean, it's still to this day. He still cleans the church cemetery and everything. So...

DH 44:06

Thank you. This has been so much fun.

SA 44:09

I can imagine you collecting information, how you...

DH 44:12

Just talked with you has been so much fun. We've worked together for you know, over a decade. Yeah. Not, you know, just kind of worked past each other. And not really got into knowing each other.

SA 44:21

When you, you know, you first started when Hanif and them brought you out there is like, “Oh, I didn't know you were interested in stuff like this!” Yeah, okay!

DH 44:29

I'll tell you I was genuinely I was really at... I was really at a reception and somebody said, “Oh, you're a marine biologist and I was like, “Yeah.” They said, “Oh, what do you study?”

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Michelle Duncan June 27, 2022

Review by Molly Graham [DATE]