

Oral Memoirs
of
Ida Boston

An Interview Conducted by

Porsha Dossie

April 18, 2015

Oviedo History Harvest

Spring 2015

Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences, and Stories (RICHERS) of Central Florida

Oviedo Historical Society

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Interview Histories

Interviewer: Porsha Dossie

Transcriber: Porsha Dossie

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Project Detail

RICHES of Central Florida is an umbrella program housing interdisciplinary public history projects that bring together different departments at UCF with profit and non-profit sectors of the community.

Central Florida has often been associated with large-scale, commercial tourism and housing development. While those aspects of Central Florida are important to the economic growth of the region, much of its history has remained unnoticed and under researched. The Public History program at UCF links many projects under one initiative to promote the collection and preservation of Central Florida history. By facilitating research that records and presents the stories of communities, businesses, and institutions in Central Florida, RICHES seeks to provide the region with a deeper sense of its heritage. At the same time, the initiative connects the UCF students and faculty with the community and creates a foundation on which Central Floridians can build a better sense of their history.

The Oviedo Historical Society was organized in November 1973 by a group of citizens. The society is a 501(3) non-profit organization. Its purpose is to help preserve the community identity of Oviedo by collecting and disseminating knowledge about local history, serve as a repository for documents and artifacts relating to Oviedo history, promote the preservation and marking of historic sites and buildings in the Oviedo area and foster interest in local, state, national, and world history.

Porsha is a graduate history student at the University of Central Florida. Ida Boston is a retired school bus driver for the Seminole County Public School system.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Ida Boston is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on April 18, 2015.

Abstract

An oral history of Ida Boston, conducted by Porsha Dossie on April 18, 2015. Boston is a resident of Oviedo, Florida, and a retired school bus driver for the Seminole County Public Schools. In 1956, she married her husband, Russell Boston, who is the grandson of Prince Butler Boston, a leading figure in Oviedo's black community. In this oral history, Boston discusses the legacy of Prince Butler Boston, establishing a colored cemetery, funding colored schools in the Oviedo area, and the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church. Boston also discusses black life in Oviedo, including membership in the Oviedo Citizens in Action Committee (OCIAC), which desegregated public places in Oviedo and fought for integration of Oviedo's schools.

Ida Boston

Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Porsha Dossie
April 18, 2015
Oviedo, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Dossie My name's Porsha Dossie. We are doing the oral history interview of Ida Boston here at the Lawton House in Oviedo[, Florida] on April 18, 2015. So, Ida, can you tell me a little bit about the items you brought today?

Boston Okay. I brought, um, with me a picture of the first school house in Oviedo for — which was called the Colored School — and it was called the Little Red School House, and it was also the first church of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church. I also brought a picture of the school after they left the little red church from — the Little Red School from the church to the school that was built on Division Street, called the Colored School, and I brought, uh, a ration book that was, uh, issued long ago for the blacks to get food as well, and I brought a picture of [Prince] Butler Boston.

0:01:08

Prince Butler and the Boston Family

Dossie Tell me a bit about, uh, Prince Butler Boston and his significance to Oviedo.

Boston Prince Butler Boston came to Oviedo from — well, he came off of the plantation — the Atkinson plantation in Georgia — and at the time, he was known as Prince Butler Atkinson, but when he came to Oviedo, he did not want to carry the slave name, so he changed his name to Prince Butler Boston. So when we celebrate the family, we celebrate the Atkinson-Boston family to make sure we keep the beginning name, And so his father brought him here, and once they got here, uh — his father was named, uh, [Dr. Alexander] Atkinson — and so then he brought his son here, and then they settled here in Oviedo, and Dr. Atkinson was the first doctor of Oviedo, and so after that, a freeze and came, and then Atkinson left, but he gave all of his land, which — it was three hundred acres to Prince Butler Boston, and that's where he started his family.

Dossie Mmhmm.

Boston And Prince was known to, uh — with a lot of dignity, and he was concerned about the black people that lived in Oviedo, and he was an en — an encouraging — he encouraged all of them that[sic] came, if they could afford to

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buy property. So most of them that did have money, they brought property. so this was the purpose of — Henry Jackson bought property. They named Jackson Heights School after him. He gave them the land to them to build the school, Jackson Heights [Elementary] School,¹ and, uh, Prin — Prince Butler owned all those three [hundred] acres of land that he had orange trees on.

So he — and he was also a carpenter. He built his own house. His house had 17 rooms. He had 10 children and each one of those children had their own rooms. So I have a picture of the house that I didn't show, but I can show that picture of the house, uh, to you so you can have that, and, uh, he had, uh, 10 children. sent all of them to college. Every one of them graduated and every one of them moved away to different states, except for one, which is my husband's dad, Joseph Boson, and he's the only one that didn't get a full college degree. He only went for a couple of years, but he joined the military, and so, uh, he's been a part of Oviedo history. There's a Boston Street, there's a Boston Alley, there's a Boston [Hill] Cemetery, and there was a Boston Project, but someone bought the project about 10 years ago and they changed the name to Academy Place, but before that it was called the Bust — Boston — Butler Boston Project.

0:04:17

Married life

Dossie

Tell me a bit about your, uh — your husband, and his father, and your mar — marriage, [inaudible].

Boston

Okay, okay. My husband is Russell W. Boston. I met him in [19]55. We got married in '56, and he was the fourth child of Joseph Boston, and Joseph lived in — on the property his dad, P. B. Boston, uh, gave him — three acres of land so he had his family — he had ten children that he raised, and, um — and my husband — very nice gentleman — he joined the military, and he spent 20 years in the military. I spent 18 years in the military with him. So he retired in 1973. Then he got his own business, which — which we lived on the Boston property, until the land was sold, and after the land was sold, then we added on to my mom's house, which where I live now — on 53 Lindsay Lane — but, uh, he — after he retired from the military, he got his own business, which was land clearing, and he worked that for 30 years, and now he's retired. I'm retired as a school bus driver. I drove the school bus for 25 years. So, both of us are retired, enjoying our lives, and we love Oviedo.

0:05:46

History Harvest

Dossie

Hmm, that's [inaudible]. Um, for some of the items you brought, uh, can you tell me about their historical significance? You said that there was a photo you wanted to talk about? Is that...

¹ Now Jackson Heights Elementary School.

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Boston Okay. The photo of the house – let me see.

Dossie You brought a lot of great stuff.

Boston This is our history book. This is [inaudible]. This – this is the house that Prince Butler – Butler Boston built.

Dossie Mmhmm.

Boston Okay, can you get a picture of it?

Dossie Did you know what year that was built in?

Boston No, I don't know – know what year, uh, but all I know it has the 17 rooms. It was a beautiful home, and it was built around a lake that was seven miles long, and it's where the Canterbury Retreat is now and then the lake is still there. The lake was named, uh, Lake Gem, and it was named after his, uh, girlfriend, before he married Julia [Boston]. So he named the lake so he could keep her in his mind all the time. I'll show you a picture of the lake, which is a beautiful lake, which All of the Boston family learned to swim in the lake. Uh, this is Lake Gem, and it's still there right now, but it's not there – as large as it used to be. They're filling in a lot of – a lot of the lake, but this is called Lake Gem, and it was a lake right around the house of Prince Butler Boston.

0:07:51 **Oviedo Citizens in Action Committee**

Dossie So, um, I believe there was an Oviedo action committee – I don't know if I'm saying it correctly – that dealt with, um, the black community in Oviedo?

Boston Oviedo Citizens in Action [Committee] – In Action.

Dossie Can you tell me about the organization?

Boston Okay. The organization was – was organized back – back in the six – it was chartered back in the '60s, but it was organized even before then, and it was organized, um, because at – at that time, we had the colored school, and we could not eat anything – there was a, uh – a drugstore. We could not eat in drugstores. We could not go to any of the, uh, barbershops to get our haircut or any – anything like that. We could not swim in the swimming pool. Um, so that's why the organization – they organized the organization to make sure that we would get recognized. So we went into – with the organization members – our first president, then-Reverend James Bordy[sp] – and some of the other members – we sat into the drugstore until they decided to serve us.

Dossie Hmm.

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Boston We went into the barbershop until they decided to cut our hair—until they really told us that, um, they just didn't really know how to cut our hair. So [inaudible]—and I guess it was really good reason. So, uh, a lot of times they would go into the barbershop, and he would just close it down, 'cause he didn't want us in there, so he would close it up, and finally he just said, "I—I really don't know how to cut black people hair." So—so that was a—that was a lot for him.

And the school—we had to go Sanford to school. We couldn't go—after we left our colored school, we had to go to Sanford to high school. so the organization fought to be able to go to school here in Oviedo. So during the Civil Right[s Movement], uh, fighting, and so forth, that's when we were able to not have to not have to go—we had to catch the bus. We had to walk—walk to Oviedo town. No matter where we lived, the bus came through Oviedo, and we had to walk to catch the bus to go to Sanford, until, uh, we were able to go to the Oviedo High School. So that was the purpose of the organization to—to fight for our rights. Mmhmm.

Dossie Uh, how long was the organization around for, or—or is it still around?

Boston It's still—still around—very, very active, uh, and—and it's no longer, a, uh—a black organization. We have everybody in it now. So it's just really nice. The City [of Oviedo], uh, is really part of our organization. The City, uh, give[sic] us a building. We have an office that's given to us by the City. So nothing like it used to be, so—but we had to fight for those rights. So we got those rights and the organization is 46 years old. Mmhmm.

0:10:47 **African-American community in Seminole County**

Dossie Now, I wanted—you talked a little bit about it, but what was like it like growing up black in Seminole County—in Oviedo?

Boston Okay, you know, I—I, uh—I can't talk about that as much, 'cause I only spent one year be—when I came here in '55. I got married in '56, and then I went with my husband in—in the military life. So I've lived the military life for—for 18 years, but, uh, eh, Oviedo [sic] very good, as far as I know. You know, I didn't go through any of the—the problems that I know that some of the others went through. Um, when I had my kids, we were away—so they were in school when I came back, uh, off and on, because my husband—every two years we would move, so when I get back, we were—they were able to go to Oviedo High School. So I did—do not have any of the problems that I know some of the others had, uh, but during the part—when they were fighting for the organization, I was here at the beginning, but then I left. so—so I don't have any—any idea about how some of the others grew up in Oviedo, but I just know that, uh, when—when my children was[sic] here, I remember when they, um, covered when the [inaudible] when they integrated...

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Dossie Mmhmm.

Boston Uh, the school, uh, a lot of the—a lot of the whites did not want to—us to come there, and they did not want to teach our students. They did not want them to swim in the swimming pool, so they—they covered it up, you know? Just covered that big, nice [laughs] swimming pool up. So—so those are the little things that—that Oviedo Citizens in Action was fighting, you know, but, um, right now everything in just perfect, you know? Uh, I think the organization was a good thing that they organized to make sure that they, uh—they knew our feelings and knew the desires we had in our heart, and the things that—we wanted equal rights. So we have that. So Oviedo is just a perfect, perfect place to live in, you know? It's—we don't have no[sic] problems with nobody. Uh, they—the city itself is with us, you know—and they've become a part of us, and so it's just—it's just a great—I encourage anybody—if you want to live in a perfect place, come to Oviedo [laughs].

0:13:24

Boston Hill Cemetery and Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

Dossie Uh, is there anything else you want to tell me about that you brought that you think is significant to Oviedo's history—that conveys Prince Butler Boston's legacy?

Boston Um, no more than[?] the, um—the [Boston Hill] Cemetery. He gave the five acres—acres of land, and this—it—it was really given for the colored people. that's what it was called the colored cemetery, and it was given to them so they would have a place to bury the dead, 'cause only other cemetery was the First [United] Methodist [Church] Cemetery, which is on, um, [Florida State Road] 426, uh, but it was—I know there's a couple, uh—a few graves that's—that's in that cemetery, but they had a hard time, uh, getting them to bury the blacks there

Dossie Hmm.

Boston So at—at that time—but not now. that's not the problem now. So that was the purpose of him, uh, giving the five acres of land for the blacks to have a place to be buried free, 'cause[?] it was to be free—free of charge. at that time—it's not that way now—but at that time, it was free of charge. So that was the—the main thing that he did.

As far the church, he put a lot of money inside the Antioch Church. Uh, he helped to build—he was a carpenter, so he helped to build some parts of the church. um, so that was his—that was his—his contribution—the—the part—the church and—and the cemetery, and—and the City of Oviedo really recognize him as being one of the leaders to encourage, um—they would go to him whenever they needed to know, 'cause he was like the spokesman for the black people of Oviedo.

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Dossie Mmhmm.

Boston So that's how I always saw him.

0:15:20 **Closing remarks**

Dossie Anything else you would like to tell us?

Boston No, I—I guess that's it. I—I hope, um—I hope it be—I hope it's interesting
[laughs].

Dossie [inaudible].

Boston Okay.

Dossie Thank you so much for talking to us about this.

Boston Okay. Thank you, and thank you [laughs].

End of Interview