COOPER SCHOOL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
EDITED DRAFT
Vivian McLean
Audiotape

[This is an interview with Vivian McLean on April 21, 2004. The interviewer is Judy Bentley. The transcriber is Jolene Bernhard.]

JB: April 21, 2004. This is Judy Bentley. I’m interviewing Vivian McLean for the Old Cooper School Oral History Project.

[Tape cuts out]

JB: First of all, could you tell me something about the neighborhood, what it was like when you first moved here—in 1948, I believe?

VM: Yes. I’ll start off first with the town that was here. We had everything here. We had three grocery stores, two meat markets, hardware, and just about everything you needed was at this town. In fact, in the early days, they supplied the food up to what is now the Alaska Junction. There were many more people. A lot of them worked for the steel mill, though many of them also worked down in the fisheries and the port and so on. There were hundreds of children. When I said I had four children, it was only four children because there were so many that had many more children. None of them that I knew were new immigrants. Down on Riverside, which is part of Delridge once you got into Cooper School, there were Yugoslavians and they were fisherman, mostly. But that was another little town that had two hotels and a tavern and gas station and so on.

[Tape cuts out]

JB: Can you continue talking? You were talking about Riverside.

VM: Yes, as I said, that’s where many Yugoslavians lived and there are some still down there. Around the steel mill, there were Italians and those still live there also, some of them that haven’t died off. Here on the Point, it was mostly Swedish and Norwegians. There were two churches on Pigeon Point. One was a Salvation Army that was still very active. And across the street from that was a Congregational church that had closed and was no longer. In fact, it belonged to the union from the steel mill. We would have caucuses there. That’s what it was used for—union work and then for these Democratic caucuses, what they were.
The creek was not improved. An awful lot of sewage and so on went into it. It was not a beautiful place like it is today.

Up here on the Point, as I say, there were many, many children. If you lived on the hill, you stayed on top of the hill. The children did. The children midway between—I was talking to some there—they didn’t know anybody on top of the hill and they didn’t know anybody in the valley along Delridge. Because they had so many children, they could have so much fun just among themselves. There was one Filipino family who lived here on Pigeon Point and there was one black family. But there were no children in school that were of different races. They were strictly white.

In [19]48 it was an eighth grade school and so there were a thousand children at old Cooper School. That was the year that Denny [School] was finished. The children, of course, didn’t have seventh and eighth [at Cooper] then. They went to Denny, leaving it a much smaller school but also very full. They came to have many portables later on because there were so many children. Do you want anymore?

JB: Can you talk about the changes in the population of the neighborhood after the war? You moved here in [19]48, after the war. And then when the school shifted from K through 8 to K through 6, the size was reduced. Did it grow again gradually, bringing children in, or did the neighborhood itself have more people?

VM: It had more people for some time. Then it went down and we had empty homes at places. Then, of course, the steel mill had built homes all where—what we called “Big Flag” Stewart’s building [Food Services of America on Delridge Way]. [There] were rows and rows of homes for steel mill workers and others, and that was taken away. So, all those children were no longer there.

JB: Had the steel mill built those houses?

VM: Yes. They had them built, yes. They also owned houses along Longfellow Creek itself. Some of them were owned by private people, but most of them, they rented from the steel mill, as I understand it. In the [19]50s, there were lots of children born. We were big in population in there in the early [19]50s. Then people began to move to other parts of the city, but rentals went here. So, there were a lot of absentee landowners throughout the Delridge area. Sad as it is, most of them didn’t take care of their homes. It became rundown in the early [19]60s and so on.

When we came also, there were three brickmaking companies down here on West Marginal Way. Only one was still working. They had brought in Belgian people to work in the brick companies. That went on before, well before the turn of the century, until just before we came. And they closed down. There’s still talk about the kiln dust that’s down there. I think it’s all covered up, but it’s still there.

There’s also a school on West Marginal Way. Both the first Youngstown School and the second Youngstown School, to get messages across, there were no telephones that would connect them. So, the best of the runners would run across the top of Pigeon Point, down West Marginal Way, and take the message, and get the message, and return. That school is still there. It’s owned by an elderly man who has a business there. It’s used for storage, but inside that building, there is a blackboard with names on. He said that two of the people had their names up
there came to see it. They said, “Yes.” I don’t know how long it was in existence, but I know it was closed before we came.

There was also a church down farther from Riverside. The children came here to Cooper School. They had to walk until the buses were required. West Marginal Way was turned into an industrial street, so they wouldn’t let the children walk it anymore. But before that, they either had to walk or get a ride.

JB: Did they come over the hill or did they go by Spokane Street?

VM: Yes, quite often. Well, both ways. Most of them came over the hill. Some of those young people I still see once in awhile. They’re not young anymore!

JB: How did your children get to Cooper? I assume they walked.


JB: Were you living here on Twentieth?

VM: Yes. We’ve always lived here. There were a number of children, so many children up here. My sister lived here. She ended up with five children. I had four. Across the street there were three and around the corner there were three. It was rather a community in itself. This was kind of a center because of the open lot that we had bought shortly after we came. So, they could play there.

Even today, most children don’t know many children beyond the block. That was true, as I was saying, about the people who lived on top of the hill. Their children stayed on top of the hill. They didn’t mix with the ones down below, the next level. And then there’s another level down beyond.

There was a man up here who owned a property, right at the very end of Twenty-First. This is before we came, so maybe you don’t want to go back that far. But it was kind of interesting.

JB: Go back as far as you’d like.

VM: Well, he was rather interesting. He was a state representative. He had a lovely home right on the Point and it was beautiful location. He wanted to change; he didn’t think Pigeon Point was dignified enough, so he put his name up. “This is my point.” I don’t remember what the name was now. The kids would go, of course, and knock it down because they thought that was real funny that they wanted to change the name. Every once in awhile, they do. Someone comes by from outside and says, “Oh, we have to get more dignified.” And so on and want to change the name, but Pigeon Point is the name that sticks. It’s different than anywhere else and it’s changed a lot.

There is a family here, the Calhoun family—the Dean family, actually, originally—that came up in a covered wagon from northeastern Oregon, a county there, which they were very popular in. They have a statue there of one of the Deans. They came over in the late 1800s. They had a home, but the first home, I believe, burned. So, they lived in a tent a whole year. Now they have a home and the youngest daughter still lives there. She’s the same age as I am,
but she doesn’t know much about the history. She doesn’t talk about it as much as I wish she would. She’d have so much more interesting things.

The first PTA president—not the first one—but in 1918, the president was a woman we called Aunt Blanche. She was Blanche Dean; they first had a summer home and then they started living there.

JB: Where is that?

VM: Right here on the Point. Right up Nineteenth and Charlestown. The home is still there and it’s a beautiful little home. She was a delightful person. She was president of the PTA in 1918 and then again in 1927 when they built the new Cooper School. That last part of Cooper School, I should say. Added on to it.

JB: She was from that family then?

VM: Yes. The Dean family. There were three, I believe, girls. Well, she was married to a Dean. Blanche Dean was married into the family. The Dean girls were three of them; they came before the 1900s, 1800’s when they came. Pat is the only one left, but she doesn’t talk too much. I’ve tried to pin her down.

Going back to when we moved here, everywhere in Delridge—north Delridge and south Delridge—they had temporary housing for workers who were in the steel mill. Or most of them worked in Boeing or in the shipyards. There were long, long apartment complexes that maybe had six units top and bottom. One stretched—when we came in [19]48, it was supposed to have been gone—from Twentieth all the way across to Nineteenth. When we came, there were very few—

[Phone rings in the background; tape cuts out]

VM: OK, that’s where we are?

JB: You were talking about the apartment building that stretched.

VM: There were very few people still living in it. There were some right here. [The buildings] didn’t go down until in the [19]50s. Filled the Delridge valley, filled every place that there was an empty lot. When those went, then a lot of people came in and bought property. They could buy the land. A lot of homes were brought in, pre-fab. They brought them in when they had to clear around the airport at that period of time, when those homes came in. So, there are many, many of those here still, all of them improved. Many of them are renters on Nineteenth. There’s not as many renters up here as there used to be. Back when we first came, all along Twenty-First—Oh my goodness gracious sake! [Vivian’s parrot hops up on her shoulder.] I don’t think you want her.

JB: [smiling] I saw her coming.

[slight delay as Vivian removes the parrot]
VM: There was temporary housing, very similar to High Point. In fact, High Point went in about the same time. That’s part of Delridge also. After the town disappeared down here, we had no church, we had no grocery stores, we had no place to shop after the mid-50’s.

JB: The town disappearing, could you talk about that? Was that related to the block that Bethlehem Steel bought out?

VM: That’s right. They bought the whole thing. Before that, times had changed, but it was still a thriving town. You could get everything you wanted. There wasn’t a clothing store but there was about everything else.

[Vivian shushes her bird in the background]

JB: The apartment buildings you were talking about—were they related to wartime employment? Were they housing for the workers?

VM: Yes. They brought in people from all over the United States, from the South especially. Yes, just like High Point filled up with people working for the—not for the government, most of them worked either on Todd shipyards or the other shipyards around. It was a very good place and a good time for them. The money was good and, again, they brought many children or had many children after they came.

When those were torn down, the population went down. But also, it changed somewhat. There were very, very few of any culture other than white but you began to see a few. The reason that we kept our children in Cooper School, and went to Denny and Sealth, was because they were more like the real world. That’s what we wanted. We didn’t want to be in an all-white community. By the time our children were in school and out of Cooper, they had a few minorities. As you know, the first black teacher [Thelma DeWitty] was there. That’s well-known. She was great! She really was good. I was glad that my girls had her before she moved on.

JB: You say you kept your children in the schools, in Cooper. Did other people move [away from the neighborhood, to other schools]?

VM: Oh, yes. They moved away but that wasn’t the reason they moved. They moved because of a job somewhere else, something like that. Or they just did. Here on the Point, in this area, we could go to either West Seattle or Sealth. So, we picked Sealth. My sister just lived a block away. Her children all went to West Seattle. It was a choice that you made and I think that was good. Two of their children, after they had been to West Seattle awhile, transferred to Sealth because [West Seattle] was all-white and, at that time, quite conservative. We were much more thinking differently than a lot of the people. I’ve never regretted my kids going to Sealth and Denny. It was good education then.

JB: Can you describe in more detail their experience in Mrs. Dewitty’s class?

VM: In what?
JB: In Mrs. Dewitty’s class. Thelma Dewitty’s class. You said she was very good.

VM: I’ll tell you one thing that I think to me was remarkable. She asked anybody that made their own clothes, would they let their children be in a fashion show at her... What do you call it? She went through college. What do you call the groups that people belong to?

JB: Sorority?

VM: Sorority! Thank you. Sorority. And I was delighted to think that she would do this. I just really wanted this. Anne, our oldest daughter, was in her class. We went over to this sorority somewhere. One of the things that fascinated me so much because I had never been around black people. I sat right in the front row just about. Right ahead of me was this band of high school students. The variety of color, it was so interesting to me. The different hues of black and so on. It was fun. This was one of the things that Dewitty would do, would take her children other places. I think I took four little girls to this. Anne said that she thought—I asked her the other day about it—and she said that there was a lady backstage. She said it was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen, person she had ever seen. And she was a black lady. I thought it was a great experience.

She was creative in so many ways. She believed that children can learn and that’s something that some teachers don’t seem to think, that all children should learn and could learn and will learn. We were sorry to lose her. She wasn’t here too many years. I met a woman the other day who knew her, and she died a few years ago. Dewitty did. But she said to us [Mrs. Dewitty] was still the same person she was when she was much younger.

We were very lucky. North Delridge developed a little faster. Of course, we have an awful lot of all of Delridge but especially this area. We have the park. We have the golf course and we have a lot of green and so on. So, you’re not going to find as many people here as there are other places. There are only three streets up here going on Pigeon Point, going north and south. As you go down farther, it’s very narrow, the amount of streets there are. This is the way it’s always been.

JB: Can you recall any other experiences that your children had at Cooper that stand out?

VM: You’d have to ask them.

JB: I could do that, too.

VM: The youngest one had learning disabilities, but he’s gone through college and gotten his master’s. So, it didn’t stick with him. But he was in one class, first grade, that they divided into three groups—high, medium, and low. He was in the low group, and I kept telling the teacher from the very first, I want him out of that class. She said, “If he was out, there wouldn’t be anybody who’s good at all.” She didn’t want to because he was the best one in the class.

I said, “He’s only getting one-third of the education that the other kids in reading.” And she didn’t take him out. So, I kept him back. I went to the principal and told him why I was taking him back. He said that’s a good idea.

JB: You held him back a grade?
VM: Yes. Kept him back a grade. He went through first again. I made it clear to him that I was the one who kept him back. The teacher was quite furious with me for doing it and he blamed me for that until he got through high school [chuckling]. He always said that but that’s just a minor thing.

[Trying to think of more about her children’s experience at Cooper] At Cooper... I think you’ll have to ask them. I know the PTAs were wonderful. It was a place everybody met because there were no churches here very shortly. No place to meet so the meetings in the afternoon were full. We had lots of dinners and festivals, as all elementary schools had then. What was then the cafeteria—the only room they had large—was filled with people. It was completely filled. Two hundred... four hundred, I guess, is what it held. It would be full. That was a little later... well, it isn’t either because the school was built before we came, the last part of the school. That was a good training. The kids had many programs, of course, as all schools did. But I can’t think of anything particular except that I spent a lot of time there.

JB: As a PTA member?

VM: Yes.

JB: So, you were active in the PTA for a period of years there.

VM: For every year. With Bruce staying back a year, I think it was sixteen years, something like that. I gave them money at the end to buy a book or plant a tree. They planted a tree and I’ve never looked to see if that tree’s still there or not. I was asking the other day—I don’t even know what kind it was now—what they were going to do with the bank behind the old Cooper School. They’re going to see that plants are on there that keep it from sliding.

JB: You think the tree is on the bank there somewhere?

VM: Yes, on the bank. On the north end of the school. I was very active.

JB: This is going back to something you said earlier. You talked about the union affiliated with the steel mill. Was that a steelworkers’ union?

VM: Yes.

JB: Can you describe that?

VM: The sign is still on the building.

JB: On the building on Andover?

VM: Yes, that’s the one. The one who bought that building from the steel mill union was Janet Laurel, who is an artist. She owned it for a good number of years. When you went into it, when we had caucuses or when she owned it, it was built up where the ministers sat and so on, or stood. It was still there. You could definitely tell it was a church.
Then she took it down. She made it into a beautiful place, using antique furniture partly and new furniture, too. She did lots of art in there. She became very popular and well-known. Now, she lives on Delridge. She sold the building to a man who is going to—at first he told me he was going to put the bottom floor into a music studio, where people could come and do music. Record. But he’s going to do that to the second floor. He’s living in the first floor. I miss it because Janet gave great parties. We did a lot of walking together. She was up here for breakfast with some other women just Thursday. We’ve stayed close. It was an interesting building, even when it was a union hall. Before that it was a church, of course.

I don’t know if I told you that the **Salvation Army’s church** was started by—and many people came to Seattle who were Swedish people. They came bringing their religion, their Salvation Army, from Chicago. A lot of them came in, besides from Sweden. Chicago, for some reason, was a very center for this group of Swedish people who were working for the Salvation Army. I heard that from several people. They speak Swedish and the woman up here, they were Norwegian. They’d go to the church but couldn’t understand what they were saying. So, they found the Lutheran church that they preferred and went to it.

JB: The church that you’re talking about, the Swedish church, was in the same building as—

VM: It’s the Salvation Army. It was the Salvation Army church that the Swedish people started.

JB: In that same building that Janet Laurel owned?

VM: No. Across the street.

JB: Across the street. [Address is 3857 23rd Ave. Church/union hall is 3858 23rd Ave.)

VM: What is now a duplex. The Salvation Army church was going after even we came to Seattle while the other church had quit into the [19]20s. Union hall already had it. I can’t think of anything else particular that would be as interesting, Cooper School.

JB: What kinds of activities did the PTA sponsor? You mentioned the festivals.

VM: The festivals, or whatever they’re called. Money-raising.

JB: Oh, money-raising.

VM: Yes. Later on we did shows in which we would bring in talented high school young adults to play and so on.

[Tape cuts out]

**END OF AUDIOTAPE, SIDE A**
VM: —and participated in this. We had two shows a day, one early in the evening and one later in the evening. Both times, these would be full of people. As I say, there wasn’t anything else here to do particularly. There was nothing else.

There was a **hotel** down on the corner of Spokane Street and what was then Delridge Way, Twenty-Fourth. And there were **gas stations**. Our store there for years was a **Safeway store**. That went mostly due to the earthquake in [19]51, whatever year it was. I think it was [19]51.

JB: I think there was one in [19]49 but there was another one in the [19]50s.

VM: The big one that they had. Well, it was the year after we came. Forty-nine, yes, you’re right, because we just got here. The earthquake happened. That winter, they told us two things when you come to Seattle. You wouldn’t have much snow and you wouldn’t have any electrical storms. Well, that winter we had such a—in fact, it was written up—the **worst snowstorm**. It came all the way up to the windows here, where it blew in. It was colder than the dickens. In those days, there were many people who had sawdust burners, which was in this house. They burned sawdust but [we] also had the furnace still up. So, we kept both sawdust burner going and the furnace, and it still froze the hot water bottle in the front bedroom. It was very cold. Right in the middle of that storm, the lightning hit the transformer down here at the end and our lights went out. Everything went out, the power. We could only look at it with humor. By that time, we were ready to head back to Michigan. If we hadn’t of spent all our money, we would have, in down payment and so on.

JB: Did your kids get home from school OK? You just had one in school maybe at that point.

VM: No, we had two in school at that time. No, one in [19]49!

JB: Others have told stories about how hard it was to get home from school that day in the blizzard.

VM: I don’t remember it. I remember a windstorm we had much, much later on in history that did a lot of damage. A lot of trees came down. The kids loved it and I loved it because it reminded me of Michigan. We were outdoors having a good time and Don insisted we come in so we wouldn’t get hit by something. And it was wise [chuckling]. It was wise.

[Tape cuts out]

JB: You mentioned the **nurse** at Cooper. Can you talk about that a bit? About her?

VM: She knew every child in school. She knew if they had bad teeth or whatever about them. They loved her and we loved her. She was not just friendly, she would tell you [there’s] something wrong with your child or right with your child. Told good things about your child as well as the bad. She knew the students much better than the principal or all the teachers. Each teacher knew their own and they knew the ones they’d had before. But she knew them all. She always smiled. She was great.
JB: Do you remember polio vaccinations going on in the [19]50s and your children getting them?

VM: Yes. I don’t think it bothered us too much. I think you’d have to ask the kids that. Kids! I mean these adults that are my children. Yes, we had that and some other things... smallpox vaccinations.

JB: Oh, really! At the school?

VM: Yes, I think so. Or maybe I’m going back to my time. But I remember the children had smallpox [vaccinations].

[Tape cuts out]

JB: OK, we’re talking about the pedestrian overpass over to the playfield. You were saying at one time it was a swamp.

VM: Yes, it still is a swamp really. When they built the new Delridge Community Center, they had a lot of problems because it was so much water in there. When there was Forward Thrust money or one of the kinds of [city] money that came to us, we asked that that end of the playfield be drained. Well, the ones that had Little League and all the sportsmen talked them into draining the other half of the playfield. It didn’t help Cooper School one bit because they could not play in that [?]. The children of my brother-in-law’s age, a long time ago, they used to get cattails over there and use them for fencing. You know, play. So, it was very wet and, as I say, it still is. It’s one of the problems of that area. We never could get the children to cross to play in it because the water stood. I told them, “Just step into it.” And, of course, they didn’t. You could see the water right there as you got across the overpass.

JB: They would back up on the bridge and not get over there?

VM: They went to the edge and saw that it was wet. It was deep. The playground was very, very small. There were so many children on it—they had older kids and younger kids—it was still too crowded to really do much. They just ran around kind of crazy, had tether balls, a couple of those. That was it.

It was covered underneath, what we called the boys’ restroom. They made a big point of the boys’ restrooms were outside. Well, they were no more outside but they built around the girls’ restroom. It was on the far end, on the south end of the building, which was new. The other one was here at the other end. I didn’t see anything so terribly wrong with it.

A number of years ago, the school district had quite a few schools that should have been sold, could have been sold because they were no longer used. Cooper was one of them. There was a group that came in from the East that said they were supposed to judge which ones should stay and which ones should be torn down, which ones they could sell and so on. They made a big point of the fact the boys’ restroom was outside. You know how bad that school was. I know I went to their meeting they had and tried to tell all the good things about Cooper. At that time it had, and still has, the fire doors that divide the school now. In the early days—now they
won’t have them anymore—the oil floors that smelled so good but were really a fire trap, all through. But it was so nice to go to the first days of school. It smelled like a school.

JB: Because the custodian had just oiled the floors?

VM: Yes, everything was oiled and beautiful and clean. This group that came from the East said tear down Cooper. Tear down the whole school. It wasn’t worth redoing because the electricity, water, everything has to be new. In fact, the water—the last few years that it was open, I was down there tutoring for a long time. This is the first year I haven’t tutored I guess in twenty years. I was taken out, I was sick. So, you couldn’t get your mouth on the faucet. I told the school and I told the school district. Finally, I called the health department. They came out and said you have to get it up higher. It was bad.

It will take a lot of [work to fix Cooper]. And, of course, we knew that. It will be an expensive building to rehab. But the building itself is in good shape, very good shape. It’s gone through a number of earthquakes. It was closed because of earthquake, as you know. They raised the scale of—

JB: Standards.

VM: Yes. All of a sudden. There was Boren School down the road and it was a new school. They didn’t want to leave that one empty. So, they moved all the kids [at] Cooper. But at that time—there were a number of others, too—I insisted and talked these other people into insisting that we do not let the kids move unless we had a written agreement that they build a school in north Delridge because there was none here. That’s why we got our school here. It was supposed to be down on Delridge, but they waited so long that there was no land big enough for the school. That’s why it’s up here. It’s a beautiful school, the new Cooper.

Going back behind, when Youngstown, it was a one roof and it went to two rooms and the woman [Audett] rode horseback down. You’ve heard all that. Both Highland Park and Cooper were only K through 8. When they went to West Seattle, which was the only [high] school at that time, there was nobody else there in the ninth grade. When the kids came in from Madison, they knew that they [Cooper kids] were from the wrong side of the tracks. I’ve heard it time and time and time again how they were discriminated against.

I wish I could remember the name of the woman. She’s since died but I can find it today—I’ve got a meeting with Tim St. Clair [reporter for The West Seattle Herald] and he knows the name. Her father worked at the steel mill and was some kind of official there. The daughter would come home from West Seattle and say, “They won’t let me work in the office. They won’t let me get in any of the clubs. They won’t let me do this and that and this.” Which is true. The people here just didn’t care, get anything over there. So, the mother went to the school board and said, “You have to change the name of the school from Youngstown to something else so they won’t know where she comes from.”

JB: Schwartz. Was Schwartz the name that you’re thinking of?

VM: Well, it was only Cooper. Name it after the first superintendent of the school here.
The daughter—she died in her eighties—I would have her over for lunch once in awhile. She kept saying, “It didn’t make any difference. They knew where we [came from]”—[asking Judy]

Is it called Poverty Gulch?

JB: Poverty Gulch, yes.

VM: Those people know where Poverty Gulch is. They know where I come from. They didn’t have to change the name of the school. Most of the people didn’t want it changed. They wanted it Youngstown. That was the name of the town; that was the name of what they were used to. Two schools were under it. It changed to Cooper because of the problem in West Seattle High School that these kids had. It didn’t stop the problem.

[Tape cuts out and resumes.]

VM: Erma Schwartz.

JB: The name was Erma Schwartz, who had gone to West Seattle and had that experience, then lobbied to get the name changed.

VM: What is the man, just this end of White Center, who was the poet that was so famous?


VM: Yes. He tells the same story. We took a tour of Hugo land, as they called it, and one of the people on that bus—there were two busloads of people that did this tour—and the one that I was on, was this gentleman who lived right out by Westwood. He probably still lives there but he might have died. He’s a little older than I was. He might have passed on. But anyway, he was telling the same thing about West Seattle and that Hugo thought that the people on the other side of Thirty-Fifth were all rich because they had green grass. We started off on this side of the bridge, going along West Marginal Way and talking about Riverside, which has really deteriorated to nothing. But at the time, it was a very important area. On down, where there was this town—village, I guess you’d call it—that the port destroyed. In fact, when we viewed the half hour program—

JB: “Delridge Memories?” [Diaries of Delridge video produced by Chief Sealth students and shown at a gathering of Cooper alumni in fall 2003]

VM: Yes, there was a sister and brother that had lived down there. I knew their mother very well. She’d moved back over here and she was interesting as the dickens. I had asked her what happened to the old people. They were fishermen, all of those people down there. It was a neat little village. She said they just died off because they couldn’t find places near the water to fish and so on. Most of them died off quite soon after they moved away. But this man who was on the bus was saying these were all poor people and they didn’t have anything and they were so unhappy. I couldn’t help but speak up because those kids—[loud scraping noise from Vivian’s microphone—probably the parrot]
VM: In fact, I asked [the sister and brother], “What did you think of living down there?” They had the river. They had the hillside. They had all the land. They had a creek. They had a wonderful life. They said, “Yes, we were poor but we certainly weren’t unhappy!” And that’s the way it is. People judge us wrong. If we’re poor, we’re not having fun and making the good life that we make. I hope sometime you can go down and see the school that’s down there that these two young people, sister and brother, went to.

JB: The Riverside School, that’s what it was called?

VM: Yes.

[Tape cuts out for the final time]

END OF INTERVIEW OF VIVIAN MCLEAN ON APRIL 21, 2004.

Phone messages, October 2006

There were hundreds of kids in the neighborhood in the 1950’s, 1965, 1970, and many more homes.