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Davis Bottom History Preservation Project

Edited Transcript

Ms. Yvonne Giles

Interviewee: Ms. Yvonne Giles, Director, The Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum
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Interview: Ms. Yvonne Giles

(00:00:26) Q: *Could you please state your name, title and affiliation to the Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum?*

A: I am Yvonne Giles, and I have been chair of the Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum since its inception December 2002.

(00:01:04) Q: *How would you compare the extent of the historical resources that you have found between upper and middle class communities in Lexington and those with working class communities?*

A: Most of the working class communities in Lexington developed after the Civil War. Prior to the Civil War, African Americans who were employed, either free blacks or enslaved, were part of the downtown community. The town developed around a quadrant of streets and the enslaved who were part of the households lived in the households or in smaller buildings close to the households. Free blacks owned houses within the downtown core. But, after the Civil War, we will see a development of what we call *enclaves* that were housing exclusively for African Americans. Landowners would either subdivide their own property, or there were land speculators as there are today in real estate. They would buy up large tracts of land and then plot it. And the plots, the plats were usually very small: thirty feet wide maybe by sixty long, sometimes sixty wide by one hundred long. But, they were very small plats. And these were affordable to the newly freed African American who came into Lexington after the Civil War. Lexington's African American population, between 1865 and 1870, increased by one hundred and thirteen percent. So there was an influx of people who needed housing, who were seeking employment, and who came here for the improved educational facilities, and opportunities. And with an influx of a population that large, it was like where do you put em? It's like a relative coming with all of their kids. Twelve kids show up at your doorstep, and you don't know what to do with them. So you pull out the cots, and people have to sleep on the floors. And this is what happened after the Civil War. Those who came into Lexington either stayed with relatives or other people took them in. And, of course, they were all looking for employment. And, because the town itself, or the whole state itself, needed to recover from the Civil War, the black population you know helped fill that void in terms of manpower. But, it also presented an opportunity to landowners who all of a sudden had lost their workforce, had no one else to provide the labor for the farming, for the manufacturing. Hemp was one of our manufacturing industries; thoroughbred horse industry was another very lucrative business. And they still needed these people. Tobacco factories didn't come until later in our development. But all of the early manufacturing - hemp and cotton and the thoroughbred industry - employed these enslaved, former enslaved individuals, who came into town.

So the housing itself was clustered in areas close to the one-mile boundary; on the outer edges of town. They were developed in areas that we call *bottomland*. They were developed where there was manufacturing - hemp, cotton-bagging factories, and, around the railroad tracks. And over the period of

time...when they first developed, I'm sure they were good communities. They were new. So they didn't have time to deteriorate. And, you also have to remember that after the Civil War, we didn't have sanitary facilities. Everybody had their own outhouse – behind their house. And that was in effect well up until the 1970s in some of the communities. So, over time, when you don't have infrastructure, improvement in these enclaves they become the slums. Which is not a nice thing to say, but that's what they appeared to be. Their housing was beginning to deteriorate. And because they didn't have city sidewalks, they didn't have lighting in some of the communities, and definitely, they were not on city water. So it was a community that started out for families who had no place else to live. Had jobs. Needed education. And they developed these small communities that over time without continued money poured into the community by the city, they became not such a good place to live.

(00:06:03) Q: *What is bottomland?*

A: Bottomland in the definition of where you place the community is land that is low lying, easily flooded, and is unsuitable for use for agriculture and for what we would call an estate building. But, it was perfectly good to subdivide, and to sell these lots to the newly freed African American or any immigrant family. Cause we find in the Davis Bottom area, not only did we have African American families but we also had white families.

(00:07:00) Q: *What do you find in Davis Bottom?*

A: In Davis Bottom, and I think it's interesting that they call it Davis Bottom. Of all of the African American enclaves that were formed after the Civil War, none of them used that term "bottom." But, knowing that "bottom" means lower level you almost have the visual that it's a low lying area. Most every city will have an area that they have bottom attached to the name and a bottom. And sometimes its associated, the name itself is associated with an area that's not quite as affluent as you would find – like "Davis High." You think of high, like High Street here, as up on the upper end of the echelon of income. Bottom is not. So they used the term Davis Bottom, indicating that it is a low-lying area. And truly, when you look at the early maps of Lexington - 1790 – when there was a composite map drawn, it clearly showed that this area had a quarry, which meant that it was a rocky area that held water. And, you know that has continued on and some of the land in Davis Bottom has been filled – backfilled – so that its more level and, maybe, not quite at the same lower level that the water was when the quarry was there. But, it's still an area where it's low lying. In fact if you go out of Lexington, and off of High Street into Patterson, to Maxwell, you will feel, literally feel, the slope of the land headed down, like you're heading down to a river bottom.

(00:08:51) Q: *What also came with bottomlands, or swampy lands. Tell us about some of the disease that the first residents might of had to deal with.*

A: Generally, when you have an area that's swampy or holds moisture, you also have diseases. And, looking at some of the death certificates from residents in that area. And, particularly the children, its kind of heartbreaking, that many of them died from pneumonia, tuberculosis, and diseases associated with unsanitary conditions. And, there was one period when I was looking at death certificates and the numbers that had died from these upper respiratory illnesses was just amazing. I was surprised, but then when I realized that the deaths were from the Davis Bottom area, Patterson Street, DeRoode, Willard, I understood. They were down in an area that wasn't well drained. They probably had mosquito infestation, because when you have standing water, it allows the breeding of mosquitoes. And, at the time, they may not have known how serious this low-lying, moisture-laden environment was to their health. But, it's really surprising, and you find out so much about the geographical area by looking at the deaths in an area. That's what you do. That's how you determine, "Was this a safe environment for an individual to live in?" At the time they didn't know this. They probably had no focus on why is my child dying? Why do we have a high mortality rate in this area? But, in retrospect, when you look at it in historical context, you understand perfectly. And, when and where that became obvious to town health officials, I'm not sure.

Time: (00:10:25) Q: *Tell us about the types of historical records related to poorer communities such as Davis Bottom. What's there? What's missing? What's rare?*

A: Most of the time, and I think most people are surprised, there are always deeds. And one of the focuses on African American's upward mobility after the Civil War was education, and owning property. I remember my grandmother telling me, "You'll always be able to eat if you own a plot of land because you can grow a garden." And, evidently most of these enslaved who came into the city, they were farm residents - previously farm residents - so they would have had this mantra embedded in their minds. As my grandmother always said to me, "Own a piece of property." They came into town. They purchased a property, which meant they had to have filed a deed for that property. So you'll find deed records after 1865 for almost every enclave that we had, and there were six of them in Lexington. And, they all specifically said either Kinkeadtown, Brucetown, Davis Bottom, Goodloetown, Gunntown, Pralltown. So its easy to identify...and Peach Orchard was the other one. It's easy to identify where these people were purchasing property, but that's the easy part. The easy part is finding the deed. The not so easy part is to track them. Cause occasionally, when they purchased a property, they would have made a down payment, and then they would have had what we call a land lease. They would have had to continue to make property payments until they paid it. Most of the landowners would hold filing the deed until they had paid so much. And, then they would go in and file. So they could have been living on the property for as long as two years before the deed was filed. And, if for whatever reason, they lost the property, and once they lost the property, then you lost track of them. Occasionally, if they were able to hang on to the property, some of them filed a will, which is always a surprise and to me a joy. Because they reflected the white community saying, you know, "My last will and testament, being of sound mind, knowing my demise is coming soon, I provide for the payment of my last expenses and debts." And they usually left what property they had to their wives, and then subsequent subdivision to children, or to aunts, to uncles. Very seldom was there money associated, but the will's at least left the real estate. And, occasionally, if one of the families had become prosperous in the time, from the time they first purchased the property, you'll also find out that they had purchased other properties. Not necessarily where they had lived, but other places across town. And, they will say so in those wills. You know, that I have another piece of property on such and such as street, and it's supposed to go to whomever.

So, those are the pluses. The minuses have been once they lost property is trying to find them. Then you have to go back to city directories. And the Lexington City Directories are a jewel. They started in 1818, and then there was a long period of time that they skipped, but 1864 they were consistent. And, this sounds bad now. And at one time I was angry if my race was designated as "colored," "negro" or whatever term, but as a researcher I just marvel with it. Because now, when I see that name, and it has a "C," or a 'Col'd', or even an asterisk, I know its my people. I don't have to worry about, "Is this John Willis white or black." I know that he's black. And, from that, from the city directories, I have been able to determine whether they have stayed in one place from year to year, which means that they probably owned the property. Or, if every two years when they printed the directory, they had a different address, which meant they rented property.

So that's a plus. When they don't show up in the city directories, I get distressed, and when I can't find them. And the other explanation with the city directories, they were just for the city - the one-mile radius from the courthouse. Anybody outside that one-mile radius didn't get recorded. So then its going, City Directory - didn't help me there. Then you have to go to the census, and hopefully, they show up in the census. But, again that takes a while to find them and to locate them. And not all of the early censuses listed the streets. They had them by districts. So you almost have to know what district they have been listed in the census, and then try to find out what street they lived on. And then, the other wonderful piece that I have found that's been so helpful is the old newspapers. Our newspaper was printed, and if I can remember the date, 1792, I think was the first issue. They're all on microfilm, and they have all been digitized now. But you can go. And, you have the patience to sit there and reel through the paper till you find the "Notes" about African Americans in the papers. And many times I have found obituaries, I've found social information about them. In fact its in 1898, they started printing a "Colored Circles" column that eventually turned into the "Colored Notes," and then "Notes and Obituaries." But, they always had an African American editor. And the pictures were always in the

papers. So you didn't have to worry about it, "These "Notes and Obituaries" of someone else or are these African Americans?" You always knew.

(00:17:28) Q: *Let's go back to the census records. As a scholar, r you mentioned that you need to look at certain biases in the historical record. And nothing more clear than that term, "mulatto" that often shows up in Davis Bottom. Tell us what you have found, and how you need to understand how the term mulatto is being used.*

A: When census takers were hired, they were given a set of instructions. And, supposedly this was uniform all over the United States. But census people are people. And, each of them I found have sometimes interpreted their instructions according to their own desires and approaches. And, some census takers would actually list African American as "black," using the initial "B." Sometimes they would list them as "Colored" - "C." And, then there was a term they used as a "Mulatto" - "M," or "MU." And those were individuals whose skin tone may have signaled to the census taker that they were of mixed race. Now, whether or not they actually asked the individual, "What race are you?" Like they do now. They ask us now. But I suspect that it was up to the census taker to determine what race you were, because in my own family, doing my own family research, I discovered one of my relatives is a Native American. And in one census she was listed as a black, another census she was listed as a mulatto, but never as Native American. And she was clearly Native American, her facial features. I have a picture of her. So, they should have been listed as a Native American. But how can you determine? One year you're black - one census year - and ten years later you're mulatto. How do you do that? But, again, it was based on what that particular census taker felt your racial mix might have been.

(00:20:11) Q: *As a scholar when you are working with these primary documents census records, deeds, plats, obituaries - what do you always think about when analyzing these materials?*

A: When you look at it, you have to remember this is information that someone has recorded. And, it's subject to the interpretation of that recorder. Case in point, sometimes the death certificates, which is a primary source of information, has misinformation on it. And you look at the person who is the informant, and you say... I always say to myself, was this a relative? Was it a child? Was it a neighbor? And even relatives get it wrong. I had one relative who listed that his aunt had been married, and she had never been married. And I looked at this and I thought, "How come he didn't know this?" And I was talking to him. How come you didn't know that, she's never been married. Why did you put that on there?

So when you look at these records - spellings of names, where they were born, who their parents were, whether they were married, what their birthdates were - all is subject to the interpretation or the correct knowledge of the person whose informing. Now the medical information, because it always says, you know, the date they became ill and how long they were ill, who the doctor was - the attending physician - and what their diagnosis of death was, that I can always feel comfortable about. But, all the personal information, I try to find at least two other sources that verify the information that's on a death certificate. And, you should do that with the census. Cause sometimes the census taker my misunderstand a name and misspell a name.

My Native American relative, her name was Hiantha. Sometimes it was spelled Anthy. Sometimes it was spelled with an "H." And sometimes it was just spelled with an "I." But, you know, through process of putting together several sources, I was able, and of course our own family history, I was able to figure out, you know, what is her real name. And, it was Hiantha with an "H." Even in the will that she was named - and she was an enslaved person - in the will of her owner, the person who was doing the inventory wrote her name as Anthy' - "ANTHY." But, I verified that it was the same woman because he had also listed the three youngest children right adjacent to her name. So I thought there was enough primary information for me to make that connection. And that's what you almost always have to remember. Don't take the first document you find for the Gospel! Look for others, and just review. Constantly review.

Don't even... You know, I had one researcher tell me when I first started doing research, "Don't ever give up!" If you can't find the answer the first time, keep looking. He told me that he had been looking for a relative for 25 years. And he finally found him because he went to the library archive in Frankfort

and someone had just published a tax list for the county that he knew his relative had lived in. And there he was. So he owned property and he verified that actually he did live in that county at one time, but he said, "It's been 25 years." But, I've looked almost every time I come down here. And you have to do that because new information surfaces all the time. I don't generally use Internet sources - even Ancestry.com. I guess I'm still old fashioned. I like to see the paperwork. And, again, you know Ancestry depends on who has entered the information. You know, how accurate that is. So using a number of resources is the best way to verify information, not take one.

(00:24:38) Q: *In the general sense for working class communities, what's missing? What would you find that describes life for Henry Clay, but you will never find, or rarely find, to describe life for the average worker in Davis Bottom?*

A: It's the autobiography. It is the biography, and it is the correspondence. Most working class families just felt they had to get through their lives. They didn't sit down and write diaries. You know, we have no account of how their lives were. They didn't correspond that much. Or, if they did, the families never retained their letters. They didn't think it important enough to compile them into the volumes that we know Henry Clay's letters and correspondences have been compiled. They were just trying to get through life. Truly. (09:31:36) Working class families, they worry about how they're going to pay the rent, their mortgage - like we do today. You know, how we gonna pay the rent? How are we gonna pay the mortgage? Where are we going to get the money to put the gas in the car? Buy the clothing for the children. It's not something they feel they should sit down and write about.

(00:26:00) Q: *Conversely, when you do find some rare biographical information or letters, what's the value of that to you as a researcher?*

A: Oh, I get very, very excited when I find that there is a written account of any one working person's life. Any shred of information, whether it's a little "News Note" in the newspaper, like, "Mr. Hathaway is going to Washington D.C.," or, "he has created a bust that he is taking to the St. James Exposition," or that "he's making a presentation at one of the churches." When you start compiling those tidbits of information, you kind of get a picture of who this person was. And, the "Colored Notes" section in our local paper helps you pull together those pictures of the individuals, of their lives, of their social interaction with each other, what they may have been thinking because, occasionally, there would be opinions written in the paper if something adversely had happened that would have affected the African American community. There were leaders here who said, "Oh, no we don't like this. We don't want to see this happen." So you kind of get an idea of how cohesive a community was, the African American community was. And not only that - because I read the "Colored Notes" routinely - but occasionally as I'm scanning the paper I also find news notes about other ethnic groups when things are not going well. So, reading the old, you know, you might not want to read today's paper because much of all the trauma that's going on in the world. But reading the old newspapers give you a much better perspective of what our community was like - truly what it was like - what the interaction between the races were, and sometimes it wasn't always good. But, they found a common ground, which is encouraging. It really is encouraging.

(00:28:11) Q: *What is the mission of the Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum?*

A: The Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum, Inc. was organized in December 2002. And our purpose is to tell the story - highlight the stories - of African American men and women who made contributions to our history. And we focus on those people who were influential in politics, in education, and in literary and art. Mr. Hathaway happened to be the artist. He was also an educator. But we know his artwork was the primary focus of his life. He taught because he had to earn a living. But, his passion was art. And we try to focus on telling the story of all of the African Americans prior to the Civil War that we know about. And especially after the Civil War during that Antebellum period because that was the era of the greatest growth and influence that African Americans had on this community.

(00:29:50) Q: *Why did you choose Isaac Hathaway as the namesake for the museum?*

A: Most people have forgotten about Isaac Hathaway. He outlived his contemporaries. He died at ninety-five years of age. So everyone that he had known and grown up with who had appreciated him as an artist had died. When we first started looking at Isaac as a name for the museum, we discovered that most people didn't realize he was from Kentucky. We called Arkansas, we called Tuskegee because we knew those were places he had been, and they all claimed him. And I thought, "Oh, no! no. no. no. He was from Kentucky! He was born here 1872. You can't have him. You may borrow him, and acknowledge what he did in your state, but he is a Kentuckian. So we... And the people here in Lexington, in Kentucky, had forgotten him. There were written histories and tour guides, lauding the accomplishments of many Kentuckians, but not Isaac. So we chose to call our museum to honor him, so that we can tell the story. And, almost everyone when we say, The Isaac Scott... "Well, who was he?" And that opens the door. And I tell it with passion!

(00:31:15) Q: *What motivated you to get involved with the broader concept – the African American community?*

A: At the time, there were five of us who had attended a showing of Mr. Hathaway's work. There was a gentleman who owned some of his work, and had come to Lexington and presented in a one-night exhibit the work that he had of Mr. Hathaway. And, at the time, he was willing to sell it. So we opened a conversation with him. And those five of us, who knew how important this was, we decided we needed to organize because we knew that in order to acquire the collection of this magnitude that we needed to be an organization. You know, no one of us could have been able to fund that particular adventure. So, we got together. We organized – it took us about two months to get all of our paperwork together – and filed the appropriate paperwork. And, then we started making the case of interest to other people in the community. And we did work for about two years offering contracts. None of those contracts were ever consummated. And, our attorney finally just suggested to us, perhaps we just need to let that go. And we did. We let the collection by-pass us. But, in all of the process, we realized we still had a mission. And the mission was to tell the story of African Americans and their accomplishments. Cause its phenomenal, truly, truly phenomenal. With a focus on Mr. Hathaway, because we didn't want people to forget who he was and why he became such an important figure. This small man from Davis Bottom, one of the lower-lying parts of Lexington. No one ever thought anybody of importance could have ever come out of Davis Bottom, and he did. Very quiet, very assertive young man that rose out of a time period when this wasn't supposed to happen. He had no role models. Had none. His family economically wasn't of the upper, middle class African American. It's just an amazing story.

(00:33:58) Q: *What will visitors see and experience when they come in to the museum?* Note: The museum has moved to a new, larger location since this interview.

A: When they come into the museum, we have a number of small exhibits assembled. We're in a very small space, I know, 800 square feet. But, we try to maximize that by focusing. One of the focus areas is Isaac Scott Hathaway. We have a large biographical photo of him with biographical information at the bottom. We have a collection of some of the things related to his artwork, and those are the coins that he created, was commissioned, actually paid for. He didn't do this for free. We've heard that comment, "Oh, he did that for free just to get his name out there. Oh no, No, no, no, no." We know that he was actually paid for it. We have a replica of one of the busts that he had created early on in his career. And we have a photograph, or I should say, a design display of what his birthplace will look like when we finally get it all finished – Memorial Park. And we have the doorplates from his house.

Now the story on that the gentleman, who was with the fire department, was in charge of safely removing structures by using it as a fire training experience, he said to me that when he went to close the door of the house, he touched the knob, and he looked at it, and he realized that somebody important had lived here. He didn't know whose house it was. So he carefully removed the doorplate, the doorknob, and the doorbell. And he saved it from 1980 until after we moved into this space in 2007. He called me twice before I believed him. And, once I went out to visit him, I understood his passion. I knew immediately when I walked into his house that he understood the significance of this piece. And he'd made the connection. And, he made the donation to the museum. But, I would never had known what those pieces looked like without his foresight. And we have photos of the house. We have newspaper articles about the house, and it was placed on the National Registry so they actually took

pictures of the interior. But the houses themselves are gone. But, thanks to him, you know, we have these physical reminders that although this was a house that was in the "poor" section of town, there were some value to the property itself.

(00:37:10) Q: *Who is Isaac Scott Hathaway?*

A: Mr. Hathaway was an educator. He was a teacher, and his passion was art in all forms. He painted first - that's how he got his start. As a young man, he painted portraits of horses, thoroughbred horses, which meant that he had to get permission from the owners of these horses. There is a newspaper article giving details of the horses that he painted - and this is very rare, 1896. The only known portrait of one of the thoroughbred is Queen Ban that was owned by B.J. Thomas who owned Dixianna Farm. It's the only one that we know has survived. But we do have a list from the paper, archive information again.

We also have unpublished documentation of Mr. Hathaway's talent as an artist. One of his nieces, Edna Shanes Bailey published what she calls, Autumn Leaves. And, it was a book of poetry, but more importantly it was a documentation of the Scott family; his mother's family. And, she says when she visited Lexington, she would always visit her cousin "Ike" or Isaac, and she said he could really paint and draw well, and worked really well with clay and plaster, which she could never replicate. She'd tried drawing, but she said I was never as good as he was. She decided to become the writer, the historian - the documentarian of the family history. So from her telling the story, we know that Isaac as a child was a very talented young man. He was already drawing and painting and experimenting with plaster and clay. Very early, well before he became the professional. She talks about him using clay and plaster. And, Isaac himself tells the story of his experience, his first experiences with these two mediums was in a classroom. He attended Chandler Normal School. Well, it wasn't called Chandler Normal then, at the time it was Lexington Normal Institute, and this particular institute was supported by the American Missionary Association. They would send teachers from the far eastern states to Kentucky. They had a background that was unlike teachers here in Lexington. And they engaged their students not only in education, the three "Rs" reading writing and arithmetic, but they must have also provided something beyond - the artistic. Encouraging children in music, cause they did have music education and art. And we all know now that children's development depends upon art education. And he was given clay and plaster of Paris in school to work with. And this was, this he acknowledged, was his first experience with these two mediums. He chose to use plaster of Paris in his work because it was inexpensive. For those who don't know, it's just a powder and all you do is mix it with water, and its easily molded, and then carved. I've taken a Popsicle stick and shaped a piece of plaster of Paris. And he did that because it was so inexpensive for him, materials easy to come by, but it was also inexpensive for those he was trying to sell a product to. And that was one of his missions.

(00:41:13) Q: *When and where was he born?*

A: Isaac was born at his birthplace, right here in Lexington on Pine Street, April the 4th, 1872. And there has been some information printed that said 1874, but definitely 1872. And we know from biographic information that Isaac himself has given, as well as his father in his pension file. He listed the birthdates of all of his children. And it is 1872 that Isaac was born. He was born in the little house that his mother and father first set up housekeeping on Pine Street. And it really was a small, frame house. It just amazes me to think that there were four adults and four children living in this house. I thought, "Goodness how did, where did they find room?" But when you consider after the Civil War in 1865, most enslaved families would have lived in a small cabin, one room cabin. And reading historical accounts of life in these one-room cabins, you kind of understand why they would have been crowded into this one small house. And I'm sure they knew how to adjust to each other. It's not like all of us. We have to have our own room with the door closed and the TV. They didn't have any of that. So they learned, it was a cooperative situation. You know, everybody did their share. Everybody put up with everybody else. You just learned to live...they were accustomed to living that way so it wasn't unusual after the Civil War to continue to live in a very small house and, you know, with a number of people in the household.

(00:43:00) Q: *Tell us a little about the paternal grandparents of Isaac Scott Hathaway. Who is Isham?*

A: From what I've been able to figure out, Isham, and I'm assuming that's how he may have pronounced it, I'm not sure, was from Bath County. And we got that information from his Freedman's Savings Bureau record. Those records, we haven't talked about those records, but they are just a treasure. After the Civil War, Freedman's Bureau Savings and Trust Company was a banking system opened particularly for African Americans. And many of the newly freed would come in and they would make deposits, sometimes as little as fifty cents, or a dollar or five dollars. But, even at that, in those days and times, that was a lot of money. Isham opened a savings account, or a trust bank account. And of those records they ask, "Where were you born? Where do you live? What is your occupation? How old are you? What color are you? Who are you working for? Who your wife is and who your children are, and who your mother, father, brothers and sisters were." So we got all of this information from his account. He says that he was born in Bath County. That he was brought up in Bath County. His father had died on the Ohio River. His name was Moses. And his mother was in Bath County, and he had two brothers and sisters, and he was married to Esther. Now Esther was the mother, or Isaac's grandmother, let's just put it that way - Isaac's grandmother. And how Isham and Esther Hathaway - Isham Jackson was his name - how he and Esther got together, I'm not really sure. But we also have a marriage record for them, which is another just wonderful, wonderful record.

In February 14th, 1866, the state legislature passed an act that allowed the recording of marriages of former enslaved and mulatto. Many of the times they are listed as 'colored' marriages. And this record was kept separately from 1866 to 1964. In this first book of marriage records, many of the newly freed African Americans would come in and file their records. Isham and Esther were married in 1847. And they had to pay twenty-five cents in order to file their Declaration of Marriage. And many times they will say, you know, "We were married at someone's house by, probably an itinerant preacher, and they give the date, an approximate date, and they wish to continue as man and wife." It... Those stories are just... It's an emotional experience for me. It really is. When you look at it and realize that this relationship has survived enslavement. And they probably had been living on separate farms, which is usual. And somehow or other they had survived the separation of families, and husbands from wives, cause all this was part of the era of enslavement. You never knew from one day, week or month whether your family would be separated. And it still amazes me that, men and women would marry. One would live on one farm, and the other would live on another. I thought, "How does this work?" We have to live in the same town and city and household. They didn't. They didn't. They formed these bonds. They bore children. They raised them, with all of this uncertainty around them, but yet they emerged. Still intact; a family intact that wanted to remain intact. And, you know, just band together and move ahead after the Civil War. But the fact that they had married in 1847, and I don't know how they ever came to know each other, I don't know whether it was through a church group, or whether they had been working on the same farm, enslaved on the same farm for a period of time. I have no clue, because we don't have those written records. We don't have the letter that says, "I met them at such and such place and this is why we got married." I don't have that.

(00:47:47) Q: *Do we know if Isham or Esther had any special skills, or was there anything during their enslavement that that would speak to what their life was like?*

A: According to his Freedmen's Savings record, he was, he listed his occupation as a farmer. In his Federal Pension Record, as a U.S.C.T. troop, he said that he was a "hod" carrier [a laborer who carries supplies to masons or bricklayers]. So evidently, he must have been initially as a farmer, and then became a common laborer working in the building industry. But, I don't have any clue other than what is listed. And the city directory only listed him as a laborer, and so does the census. So I'm sure it was, "What can I do? What kind of work can I perform?"

(00:48:38) Q: *They bore during enslavement a son, Robert. Who is Robert?*

A: Robert Elijah Hathaway, and my take on this because in Isham's will, and this was another one of these rare, very unusual circumstances. He left a will, and in his will he acknowledges Robert Elijah Hathaway as his stepson. So, Esther would have given birth to Robert prior to she and Isham becoming husband and wife. And, who Robert's father is, I have not a clue. We have no inclination, Robert did not say in any of his pension records that he knew who his father was, but this is not unusual for an

enslaved family. And you know, I'm not going to make the connection that Rachel [Esther] bore the son of one of her former owners. I can't make that connection. Or, Esther bore the son of one of her former owners. I don't know that. And there's nothing at all to lead me to that conclusion other than the fact that I knew that Robert Elijah was Esther Hathaway's son, and Isham Jackson, her husband, acknowledged him as the stepson.

(00:50:05) Q: *From the maternal side, who are the grandparents of Isaac Hathaway, and how does their story relate or differ from the paternal grandparents?*

A: It's very, very similar except that we have more complete data on that family. Isaac's grandfather, on his mother's side, was Isaac. So, it's very obvious that our Isaac Hathaway was named for his grandfather Isaac Scott. Now, Isaac Scott married Henrietta Johnson. And, again, this is another one of those slave marriages. They married in March the 7th, 1847. And they bore ten children. And we know who those are thanks to relatives of that particular family. There's only one of those ten that we have no information about, but all of the others, we do know when, approximately, they were born, and most of them when they died, and what kind of livelihood they pursued. One of them Edna Shanes Bailey, that I mentioned earlier, was a daughter of Lucy Scott Henry Shanes, and she married twice. Her first husband died and she married a second time. But Edna Bailey gives this great, great history of the Scott family on the maternal side of Scott, Isaacs family.

Isaac Scott, according to Edna's history had been trained as a shoemaker as an enslaved individual. And, Henrietta had been trained as a seamstress. Somehow they met. We're not sure how. And they married, and, of course, they continued to be man and wife, and again, I have their marriage record from the 'Colored' marriage records. And when they moved to Lexington, I am not sure. But, they supposedly were reared in Clark County, which is Winchester. And again, that's on the Freedman's Savings record. Isaac filed a record, and so did one of his sons Henry. So we have verification of Isaac's occupation, his wife and his children. And then, when Henry, the son filed, his record, he also verified that same information. My mother is Henrietta. My brothers and sisters are... And, you know where he was born.

They were born in Clark County, and moved to Lexington, and I assuming probably after the Civil War. I doubt they would have come here prior to. But again it's another story where they've moved. He had gainful employment - shoemaker. And in later census records he does show up as a common laborer, but one of the city directories actually listed him as a shoemaker. Yes, yes. And it was an occupation that a number of African Americans pursued in Lexington.

(00:53:17) Q: *Isaac Hathaway's grandfather [step-grandfather] and father were both enslaved when they enlisted in the Union Army in the Civil War. How did that happen, was that unusual, and any records on how they felt about that service?*

A: During the Civil War, when it first started in 1861, African Americans were not allowed, not encouraged at all, to enlist as military - I guess military employees - because they do hire men to fight. Instead they were what we call "impressed." They were rounded up to help build the roads, to build the fortifications, to supply labor in the camps. But, they were not allowed to have the guns - to actually shoot other people. This was the whole issue with the enslaved population in Kentucky. Kentucky was neutral. They did not join either Union or Confederate. Although, both of those armies occupied Kentucky at one time, and particularly, Lexington. But, again, African Americans weren't officially part of the fighting force for either Union or Confederate armies. And, we have enough documentation that they fought on both sides, or, were involved on both sides. When Abraham Lincoln first issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 - September of 1862 - he allowed the southern states to change their minds by January 1863, retain their enslaved, if they came back into the Union. The southern states did not do that. They thought they were gonna win. So, after 1863, enslaved individuals in the southern states - rebelling states and parts of states - were freed. Did not affect Kentucky at all. None of the states that were neutral, and Kentucky was one of them, African Americans were still enslaved, and they were not allowed to join the Union Army. Part of that provision of the Proclamation was that those who were freed could also now join the Union Army, both the navy and army. And, Kentucky still... And, African

Americans in Kentucky were frustrated. They felt, 'Hey, you all are doing this without us! How can you do this?' And, I'm paraphrasing, you know. This is how I would feel if I were told, 'OK, we let all these other people below you do this, but you can't.' You know, and that wasn't cool. That was not cool.

Kentucky had about 10,000 free blacks and nearly 300,000, I'm hoping I remember this right, enslaved. When, finally, in 1864 there was a General Order issued that allowed enlistment of African Americans in Kentucky. They started in West Kentucky – Paducah, Owensboro – and then they moved east into the central Bluegrass area. Once that happened, once recruitment opened here in Lexington, at Camp Nelson in 1862, 10,000 African Americans joined. This was not the 10,000 that were freed. These were majority, 10,000 that had been enslaved. And, as I've heard repeated, they took their freedom by foot. They walked to the recruitment stations. They left the farms that they were enslaved. They left the households where they were enslaved. And, when I say, "They," I'm talking about the men. But, the families followed them. Initially, it was the men joining, but the families soon realized that they had no support and protection. And, if they could leave, they left the farms, the large agricultural areas and went to the encampments. Once they were accepted into the encampments, the Union encampments, they became 'contraband,' which is a war measure. And, most people who fight wars know that the only way you defeat your enemy is by sheer manpower. Just overpowering them with your force, or disrupting their support system. And by accepting these enslaved laborers into their camps, they disrupted the supply system of the Confederacy. And, it swelled, the military force of the Union. Not only did they provide support, initially, to the camp, which freed up the white soldiers, but eventually they became part of the fighting force. There were, oh I want to say, 15 regiments formed at Camp Nelson. The Calvary, 5th and 6th Calvary. And, Infantry regiments up through the 124th.

And again, when we look at the record, Isham and Robert Elijah were among those enslaved who literally walked from their farms to Camp Nelson to enlist. In the case of Robert Elijah, he walked to Camp Nelson. Now, he had been enslaved with Garrett Davis in Bourbon County. And, from his pension file, we learned that Garrett Davis actually acknowledged that Robert was enslaved to him and that he was enlisting. It has this on the document. It clearly states that he was enslaved to Garrett Davis. Garrett Davis was a Union sympathizer. He had been a state representative, and then he went to Washington as a national representative for the State of Kentucky when John C. Breckenridge vacated his seat to join the Confederacy.

So he was there. And from information that I've read about Garrett Davis, he was influential in keeping Kentucky in the quote, unquote "Union" side; keeping them out of the tangle of, "Which side are you on, Confederate or Union?" So Garrett was very much...He was an abolitionist in thought, not in practice.

(01:00:26) Q: *Did he receive payment for the enlistment of Robert?*

A: I don't think that he did. I had not looked at the records for whether or not he was ever reimbursed for the use of his enslaved person because that was the rule, you know. If you have an enslaved person who joins, then the owner gets the bonus. Many times after the Civil War, that didn't always happen. Some few owners received pay. Some did not. And I have not seen the records where Garrett would have been paid for Roberts's enlistment. But, the fact that he acknowledged that Robert was 22 years old and he was enlisting him in the service to serve for a period of three years. So you know it's interesting that Garrett had this, his heart was good. But, in the 1860 Census, he owned 15 enslaved people. He didn't free anybody before the Civil War. Not a soul. And, I thought, how, how...This is what happened during the era of enslavement. I tell people enslavement was economics. You know, if you have a 600-acre farm, you can't go out and farm, and go to the state legislature, and race horses, and do all the things that most of the landed individuals did.

So they had enslaved. It was economics. And, even though they had to pay to buy clothing, to buy food, to shelter the enslaved that they owned, it still was costly to them. In fact, I was reading some information, and one man said, when he added up all the cost involved in keeping his enslaved population on his estate, he was paying them. They weren't keeping him. He was keeping them, because it was an expensive operation for them, but they were... You know, they didn't look at it in

terms of, "How much am I spending outright, but what am I gaining from having these enslaved laborers on my farm that I don't have to hardly pay anything. I'll just keep them in food and clothing and a roof over their head." Cause they had to do all the farming. They literally had to do all the farming.

(01:02:48) Q: *So, go back to the service of Isham, start with Isham and go to Robert. How did Isham serve in the U.S.C.T.?*

A: Isham did not join the service until April of '65, which is toward the end of the war. He was 55 years old, and this is according to his pension record, and he had joined in Covington. He's living in Bath County. He joins in Covington. And when he shows up at camp, he has an injury. Somehow or other he has injured his foot. But they take him in. And he was enlisted in the 124th. And in talking to some men who know more about the history of these regiments, they considered the 124th the "invalid" regiment. And, this meant that they took in all the individuals who were older, who had injuries, and who really couldn't perform as a soldier. But, they could perform services in the camp. But from the time that Isham enrolled, to the time he was mustered out, most of the time he was on sick leave. But, they still took him, because he could provide some service. But he was 55, and you wouldn't have thought... They won't take you now at 55. But they did take him in at 55.

Robert on the other hand was 22, and he enlisted in, they enrolled him in the 100th regiment, infantry. And that particular regiment was involved in battlements and... Well, he was involved in the action against John Bell Hood. And people who know about the history of the Civil War realize that John Bell Hood was trying to invade Kentucky through Tennessee. So the 100th guarded the railroads, the railroad bridge, the railroad tracks itself. And, they actually ran, or chased John Bell Hood from Tennessee down into Atlanta - or was it Georgia. It was Georgia. They pursued him into Georgia. And, in Robert Elijah's pension file, he talks about having been close to the cannonade firing during the repulse of John Bell Hood. And he gives the exact dates, December that they actually fought during those campaigns. And he talked about that he was so close to the cannon that it affected his ear, hearing, you know many years after. And, his pension file shows that he had been hospitalized after that battle for a time period, because of exposure, and because of the cannonade firing that had affected his hearing. And at the time he was a young man. So he wasn't deaf. But, over a period of years, he lost some of his hearing. And, the other thing about the Civil War when you start studying the regiments and what all they had to do, the Union did not support the African American troops as they had the white troops. So many times, they were without uniforms, proper uniforms, proper equipment. They got the hand-me-downs. And they were left to exposure. When you consider that your exposure would have been tents. And, we're talking December in Kentucky and Tennessee. It's cold. It's snowy. And again they were probably camping on "bottom land." Here we go back to the bottomland where it's damp, its cold. And many of these individuals, even though they were young, they were exposed to elements that would cause problems later in life. And when we look at the pension files, we see these issues of rheumatism, of respiratory diseases. And, in Robert Elijah's case the deafening from the cannonade - because they didn't have the earplugs. They didn't know to cover their ears, or get farther away from cannon explosions. So it was for him, as a 22 year old, I can't imagine. I told someone, looking, reading about that era, and what the deprivations were for the soldiers. I would have been on the list of deserters. I'd have gone back home. And, there is a list. There is a list - Adjutant General's report, Volume II. And the very back section, all of these United States Colored Troops - every man who enlisted, who died, who deserted, who was promoted, discharged - are listed in that volume. So, you can always go back and check your relatives to see if they were actually part of the United States Colored Troops. "You were in Kentucky?" Yes.

Kentucky enlisted over 23,700 African Americans in the Union Army under the United States Colored Troops - U.S.C.T. You'll see that abbreviation a lot. And unfortunately, some legislatures after the war felt that it was a special division. That they weren't really part of the regular army, so therefore: we're not going to give them pensions, and we're not going to give them military honors, and we're not going to treat them in the military hospitals. But after the Civil War, African Americans knew they had power. And they didn't allow any of that to stand. In 1866, they formed the first Colored Peoples Convention. Met here in Lexington. And they hired attorneys to fight for their rights. They couldn't vote; even after

they had won the war, after they had been freed by the Thirteenth Amendment. They were no longer slaves, but they still didn't have rights - the Civil Rights that were afforded all other citizens. So they hired attorneys: Madison C. Johnson, Willard Davis and William Brown. And, this is documented, to represent them not only with the state legislature, but also the federal. Because they fought on all fronts. They thought, "Hey, enough's enough!" We've helped build this country from day one, from the time 1600 when the first African Americans were shipped into the United States. They came across the Cumberland Gap with Daniel Boone, with all the early pioneers. Had it not been for African Americans here to help raise the farms, raise the crops, protect and fight the Native Americans, this state would not be the state, period. We would not be a Union without the manpower of these African Americans. And, they knew that. They knew it. And, they made sure that their contributions were acknowledged. And it wasn't just this 1866 conference. They had a conference every year up until the mid 1900s. And everything that came along, even during the era of Jim Crow, when they were told they couldn't ride the coaches, or had to ride in separate coaches, or, told just not get on the trains and buses at all. They didn't take that laying down. They did not. They were a very, very powerful force because they knew that they had made the sacrifices, and they were not gonna take this. Reverend Elijah, Robert Elijah, was among those groups of men, you see his name at the conference, the convention. You'll also see him as a very active part of the Grand Army of the Republic, which was the veteran's group of the Union Army. They had meetings every year, and they had a black corps, as well as a white corps. But they still were part of the same movement - to make sure that the veterans were given the benefits that they were supposed to receive.

(01:11:09) Q: *Often USCT soldiers upon discharge received an army bonus that was critical to their lives, and their families lives, after the Civil War? Tell us about Robert and Isham. What do you think happened with their army bonuses?*

A: Again we know from their pension records, Isham and Robert's pension records, that they were discharged right at the end of 1865. On December the 26th, 1865, there was a deed filed for the property on Pine Street that became the Hathaway Estate. Isham, and another man named Cyrus Hathaway, and I am not sure at all who Cyrus could have been, he might have been the brother to Esther. They filed a deed. They purchased the property. And, it was about 2.67 acres from a Richard Martin on Pine Street. And I'm thinking, 'Where in the heck did they get this money?' Cyrus was also involved in the 124th regiment along with Isham. So I think they just partnered themselves together, they probably knew each other before they became involved with the regiment. But after the regiment, they pooled their money and purchased this property. Again it was like, "We need a place to live." My grandmother's saying, you know, "You gotta have some land." So they bought this property. And I believe it probably already had the small frame house on it. From doing the deed search, or research on the property, Richard Martin had purchased it from a William Lusby in 1863. And the deed description did not say that there was a house, or anything on the property, it just said the lot. But by the time Richard Martin had sold it, there was indication that there may have been a house built there. So I'm assuming that Lusby [Martin] may have built a house in 1864. So the house had been standing there maybe a year, a year and a half, when the Hathaways and Mr. Jackson, Isham Jackson, jointly purchased it.

Robert Elijah is discharged from his unit in December 1865. He's discharged in Nashville, Tennessee, but he makes his way back home as most of the soldiers did. And he comes to Lexington to live with Isham and his mother. And I'm assuming that all three of these men have taken the bonuses that they received when they discharged to come back to Lexington and establish this household. We have no record, again, this is one of those situations when you would like to have them had written, "I took my money and bought this piece of property." They didn't. It was like, survival. You know, "We have this chunk of money. We can do this." And they kept the property. It wasn't a situation where they made the down payment and then couldn't make the rest of the payments. They kept the property. In fact, the property stayed in the Hathaway estate from 1865 to 2008, when it was transferred to our museum for care and development for the Memorial Park. That in itself is a record. It's a treasure. It's a legacy that we build on.

(01:14:52) Q: *Robert kept a part of his uniform that became important in the life of Isaac? What did he keep?*

A: From information that we had about Robert's service, we had learned that one of the pieces of his military equipment or military uniform that he actually retained were his boots. We know this because his son, Isaac, tells when he was a child, the family was so poor, that they couldn't afford to buy shoes for him. So he wore his father's boots to school. And the kids teased him and called him, "Big Boots." So we know from the time Isaac is born in 1872, Robert had been discharged in 1865, so that's what, 7 years. And by the time Isaac starts to school, he had to have been at least 5 years old. So for almost 10 years, these boots are around. I can't imagine what they could've looked like. I, I thought, 10 year old boots? But I have to remember that they were probably made of good leather. And they were gonna survive. They're not like our shoes today that die in the first rain. But, the fact that he had to wear these boots to school, because they couldn't afford to buy boots for this child or even have them made, and when you look at the old newspapers, most shoes sold for a dollar. Its amazing to me to find out how little things cost, but when I'm comparing that to... A dollar is nothing, I mean for us now, but a dollar was very significant back during the Antebellum period of Lexington.

Time: __: __ Q: (10:22:15) So Isaac comes along, and, when he's starting to be recognized as having a special talent, what was rare about the family in that context - of economically supporting that talent?

A: Well when you look at where Isaac was living down on Pine Street. Again in this bottom land area .. [stopped for noise]

(01:17:15) Q: What was unusual about the support that Isaac received from his family for artistic talent?

A: Well, we know that the family, because of where he lived, the Davis Bottom, it was not a high income area. They were surrounded by a lumberyard; just across the street from them. They had a railroad track that ran adjacent, the boundary, the southern boundary of their property was a railroad track. And the whole street itself wasn't highly developed. It had just begun to start developing. So they were not a high income family that you would have expected to have any interest at all in art. But they did. And I have surmised just from reading the history of Isaac's mother's side of the family that they had some artistic talent among all of the members. Edna Shanes Bailey, that I mentioned earlier, became a writer. She became an educator, too - taught school. And, another brother of hers - uncle of Isaac - Sidney Allen also published a book of poems. So, I think there was some artistic interest in the family on his mother's side. Robert Elijah, Isaac's father, recognized this and supported it. They sent him to a school, the Lexington Normal Institute, where teachers had an appreciation for art education, as well as the basics of seeing that these children knew their ABC's and 123's. So, he, he was surrounded by people who understood the value of art education. And, he had some natural talent. Evidentially, it was quite evident, that he had natural talent because of his telling of his early childhood by his own biographical information. After he had produced the first commemorative coin, The Kentucky, which is our historical society magazine, interviewed him in 1947. So we get this first hand account him quoting, ya know, "This is how I got my start. This is what I used to do when I was a child." We know that basically, it was kind of an autobiography. It was one of those things that was written - that we know from him - that this is who he was as a child. And, he just had natural talent. There are some children who do. They can pick up a sheet of paper and start writing. And it turns into this beautiful artwork. And that's what he did. He could draw. He could paint. He worked with plaster-of-Paris. He worked with clay. And, he just had natural talent. I just keep going back to that, because not every child is that capable. And, the fact that his family recognized it and supported it. Because, they could have easily, "Oh no! Put that away! You need to start studying." And he must have been a good student as well. Because he did advance through his education. There never seemed to be an issue with, "Is he failing a class?" Once he graduated from here in Lexington, he went to the New England Conservatory of Music and spent a semester there. And then he went on. He came back to Cincinnati, Ohio and studied at the Cincinnati Art Museum [Art Academy of Cincinnati]. And then he became a teacher here in Lexington, in Keene, Kentucky, which is not far from us. But when he came back to Lexington in 1900, after completing some of his education, he opened his studio in a chicken coop.

[Noise stop down]

(01:21:30) Q: *In 1881, there became a really significant moment in the career of Isaac Hathaway when his father and he went to Cincinnati. What did he see and what happened?*

A: When Isaac was nine years old, again this one of the supportive parents. His father, and again he tells this....

[Noise stop down]

Q: *What happened in Cincinnati?*

A: Isaac's father took Isaac, and I'm assuming he took the other two children, to an art exhibit in Cincinnati, Ohio. Isaac would have been about nine years old. And, in the process of viewing the exhibit that they went to see, Isaac became separated. I can see that he probably got absorbed in what he was looking at. And, the group went one way and he wandered off in another direction. When his father finally found him in this museum, he said to him, as most parents would, "Why did you leave us? Why weren't you here with us?" And, Isaac says to his father, "I was looking for a statue of Frederick Douglass because my teacher said all important people are embrowned," which meant that their images would have been cast in bronze and put on pedestals or shown in the museum. He could not find an image of Frederick Douglass.

Frederick Douglass, prior to the Civil War and during the Civil War, was a vociferous advocate for abolition of slavery. He spoke with passion. And, he also lobbied then President Abraham Lincoln to issue the Proclamation that eventually freed African Americans. The African American community knew of this. There wasn't a telegraph. There was no Internet. There wasn't a television station. One lady said that she didn't know how they got the message out. It was probably through the cornbread. But, African Americans all over the nation knew of Frederick Douglass' effort on their behalf to see that they became free citizens of the United States. So he was an honored gentleman. He was still living when Isaac, as Isaac was growing up. And, he did make an appearance in Kentucky during the time of Isaac's youth. So it wasn't as if this was an individual that he just read about. He probably knew about him. I'm sure his father talked about him, talked about Frederick Douglass, and his effort during the Civil War to have African Americans enlisted in the service. This was probably conversation not only at school, but at home. So Isaac felt that he was a man of worth. That he was noteworthy. And, that his statue should be on exhibit at this museum. He didn't find it. Isaac's father said to him, "Well there are no negro sculptures." And, Isaac says, "I'm going to make busts of Negro people and put them where everybody can see them." And, I'm using the terms that he would have used. They didn't use colored. They didn't use Afro-American. He actually said, "Negro."

And, at nine years of age, I can't imagine! How many nine year olds do I know - do you know - that would make this statement and stick to it? Truly! How many do you know? Given the time frame, 1881, we're still dealing with the Antebellum sentiment. Antebellum economics. Not having a role model to follow. Not truly knowing what the economic situation of the family was. Not being able to afford art lessons. How was he going to do this? How did he do it? And it's a question that I always wonder myself. But, again, he had this natural talent, and he had this passion at nine years of age that he was going to become the sculptor that actually did this. In his lifetime, he created over a hundred busts of African American leaders all over the United States. And he covered all professions - educators, politicians, entrepreneurs, musicians, orators. Just very influential people throughout the United States. And, he went out of his way to create these pieces of work. He tells the story of having met Booker T. Washington, the educator at Tuskegee, here in Lexington when he came to Lexington in 1902. Isaac was asked to create a particular souvenir, which he did out of plaster-of-Paris. They presented it to Mr. Washington, and five years later, when Isaac's in Washington D.C., he sees Mr. Douglass [Washington] getting in a carriage and heading down the street. From what Isaac says, he followed the carriage. And, when Mr. Douglass [Washington] gets out, he introduces himself and tells him where they had met, and Mr. Washington invites Isaac to come to Tuskegee to create a mask. Because he asked, he asked, and he said fine. Make your way to Tuskegee and I will do it. Isaac did it. He made his way, don't ask me how because he didn't tell us. But he got to Tuskegee and actually created a mask of Mr. Washington while he was alive. It wasn't a death mask. It became the only piece that we know that was created of him

while he was living. And from that particular sketching, and work that he created, he was able to submit the design for the first United States commemorative coin honoring Booker T. Washington. From that experience, he went on to create masks of other important individuals: Paul Laurence Dunbar, who was Isaac's contemporary by the way. They were born two months apart in 1872. Bishop Allen, and this he had to create from memory and other sketches from archives. Frederick Douglass of course, and he has a story of about how long it took to get the facial features of Frederick Douglass just right. He was perfectionist. What else did he create? I'm running out of, I'm forgetting here!

(01:28:35) Q: *It's basically the who's who of successful.... Now not only were the 12-inch busts, which are his signature work and his livelihood. But because of the Plaster of Paris, and what not, they were affordable. Why was that so important?*

A: Well, when Isaac made the vow at nine years of age that he would make busts of Negroes, and put them places where people would see them, he knew that in order to do that, they would have to go into their homes. Because most people would, a) not go to a museum or even afford maybe the admission to a museum. And, you know, it's amazing to me that he made that comment just exactly that way. Because, then his marketing strategy became, "Let me produce a bust that's affordable, that's transportable and of people that are easily recognized and acknowledged." So he created these Plaster-of-Paris busts. Plaster-of-Paris is a very inexpensive substance. And, he painted them bronze so it would look like as if they were metal. He hired a gentleman when he was in Washington D.C. to sell these. It's like insurance premiums. You go to the door and pay 25 cents a week in order for you to have insurance. And this was normal for Kentucky even for national - African Americans - way of life. So he sold the busts for a dollar - a piece! Later, he increased the price to \$1.50 a piece. But it's amazing! I thought, 'How many pieces?' We don't know how many he pieces he actually produced, but he had to produce enough to stay in business, because he had his own business. He had a letterhead - stationary. He produced a brochure, a catalog, of all of his work. So he had to be making money doing this. Not only was he doing this - individual pieces of African Americans that he was selling door to door - but he was also being commissioned for larger pieces. What we call the heroic size busts, which were about 36 inches tall. That would indicate a person at waist level up. So you'll see them sitting on pedestals in museums and schools, other institutions. Very few of the heroic size busts were in homes, but they are in institutions.

(01:31:05) Q: *After his training, and certainly after the Art Academy of Cincinnati, he came back to Lexington. Why did he come back and what did he do?*

A: When Isaac left Lexington, he studied at Boston. Then, he went on to Cincinnati Art Museum. And, from an account that we have in the paper, he said that he had been offered positions in other places, but he wanted to come back home. I'm not sure why he chose to come back to Lexington, because this is not a center for art distribution. There weren't too many places similar to what he was trying to create here. So I don't know whether he felt homesick. I don't know. But he decided that he wanted to really stay in the Lexington area. So he returned to Kentucky and in 1900 we find that he set up his studio. The City Directory lists him as a studio - art studio - in 1900 at the Hathaway place, 208 West Pine St. And, the 1947 Kentucky Historical Society magazine says that he set it up in the old chicken coop behind his house. I can't imagine! If anybody knows anything about a chicken coop, it's not a place I'd set up as a studio. But that's what was available to him. So he, and his father, probably, cleaned out the chicken coop, and put a new roof on it. Put siding on it to protect it from the weather. And, that's where he worked.

[Stopped for noise]

He and his father would have probably worked on rehabbing the chicken coop. This is like an early recycling project. He rehabbed the chicken coop and that's where he set up his studio. So he had a place to work, where he wouldn't mess up the house probably, with all of his powder and his dust and his carvings. Once he set up his chicken coop he started, he didn't waste time in getting the word out. There is an article in a local newspaper that has a wonderful studio portrait of him with a very lengthy article of his effort as an artist. And they talk about what he actually had worked on in the studio - the pieces

that he created - the souvenir piece. He had worked on a piece for the Transylvania University recreating the old Morrison Hall. He had sculpted the mask of Paul Laurence Dunbar. He had done one for W.C.P. Breckinridge, and he had also cast the death mask and bust of Cassius M. Clay. This is not the boxer. This is the Ambassador to Russia during President Abraham Lincoln's tenure. So we have a record of what he... And, there was one other gentleman, R.C.O. Benjamin, who was an editor here in Lexington at our black newspaper, *The Standard*. He was murdered in 1900 by an assassin, and that's another long story. But, he did cast the mask of R.C.O. Benjamin. So we have a record of about 5 pieces he actually created while he was here in Lexington. One of the more significant pieces that I think, or there are two, that earned him national recognition.

There was a meteorite that fell in Bath County, and from the information that I have read it was one of the largest meteorites that had fallen in the western hemisphere for generations, for years. And, of course, geologists went out to collect the piece itself, and Isaac was commissioned by the Smithsonian Institute to cast this meteorite that they were going to show at the St. Louis Exposition. I did find, here at our Geology Department at the University of Kentucky, that they have a slice of that particular meteorite. And, I had expected to see the whole thing., And so when I go out and talk to them about it, they said it's normal for them to slice a meteorite and share it with other geology departments. So, I didn't get to see the whole piece, and no one's been able to find the whole casting, yet. It's somewhere. We don't know.

The other piece that he gained national recognition for was for the casting of a murder scene of a gentleman in Louisville, Kentucky. William Bullitt was an attorney, and he hired Isaac to go down to Louisville and actually cast the mold of the tree and the surrounding area where this man supposedly had committed suicide. And, the reason that they were doing this... The man had taken out a huge insurance policy - several companies. Some of the companies paid off immediately. And other companies decided to refuse payment thinking that he may have committed suicide, because, there was a clause in their policy. If you commit suicide, you don't get paid. So the family took it to court. Because Isaac had created this scene and it was so lifelike, he was accused of having mutilated the death scene. And when the opposing attorney went to prove that he had mutilated the death scene, he stabbed the tree with the knife and when he pulled it out it was plaster of Paris. So not only had he created the scene just as he was supposed to, but he had colorized it enough that he convinced everybody, or made them believe it was the actual scene. So, having that - because it made national attention. This had never been done. Never been done! And, again we have the newspaper articles giving the details of this particular case. And I do know a gentleman who is archiving papers of William Bullitt, and he called me one day and he says, "I found your man." Isaac's mentioned in some correspondences. Because he and I had talked about this. Nobody knows where the death scene is. They think there was a fire in one of the warehouses that Mr. Bullitt kept, and they figure it has dissolved with the water.

(01:38:00) Q: *What were some of the personal and professional traits - the characteristics of Isaac Hathaway - that made him successful when there were so few role models?*

A: One, Isaac was determined. A nine year-old child making this statement, and it wasn't a fly by night statement. He had given some consideration to it, even at nine years of age. So, I know he was a very quite man. Almost everyone speaks of his quiet determination, his dedication to what he was doing. His self belief. He had to believe in himself in order to get this far. His support of his family. He couldn't have continued on in his art career without the support of this family. But I just think he was very determined, and not in an aggressive way, in a very quiet assertive way. And, he didn't let the era of racism, of Jim Crow laws stop him. And, people who recognized his talent also acknowledge that race made no difference. The President of Transylvania University hired Isaac to create this replica of the Morrison Hall - 1904. 1904 was the same year that Kentucky passed the Day Law that separated African Americans in education at Berea. Since 1865, African Americans and whites had always attended Berea College for their education. 1904 that all disappeared. We have all of these Jim Crow laws. You know, you got the colored water fountain, and the colored restroom, and the colored entrance. None of that fazed, none of it fazed Isaac's approach, nor his recognition by those people who could acknowledge a man who had passion and talent. None of it.

[Stopped for noise]

(01:40:12) Q: *There are so many facets to Isaac's life, and his career and his talents, but what would you say are the most important legacies of Isaac Scott Hathaway - first as an artist and professor?*

A: As an artist during his time, to know that he had the talent, recognized the talent, and pursued despite all the odds. I think that's a lesson in itself. When we think that in this day in time, we have to have all of the things in line - all the stars have to be in line. We have to line our own stars. We have the talent determination. Money wasn't a factor for him. But he pursued what he wanted to do on limited resources. We can do the same. We should do the same! And, particularly young African Americans; I think when they look at his life and understand his life, understand the circumstances surrounding his life, then what does that say about all the advantages that we have. And, why can't we excel more than we have. I've talked to people, and these are adults who I've spoken to about this. And, they'll start bemoaning their situation, and I'll say to them, "How do you feel about your ancestor who was brought, who was captured, brought over on a ship, plopped down wherever. Separated from people that they had become accustomed to, learning a new language, learning new skills?" They survived and we're still here because of them.

This is the same with Isaac. He didn't have money. He didn't have people in his household that could hand him fifty dollars or a hundred dollars, and say, "You go off to art school." He earned every penny. And, he tells that he painted these racehorse pictures so he could have money to go to school, as well as help his sisters go to school. So, he sought employment. He sought gainful money, or he earned money based on his talent. And I think we all have something that we can give. He gave us what he interpreted as a legacy; in terms of having an image of influential African American leaders - both male and female. When we look at the numbers and types, and the individual that he actually captured in plaster of Paris, many of those we have no other images for. We have some pictures of Booker T. Washington, but do we have images, pictures of leaders of labor organizations, bankers, or other artists in music and literature? Where are those images? His plaster of Paris has survived! Although we don't have them all here in Lexington, they're scattered wherever he worked in Arkansas, in Texas, in Tuskegee, Alabama, at Washington, D.C. Some are in private collections all over the United States. Since we have been open, I get calls, phone calls from people telling me they have some of his work and want to know what the value of it is. And, some want to authenticate it. And, I always offer... I tell someone, somebody's going to offer, "O.K., I'll sell it to you for X amount of dollars," which will be more than we'll ever be able to afford. But, they do always want to know what the value of is. And, I can't value it, because museums don't appraise things. But it's gratifying to me to know that they have survived from 1900 to 2012. That's over a hundred years.

(01:44:20) Q: *Having studied his career and his life. If you had the opportunity to ask Isaac Hathaway a question that's missing from the historical record, what would you ask him? What would you like to know?*

A: Why did he do it? That's, you know. Why... Given all of the circumstances he was dealing with, why did he do this? He could have had a much more lucrative career that would probably have earned him more money, more recognition. And, why he chose to highlight his artistic talent, I'm not sure. But, why? Why did you do this? And once you decided to do this, what did you hope your work, well, not what, but how did you expect your work to influence African Americans. Cause his mission was to put it in the homes. Why? Why did you want this to be your focus?

(01:45:27) Q: *How should we look on Isaac Hathaway in the context of Lexington, Kentucky?*

[false start for noise]

A: I think Isaac should be as well known as any other artist that was from Kentucky. Joel Hart. Everybody talks about his work in marble. Why is there no conversation about Isaac's work in plaster of Paris? And, he did do some bronze sculpture. Is it because he didn't leave a written history of his work? Was he unpopular when he was working during the time period that he was here? Although there are newspaper articles about his work. There are some pictures in the paper. Why has that not been more widely circulated? How come he's not in the history books? You know, his life - just studying his life - is

enough to give us a lesson of all races make contributions to our community. All races leave us a legacy. Why isn't that part of our education system? And, take out the word race. This man! This man - given the circumstances of his birth, of his upbringing - what he did as an adult. This should be a part of our education system. (10:53.07:16)

(01:47:08) Q: *Your organization is making an effort to have tangible evidence of his birthplace. What is the memorial and tell us about the timetable and what's needed to make that a reality?*

A: Fortunately for us, when the property was transferred to us by his estate attorney, we had been organized for five or six years. So, we were stable. We were at a point where we could pursue clearing the lot. Getting all of the junk cars out. All the trash out, and eventually getting all the overgrown trees – eleven of them. It cost a fortune to take them all down, but we got all that cleared. And people have come to us, as they have discovered that we are doing something with this lot. And, what the purpose of it is. And that's to memorialize Mr. Hathaway and his family. And, contributions of other African Americans, not just the Hathaway family, because this is about Kentucky African Americans. So we will have some information about the impact that African Americans had on our society. But again, we're focusing on Mr. Hathaway. But having people recognize this property, and saying, "Who is that man?" Becoming a part of your every day language. We've had people visiting us from other parts, other states. And I've had, particularly African Americans say, "I don't know why we're not on some of this. We should have our names and our faces". And, I'm always so happy to say, "But, we're on coins." We have African... Well, they never knew it. They never knew that there were African Americans on the faces of coins. And, that an African American from Kentucky actually created the mold, actually created the design, for these coins. This needs to be more public. And, having this park here, will help us tell that story. And why is it important? Because it shows during the early 19th century - when there were just numerous lynchings of African Americans all across the south, the Jim Crow laws that just sprang up out of nowhere - that this man was creating this work during that time period. It's a story when you look into why, why it happened, and who he was, that he was able to move through society, and move ahead with his artistic talents, and create this legacy. How did this happen? How, how could he have done it? I really get too emotional. It's not a good subject for me to talk about, because I really get too emotional. [When I have looked at his life, and asked those same questions, It's not totally objective because I can't get object.. And he's not a relative of mine. But, I can't get objective about what he must have sacrificed, and how he personally could have felt about this. But he did not let any of those things effect him. Not ever.

(01:50:36) [End of interview].

*Final transcription by Thomas M. Law
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