



Smithsonian

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Historical Records related to the Jones-Hall-Sims House

Ja-Zette Marshburn, Earnest Lucious and Alana Donocoff

March 2021, updated June 2024

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	1
Scope and Contents	4
Arrangement	4
Names and Subjects	
Bibliography	4
Container Listing	
Series 1: Photographs	6
Series 2: Oral History Transcripts	7

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of African American History and Culture
Title:	Historical Records related to the Jones-Hall-Sims House
Date:	1978-1979
Identifier:	NMAAHC.A2013.110
Creator:	McDaniel, George W.
Extent:	.41 Cubic feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Jones-Hall-Sims House also known as "Freedom House" is featured prominently in the NMAAHC <i>Defending Freedom, Defining Freedom: The Era of Segregation</i> exhibition. This collection reflects the research completed by historian Dr. George McDaniel documenting the history of the Jones-Hall-Sims House and the surrounding communities of Jonesville, Maryland.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Acquired as a gift of Dr. George W. McDaniel.

Processing Information

This collection was originally processed, arranged, and described by Ja-Zette Marshburn and Alana Donocoff in 2019 and 2020. This collection was re-processed and re-described in June 2024 to meet industry and museum standards by Ja-Zette Marshburn and Earnest Lucious.

Preferred Citation

Historical Records Related to the Jones-Hall-Sims House, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research. Access to collection materials requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

The NMAAHC Archives can provide reproductions of some materials for research and educational use. Copyright and right to publicity restrictions apply and limit reproduction for other purposes.

Biographical / Historical

The Jones-Hall-Sims House, also referred to as the "Freedom House," is featured prominently within the permanent exhibition, *Defending Freedom, Defining Freedom: The Era of Segregation* of the Smithsonian National Museum of

African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). NMAAHC acquired the House in 2009. After disassembling the house at its original site in Maryland, it was reconstructed in the museum and became a focal aspect of the main History gallery. The House was named for three of the families that owned and occupied it for several generations starting in 1874. The home was originally located in Jonesville, Maryland, near what is now classified as Poolesville, Maryland. The Jones-Hall-Sims House was located at 6 Jonesville Terrace.

The city of Jonesville was named after brothers Richard (1810-1880) and Erasmus (1823-1880) Jones. Jonesville was one of the earliest free African American communities in Montgomery County, Maryland. Most of the inhabitants of Jonesville were descendants of the town's founders. With ratification of 13th amendment effectively banning the practice of American slavery, many former plantation owners were forced to sell their land to the formerly enslaved people who wanted to create and sustain their own communities. Research indicates that Richard and Erasmus were likely enslaved by the Bruner family on their Aix la Chapelle plantation. It is believed that the Bruner family enslaved up to 5,400 African American men, women, and children before the Civil War. This included Henrietta Jones, (1778-1870) that research suggests was the mother of Richard and Erasmus. In 1874, Richard Jones purchased 9 acres of land on the former Aix la Chapelle plantation from the Bruner family for \$135.00. The sale was not formalized until the death of the landowner and head of the Bruner family, Joseph in 1874.

It is believed that the Jones-Hall-Sims House was built in approximately 1875. Research suggests that Richard Jones likely built the home with the help of his sons and neighbors. The original house was a wooden structure with two stories, three bays, and a side gabled roof covered in tin. Although Richard owned the house, it is unclear if he ever lived there. He transferred ownership of the house and land to his sons, John Henry (1853-1920) and Dennis (b. 1855) in 1876. John Henry and his wife Maria Jones are the first recorded occupants of the Jones-Hall-Sims House. Maria was the daughter of John Peters (b. 1825) a free-born blacksmith and an unidentified enslaved woman. John Peters also hailed from a longtime Jonesville family. Marrying John Henry in 1878, Maria was the first of her family who lived with her husband and children in the same home. In 1896, John Henry Jones sold the land the Jones-Hall-Sims House was located on to his brother Frank Jones and a friend, Levin Hall. The house was on Hall's property; therefore, the ownership was transferred to him.

In 1915, Elmer Jones, Richard's grandson, built a house nearby Jones-Hall-Sims House and made a home with his wife, Elnora Hall, Levin Hall's daughter. Elmer, a carpenter, known during that time as a "house wright," was responsible for rebuilding Elijah Methodist Church after it was damaged in a fire. Elmer's grandfather Richard was responsible for building the church, an integral part of the Jonesville community. After Elnora's death, Elmer married Hannah Jones; she would subsequently remain in that home until after Elmer's death in 1969.

In 1946, Annie E. Hall, Elnora's sister and Levin's daughter, transferred the land surrounding the Jones-Hall-Sims House to her daughter, Marion Hall. Marion married John Sims and they raised their son, Paul, in the historic home. In 1964, returning home from his service in Air Force, Paul married Barbara (b. 1944) and returned home where they lived with his father, John. In 1989, John passed away and transferred the property to his son. Like his father, Paul raised his children and grandchildren in the home. The families in the home were always self-sufficient, hunting and farming for their food, growing orchards and gardens, and making their own wine. Featured frequently in the collection are images of hog butchering, a main source of income throughout the home's history. Hog butchering was a joyous occasion, celebrated with food and drink by the whole community.

From 1978-9, Dr. George McDaniel conducted a historical survey of African American communities in upper western Montgomery County, Maryland. McDaniel worked with the preservation organization, Sugarloaf Regional Trails and the Maryland Historical Trust to conduct the survey. The purpose was to document important African American historical communities and homes in the area as they were rapidly disappearing. The survey was also used to obtain historical designation from the Maryland Historical Trust for the home in applications date for 1979 and 1985. Unfortunately, the house did not successfully receive the designation. At the time of the survey, McDaniel was a Ph.D. student at Duke University studying traditional African American home and customs. The study included research on the homes, churches, and schools through artifacts, photographs, and oral histories. At the time of the survey, Paul Sims owned and lived in the home. From his findings, McDaniel published *Black Historical Resources in Upper Western Montgomery County* and *A Living Black Heritage* focused on 11 African American communities including Jonesville and Sugarland.

In 2000, the family lost ownership of the home and it was purchased by Maryland resident, Brad Rhoderick with the intent to demolish the property to build a new home for his family. The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission was not able to designate the Jones-Hall-Sims House for historical preservation because of the many changes done by later generations who lived in the home, so they turned to NMAAHC for help. They worked together to acquire the house as quickly as possible to ensure the rich history presented by the home was preserved.

Historical Timeline

1778	Henrietta Jones was born. Research suggests she was the mother of Richard and Erasmus Jones.
1810 ca.	Richard Jones was born.
1820 ca.	Richard Jones married Evelyn
1825	John Peters was born.
1850	Levin Hall was born. Frank Jones is born to Richard and Evelyn Jones (b. 1820).
1853	John Henry Jones was born to Richard and Evelyn Jones.
1855	Dennis Jones was born to Richard and Evelyn Jones.
1858	Maria E. Peters was born to John Peters and unidentified enslaved woman.
1864	Maryland ratified the Emancipation Proclamation.
1870	Henrietta Jones passed away.
1874	Richard Jones purchased 9 acres of land from the Aix la Chapelle plantation. Richard purchased the land that became Jonesville, named after founders Richard and Erasmus Jones.
1875	Jones-Hall-Sims House was built.
1878	John Henry married Maria E. Peters.
1876	Richard Jones bequeathed the House and land to his sons, John Henry (m. Marie E.) and Dennis Jones (m. Mary V.)
1879	Frank Jones, son of Richard and Rachael Jones, married Ruth (1858-1931).
1880	Dennis Jones married Mary (b. 1862). Richard Jones passed away.
1888	Elmer Jones was born to John Henry Jones and an unknown woman.
1891	Elnora Hall was born to Levin and Ruth Hall.
1896	John Henry Jones sold the House to his brother Frank Jones and friend Levin Hall splitting the property in half. The Jones-Hall-Sims House was located on Hall's land.
1898	John Sims was born.
1902	Marian Hall was born to Annie E. Hall and unknown man.
1915	Elmer Jones built his own home in Jonesville near the Jones-Hall-Sims House and lived with his wife Elnora Hall Jones (daughter of Levin Hall).
1920	Marian Hall married John Sims. Elnora Hall Jones and John Henry Jones passed away.
1924	Annie E. Hall inherits the land from her father, Levin Hall.

1936	Paul Sims was born and raised by Elmer Jones, husband to Elnora Hall.
1946	Marion Hall Sims (daughter of Annie E. Hall) inherited the land and passed it on to her husband John Sims.
1969	Elmer Jones passed away, leaving his own house to his widow Hannah Jones (1902-1984).
1978-1979	Dr. George McDaniel conducted a historical survey of the black communities in Montgomery County, Maryland.
1989	John Sims passed away. Paul Sims inherits the home from his father, John Sims.
1984	Paul and Barbara Sims lived with their children and grandchildren. John Sims lived with his family until he passed away in 1989.
2000	The family sold the land.
2008	Jones-Hall-Sims House was purchased by Brad Rhoderick with the intention to demolish the house and rebuild a new one.
2009	Jones-Hall-Sims House was acquired by the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Scope and Contents

The Historical Records related to the Jones-Hall-Sims House consists of primary documentation collected and created by historian Dr. George McDaniel. Dr. McDaniel created these materials in an effort to document African American communities in western Montgomery County, Maryland. The collection consists of photographic materials and oral history transcripts created and preserved of the families and community members that occupied the historic home and the surrounding Jonesville community. The bulk of the materials were created and collected during 1978-1979.

Arrangement

This collection was arranged as close to Dr. McDaniel's original organization as possible. This collection is arranged in two series: Photography and Oral History Transcripts and described as such. Arrangement are explained at the series level.

Bibliography

Brackett, Jeffrey R. *Notes on the Progress of the Colored People of Maryland Since the War. A Supplement to the Negro in Maryland: A Study of the Institution of Slavery*. Baltimore: Publication Agency of the Johns Hopkins University, 1890.

Fields, Barbara J. *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Fuke, Richard Paul. *Imperfect Equality: African Americans and the Confines of White Racial Attitudes in Post-Emancipation Maryland*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1999.

Keys, Allison. "For Nearly 150 Years, This One House Told a Novel Story About the African American Experience: On view in the new museum, the wood frame dwelling evokes the aspirations and limitations

of the era following enslavement". *Smithsonian Magazine*, Sept. 7, 2016. (accessed August 2019). <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/for-nearly-150-years-one-house-told-novel-story-african-american-experience-180960355/>.

McDaniel, George W. *Black Historical Resources of Upper Western Montgomery County*. Sugarloaf Regional Trails, 1979.

McDaniel, George W. *Hearth & Home, Preserving a People's Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- American South
- Communities
- Domestic life
- Emancipation
- Families
- Free communities of color
- Housing
- Local and Regional
- Photographs
- Religions

Types of Materials:

- Oral histories (document genres)

Places:

- Poolesville (Md.)
- United States of America -- Maryland -- Montgomery County -- Potomac

Container Listing

Series 1: Photographs

Arrangement: This series is arranged by format and then subject. Photographic prints include images of Jones-Hall-Sims House, the surrounding communities and activities that took place at the home. The last folder in the series contains negatives and contact sheets of some of the images included in the collection but it is not comprehensive. These materials were aggregated and captured by George McDaniel.

Scope and Contents: Materials in this series include photographic materials aggregated and captured by George McDaniel for research and reference during his survey of the Jones-Hall-Sims House. The materials include images of the house in its various iterations, the Jones-Hall-Sims descendants, and hog-butchering. There are also images of the surrounding community and its people in Jerusalem (a community in Jonesville, MD) and Poolesville, Maryland.

Box 1, Folder 1: Photographs of the Jones-Hall-Sims House

Box 1, Folder 2: Photographs of Jonesville Community

Box 1, Folder 3: Hog-Butchering at Jones-Hall-Sims House

Box 1, Folder 4: Photographs of Jerusalem, Jonesville Community, 1978

Box 1, Folder 5: Negative and Contact Sheets from Dr. George McDaniel's Survey, 1978

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Oral History Transcripts

Arrangement: Each folder contains a transcript for each interview participant, any additional interviews with participant as well as duplicates with annotations completed by George McDaniel. Transcripts that indicate continuations and/or duplicates are noted by a separation sheet.

Scope and Contents: Materials in this series include transcripts of the oral history interviews completed and collected principally by George McDaniel (other participants are noted). These interviews are with descendants, former residents of the JHS Home and larger Jonesville community. Interviews were completed throughout 1979 in various area in Montgomery County and Prince George's County, Maryland. Please see arrangement note for further information.

Box 1, Folder 6: Interview with Ethel Foreman, February 1979 with annotated duplicate

Box 1, Folder 7: Interview with Arnold and Joe Hawkins, February 1979 with annotated duplicate

Box 1, Folder 8: Interview with Tilghman Lee and his wife, May 1979

Box 1, Folder 9: Interview with Tilghman Lee and Paul Wilson, May 1979

Box 1, Folder 10: Interview with Tilghman Lee and Ida Hallman, undated

Box 1, Folder 11: Interview with Adella Cravens and Hester Hamilton for NAACP Summer Freedom School, July 1979

Box 1, Folder 12: Interviews with Evelyn Herbert and Lemuel Graham, February 1979 and May 1979

Box 1, Folder 13: Interviews with Howard Lyles, January 1979 and May 1979 with annotated duplicates

Box 1, Folder 14: Interview with Oral Lyles, March 1979 with annotated duplicate

Box 1, Folder 15: Interview with Joshua Hamilton, Fanny Hamilton and daughter, May 1979

Box 1, Folder 16: Interview with Paul, John and Barbara Sims, February 1979

[Return to Table of Contents](#)