

**Transcript of an oral history interview in the collection of the
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
308 Forrest Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922**

Speaker 1: Today's date is September 20, 2000. The location is the Rossetter House, 1328 Houston Street, Melbourne. Our interview subject is Archie Phillips and our interviewer is Roz Foster. The cameraman is Lauritz Kjerulff.

Lauritz: It's rolling.

Roz: Today, Wednesday, September 20th, 2000, we're on location at the James Rossetter House, located at 1328 Houston Street in Eau Gallie, Florida. The house is located on property once owned by Eau Gallie pioneer, John C. Houston. The rear portion of the two-story house may have been built before the Civil War. According to a story relayed to us from a Houston descendant, he built the house from salvaged wood from a shipwreck on the beach, and he built it next to the location of where once stood the log cabin.

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James Rossetter purchased the property in 1904 and completed the two-story front edition shortly thereafter, completing it in 1907. Mr. Rossetter was a successful businessman who owned large citrus groves, raised cattle, and helped develop the fishing industry in South Brevard County. He also had an interest in the Standard Oil Company. His two daughters, Caroline, affectionately known as Miss Carrie, and Ella, maintained the architectural and the historical integrity of the house and donated it to the Florida Historical Society in 1992.

[00:02:00]

I make mention of the address being on Houston Street because prior to the Rossetters' addition of the front section, the front of the house was on Houston Street. When they added the front addition, the front of the Rossetters' house became located on Highland Avenue, although their original address was maintained as 1328 Houston Street. Today we are talking with the caretaker and dear friend of Miss Carrie and Miss Ella for 34 years, Mr. Archie Phillips. Good morning, Archie.

Archie: Good morning.

Roz: We're so pleased that you were be able to be with us today. Tell us something about yourself, when you came to Florida and where you came from.

Archie: Well, I moved from Tampa, Florida when I came to Eau Gallie, Florida. The first time I came, the first job I had, it was on Patrick Air Force Base. I stayed out there for six years. Then I got a job with the City doing sanitation work. I was a truck driver and I drove heavy equipment, tractors and trucks, for I say 15 years. After the 15 years, the City contracted out to Harris and I continued working with the City.

[00:03:00]

Then I got transferred to the waste water treatment plant and stayed to the treatment plant until I retired June the 30th in '89. 23 years with the City, and at the same time I was working with the City, I was working over to a house for a fellow named Mr. [Figgins

[00:04:00] 00:03:59]. Miss Carrie seen me working over there and she asked Mrs. Figgins could I help her a few days and she said yeah. Then I started working with them in 1966. First start when I get off the work from the City I will work 3 hours every afternoon. Then I didn't have to work but four days for the City. Then I started putting in 8 hours with them every week. I just continued that. When I retired I just dropped down to working just 3 days a week with Miss Carrie and Ella. Been here ever since 1966.

[00:05:00]

Roz: That's a long time; 34 years. Let me ask you, I know you knew Miss Ella and Miss Carrie. They were dear ladies and very self-sufficient ladies. First, tell us something about Miss Ella. Did she run her own businesses?

Archie: Well, she first was an insurance lady. In the time when I started working with them she had done turned the insurance business over to her brother, Jim. Then she just continued in. Me and her did the yard work; transferring the plants, fertilizing the yard. She was the cook and did all the washing and the ironing. Miss Carrie, she never did learn how to cook. She was just a straight business lady. She done all the work down to the plant.

Roz: What was the plant?

Archie: Chevron Oil. It was Standard Oil Company.

Roz: Standard Oil Company.

Archie: Yeah. She started there at the age of 15.

Roz: Good grief.

[00:06:00]

Archie: After her mother and father passed. Her father passed first. Then they had to take care of their mother. During the time she took over her dad's job. Her mother became sick and she had to take her mother to Jacksonville all the time to the doctor. They took care of mother until she passed. Then she sent her 3 brothers through college. All 3 of them went in service and they all [inaudible 00:06:33]. She was the oldest one of them. All her brothers and her sisters passed first. She lived until she got 101.

Roz: God bless her. I understand she just recently passed away.

Archie: Yeah. Yeah. She passed away, well, just a year ago now.

Roz: A year ago.

Archie: Yeah, a year ago. She was 101 years old.

[00:07:00]

Roz: That's something. Well, did the two sisters belong to the local garden club? Is that why

they were so interested in all these wonderful plants?

Archie: Yeah, Miss Ella. Miss Ella did.

Roz: Miss Ella. Okay.

Archie: Yeah. Then they used to take care of -- there was a cemetery right across the road over there. I used to take care of that and I set all the plants over there in the little cemetery; which probably you ain't never seen it.

Roz: No.

Archie: It's right across the street over there. She had a friend called Mrs. Hudson. Okay. When I started working with Miss Carrie here, Mrs. Hudson asked Miss Carrie could I help her some? Okay. I helped Mrs. Hudson for 12 years. Then she passed. She had a grandson, a little boy, and I used to take him fishing. He went to college and become a dentist. What he do for me now he pulls my teeth, he cleans my teeth, and never charge me nothing. [00:08:00] As long as I live, that's what he does for me.

Roz: That's wonderful. That's being a dear friend, isn't it?

Archie: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Roz: Yeah. That's wonderful.

Archie: I used to take him fishing with me.

Roz: That's great. Let me ask you, I noticed that Miss Carrie and Miss Ella had quite a collection here of plants. Did you plant a lot of these plants with them?

Archie: Oh, yes, I planted a lot of them. Yeah. The most what you see here in the pots well, I transplant them myself. She was right by my side, sitting on this little stool. She had this rule I had to measure them 4 different ways and make sure every plant is in the center of the pot.

Roz: Perfectionist, huh.

Archie: Yeah.

Roz: What do you remember most about each one of the ladies? I'm sure they had wonderful little personalities. I'm sure that you shared some just wonderful moments with them. [00:09:00]

Archie: Oh, yes. Well, you see, I was a yard man and a chauffeur.

Roz: And a chauffeur.

Archie: I took them to all the parties over on Merritt Island and Indialantic, to the yacht club. I

took them sometimes 2 parties in 1 night.

Roz: Oh, they were quite liked to be entertained, huh?

Archie: Yeah. She always had a rule with the drinks. She didn't want Miss Ella to drink but 2 drinks and she always drank 3. She say, Ella say, "You don't need another drink now." After the party is all over so I bring them home and I take Miss Carrie. She say, "Hold my hand." I called her my little frisky. I hold her hand and I take them and get them in the house. They close the door and they give me the keys and I go put the Cadillac back in the garage. Then I tell them goodnight. We had a wonderful time together. They used to give parties. I used to serve 50 and 60 people when they give the parties.

[00:10:00]

Roz: Oh, my.

Archie: I had a wonderful time.

Roz: Who were some of the people in Eau Gallie, do you remember, that used to come to their parties?

Archie: Oh, yeah. A lot of them is dead now. Joe Wickham, he dead. Lans [Scraw 00:10:37], the [Gleasons 00:10:39]. I'm telling you hundreds and hundreds of people. There was so many people now that most all the older people be dead now. Joe Wickham, he passed. [Miller 00:10:56] I think he's still living, but he lived in Indialantic. That's where I used to take them to parties at, too. Every time they give parties his birthday and Miss Carrie's were along in the same month. They have a party all together.

[00:11:00]

Roz: A big birthday party.

Archie: Yeah, the big birthday party. She used to give parties regular. We used to sit out here. Had a table and 4 chairs. We all, me, Miss Carrie, and Miss Ella and we used to sit here and have lunch. Then Miss Carrie, she would go back to work and me and Miss Ella still be doing the yard work right on.

Roz: What a wonderful afternoon.

Archie: Yeah. Anything I needed they give it to me. It might take them a week to come together, to decide on it, but nothing that I suffer for if I needed anything. When I needed a car, they bought me a car. When I needed a roof on my house, they had the roof put on. When I get sickness they let me have the money. Every Christmas they give me a bonus. Every Christmas they give me a turkey for Thanksgiving and a ham for Christmas. A ham for Easter, and every birthday come around they bake me a big cake and put a fish on it because I love to fish.

[00:12:00]

Roz: Oh, my goodness.

Archie: They never did miss no time of doing them things for me.

Roz: Well, they thought a lot of you.

Archie: Yeah. Then just say now you is my family. Then she fixed up me a trust will. She said, "Now you ain't going to have nothing to worry about long as you live." She said, "Now can't nobody get it but you, so you ain't got nothing to worry about."

[00:13:00]

Roz: That's wonderful.

Archie: That's what I'm depending on. I hope everybody treat me right about it.

Roz: They sure will. I'm sure that they will. What was Christmas like around here?

Archie: Oh, it was good. We, animals and Miss Ella we always -- she got all kinds of little bears and all kinds of little animals. Me and her, she keeps them wrapped every time we put up the Christmas tree. We all decorate the Christmas tree every year. She have a Christmas tree in the house. Down to the boathouse they had a big flag. We put up a lights all the way up the Christmas pole and have a Christmas tree out there on the front, too. We just had a wonderful time all the time, every year.

Roz: Miss Ella would cook a big dinner?

Archie: Right. She'd cook a big dinner. But she'd a really good cook. She used to fix the meatballs and everybody wanted the recipe for how she cook them. She never would give it out.

[00:14:00]

Roz: What was the favorite thing that Miss Ella cooked for you? Your very favorite?

Archie: Well, them meatballs.

Roz: Did you ever find out yourself what was in them?

Archie: She never did tell me.

Roz: She never did tell you.

Archie: She never did tell you. The meatballs, that was some good cooking. They always buy them nice shrimps. Them expensive shrimps. She always had a lot of them. She never would tell nobody how she fixed them. I know one thing, they had a good taste.

Roz: When you used to go fishing did you go fishing down at the boathouse?

Archie: Well, I didn't go to fishing down there that much. I mostly went out on the Eau Gallie Causeway, but they knew I loved to fish. She always kept at me about coming down there and fish some. I didn't go down there that regularly, but I went down there and fished some. Then her brother, Charlie, he had a cast net. When he come down there he'll cast a net and catch 6 or 7 mullets. Then she have me scrape them and cut the

[00:15:00]

head off and gut them. She didn't never want me to get the fat out on the inside of them. She just wanted me to take the head off and gut them. I had a lot of fun doing that. I did that all the time.

Roz: They sound like really interesting women.

Archie: Oh, they was.

Roz: They were.

Archie: That's right.

Roz: What's about the funniest experience you had with them? Can you think of something that was really funny?

Archie: Well, I used to have a laugh at them when they wanted to decide on anything and her and Miss Ella, a lot of times they'll get in an argument with one another. After she find out she can't get Miss Ella to change her mind, well, she's just sit up and say, "Well, Ella, let's go and do what you want to do." A lot of time it'll take a whole week.

[00:16:00]

I had been 2 days trying to put out 1 plant. I put the plant down and they'll get off and they'll look, and they'll look. Then I had to take it back out of the hole, then take the measuring stick and measure it, on 4 different ways. Then set it back in the hole. Then she'll walk back and she'll sight and make sure just tell me whether to lean it to the right or lean it to the left. Then if it's straight I put the water down and fill the hole half full of dirt. Then water, then I pack it down real tight. If you don't pack it real tight air will get to the root and it'll die. That's the way I done my planting.

[00:17:00]

Roz: I understand you used to take care of all this and do all the trimming and everything by hand.

Archie: I did it by hand. I first started off with one of them mowers that just push by hand and had the clippers, hand clippers. I'd do all the clipping by hand. All them bougainvilleas you see over there I used to do all of that by hand. Me and her would be out cleaning on our hands and knees and just done it the hard way.

Roz: How about the mosquitoes in the old days? What did you do about the mosquitoes?

Archie: Well, they wasn't that bad. We had used this stuff called Off when the mosquitoes were real bad. That's what we had and we sprayed with that. We made it all right with the mosquitoes because we sprayed them. They're biting and we're hitting, but we keep on working.

Roz: How did you have many, many tropical plants here we're going to take a look at later on. How did you keep them from the freezes? We had several freezes in the '80s I know. How would you cover them up or you have so many, you couldn't possibly do that.

[00:18:00]

Archie: I couldn't cover up the fruit trees, but all the plants I got plastic out there in the garage now. When a freeze is going to come I get up all of these plants. I water them first and I put them all in a line and lay them down. I cover them up with plastic. I had electric heat them. I put the heater up under the plastic and turn it on and just leave it there overnight. Be back here the next day if it was going to be hot and just throw the plastic back off the plants so they could get air. Of course, if you leave it on there it will burn them.

Roz: Yes. That's right.

Archie: [00:19:00] That's where every time a freeze going to come, well, that's what I had to do with the plants. Every one of these plants. There used to be more than this. I had to come up here. I had been up here at night when the freeze was going to come. I'd get off from work and they call me. I had to come down here and put all these plants in a line. Water them first so the dirt wouldn't fall loose when I lay them down. Then cover them up with plastic.

She'd be right out here with me. She always just wore little old short pants. She didn't wear long pants. She just wore little shorts. It could be freezing and she'd be right out here. She wouldn't go nowhere until we get all these plants covered up. I got a piece of plastic cut just wide enough to go around that tree right there. Put around all of them plants there and I have a light bulb hanging down inside that and that's way I took care of them was around the tree. Every year when a freeze is gonna come that's what I had to do.

Roz: Did you get much damage from hurricanes?

[00:20:00]

Archie: Yeah. One time we did. Yeah. Yeah. We got a lot of damage to a lot of trees and things fell over. On that picture what I showed you there used to be a big tree over there on the street. It used to lean all the way over the street. When a storm came, well, when that last storm came it broke it down. After that there had been 2 storms. During that time, well, she was sick and couldn't do nothing. She got her nephew, Chuckie, me and him cut up all the trees and got them out that year. That's about the only damage we had. Then during them hard freezes, well, they kill everything practically on the back street there. I set all of that back out myself. All the cherry trees and everything.

Roz: Well, behind you is the most fabulous staghorn fern and one of the largest one's I've ever seen, Archie.

Archie: Right. Right.

[00:21:00]

Roz: The one next to it, I understand, you took a pup and you had started that one.

Archie: I started that one.

Roz: Can he walk over there so we can get a relative how high that is? Go over to the staghorn fern and then face this way. Tell us something about that staghorn fern. Okay?

Archie: Okay.

Roz: Go ahead. I understand that that large fern used to be suspended from a tree limb of the oak tree. Tell us what happened to it?

Archie: Well, this one were on a long limb go all the way out across. That's the shrimp plant walk right there. It went all the way across the shrimp plant walk over to the edge of the yard. They got so heavy until the limb broken. She hired Mr. Nelson to get his crane and life it up and saw that limb off just where you see this plant at. Get some blocks and build a form and set it back on it. This one, I started this one off at just one of these little plants here.

[00:22:00]

Roz: About how old is that plant?

Archie: This plant here is, 1966, '67, I started this in '67.

Roz: In '67. That's quite old also. They're absolutely marvelous specimens. Now what did you do in regards to a freeze to save the large staghorn?

Archie: I always covered it up with plastic. I put the plastic over it and just leave an open spot down to the bottom of it. I closed the gap up. Me and her closed the gap up with clothespins so it wouldn't touch none of the leaves. That's the way we were taking care of it. Done the same thing with this one after a period of time. Put plastic around them and put a light, a 40-watt light bulb on it and just leave it there for all night long and let it keep the plant warm. That palm tree right there, I started it off about 4 feet high.

[00:23:00]

Roz: That's a beautiful fishtail palm.

Archie: To keep it from freezing I put plastic over it until it got so tall. Then I couldn't reach it, and then we just had to take a chance on it. I started that off at 1 plant. The freeze had killed the other ones so she bought another one about 4 feet high. I dug a hole and got all the roots right out of the ground. I set that one out and just see what it done did now.

[00:24:00]

Roz: Well, how would you like to take us on a little tour of your botanical gardens here, Archie?

Archie: I don't mind it.

Roz: Okay.

Lauritz: Okay.

Roz: We're located in the gardens near where Archie and Miss Carrie and Miss Ella used to have a delightful lunch on a beautiful afternoon. Archie, that is one of the most beautiful bromileads I have ever seen. Tell us about that plant.

Archie: [00:25:00] Well, this bromilead here when it blooms and when the bloom gets through blooming, me and Miss Ella we always take it out of the pot, take the old from the new ones, and we re-pot them. She didn't never want nobody to get none of her plants. I take all the older plants, that's to clean up the lot over there, and we had a place we'd dump all the old. She'd cut them up in little pieces so nobody else could get the kind of flowers she had.

Then that's the way we done our transplanting every year after the plant gets through blooming, we take it out of the pot. We'll separate it, and then I'll have a mixture of cow manure, peat moss, and potting soil. Then that's what we mix together and transplant all the plants.

[00:26:00]

Roz: About how old is that plant, Archie?

Archie: This plant here, well, I want to say this plant is '66 -- about 70 years old.

Roz: It's beautiful. It's a beautiful specimen.

Archie: Yep. It went this was in the pot when I started helping them. We just clean them up and transplant them every year after they get through blooming.

[00:27:00]

Roz: So they were here before you actually came here.

Archie: These were here before I got here.

Roz: They're quite old.

Archie: Oh, yeah.

Roz: Well, they're absolutely marvelous specimens.

Archie: Oh, yeah. They're quite old.

Roz: Yes. In back of you is an interesting plant. What do you call that plant over there, Archie?

Archie: Oh, that's a spaghetti plant.

Roz: A spaghetti plant. Does that get blossoms on it?

Archie: No. It just keeps putting out little limbs like spaghetti. That's the way it do. Always put out something new. I never seen it bloom, but it just puts out them little sprouts. That's the reason they call it a spaghetti plant.

Roz: [00:28:00] Well, let's go over to this part of the garden over here. You have some interesting articles that you want to show us that the girls have placed in the garden. What is this coming up here?

Archie: Oh, this is a coffee grinder. This is a coffee grinder.

Roz: Interesting. Do you know when they brought that out to the garden and why?

Archie: No. When I started working with them it was here. This was here.

Roz: I believe it says it was manufactured by Woodruff and Edwards.

Archie: Right.

Roz: Edwards. In Elgin, Illinois.

Archie: Right. Right.

Roz: Isn't that amazing. It's in pretty good shape, isn't it?

Archie: It sure is.

Roz: Yeah. Did they ever use something like that, Archie?

Archie: Not while I was here everybody come and look at it. That's all it was. That's all I ever seen happen to it.

Roz: Well, I hope nothing happens to it. We had something very interesting around the other side here.

Archie: [00:29:00] Now this is the old cane mill. When I was coming up as a young man in Georgia I used to have to feed -- put the stocks of cane in it and then a mule would take it around. The juice would come down in a barrel. When the barrel get full, we'd take the barrel of juice and we'd pour it over into the kiln. Then we started off with some fat lighter wood. Then we add [oak wood 00:29:10] to it and get it to cooking. We had a thing they called a skimmer. When it started boiling we just keep it skim. Then when it get down thick enough for syrup you just dip up a little bit if it drops off slow, well, you know it's time to take it up. Then we have syrup.

Roz: Oh, boy. At what time of the year was this usually done?

Archie: Well, along in -- cane get ripe in October. Then that's the time we'd be making the syrup and killing the hogs and making the sauces.

Roz: Do you know, was this here when the Rossetter's were here?

Archie: Well, it was here when I came here so I guess it had to be here as far as I know. When I started working in 1966, well, all of this was here. They used to have that painted every year, but since everybody got ill, well, it just look bad right now.

Roz: Yeah. This big pot here we can't read the manufacturer on the top of it because it's rusted away. It was manufactured in Savannah, Georgia. It's pretty old. It was placed on some coquina rock base as you see at the bottom.
[00:30:00]

Archie: Right.

Roz: Let's go around the other side. You have some other interesting plants over on the other side here.

Archie: Okay.

Roz: Is this a small magnolia?

Archie: That's a magnolia.

Roz: Did you plant that?

Archie: She had Mr. Nelson set that magnolia out. Yeah.

Roz: What is that plant called over that tree?

Archie: That's a monkey puzzle tree.

Roz: A monkey puzzle tree. That is absolutely a marvelous specimen. How old is that?

Archie: Well, now it was here -- it was a little small tree when I came. So we had a little pack in it to keep it straight. I came in 1966 so I guess that tree about 80 years old.
[00:31:00]

Roz: It's absolutely a marvelous specimen. I see that you have a lot of banana trees and fruit trees on the property.

Archie: Yeah. Well, I started that with one plant. That's bird of paradise.

Roz: Oh, it's a bird of paradise. It's a white bird of paradise. It has several blooms on the top I see.

Archie: Oh, it'll get more of them. I set all of that out. All the cherry bushes, I set all of them out. I stepped, all the palms, I set all of them. Everything you see back there, all but the orange trees, well I set them out.

Roz: Now who's orange trees were they?

Archie: Now that orange tree done fell over that, but Miss Ella and them's dad's tree. I tried to save it with cement, but it done got so old it just done fell over. So I'm going to have to saw it up and put it on the pile.

[00:32:00]

Roz: You told me over here underneath the bush, what was on that pedestal over there?

Archie: A sun dial.

Roz: A sun dial.

Archie: A sun dial. Somebody took the little dial off of it, but there used to be a dial that sits on top of it. You could move it around and tell what time of the day it was.

Roz: The St. Mary was there, was that here since you've been here?

Archie: St. Mary was there, Miss Carrie had me set out them plumbagoes and I got a -- she had me set out a jasmine. Here's the jasmine comes in with them.

Roz: Oh, how lovely.

Lauritz: Why don't we walk over to it.

Roz: Okay.

Archie: She had me to put that on there for her, Miss Carrie.

Roz: Are you still on?

Lauritz: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Roz: Okay.

[00:33:00]

Archie: You can't see the jasmine. I got a jasmine mixed in with this. She had me set all of that where everything would be blooming. The jasmine, see the end of the jasmine over there?

Roz: The jasmine blooms in with the plumbagoes.

Archie: Right.

Roz: That's absolutely lovely. Did you bring them out here quite often?

Archie: Oh, the jasmine? Yeah. Oh, yeah, they come out here all the time and look at this. She

sit on that bench you see right yonder. They all come out here and just look, look, look.

Roz: Let's go around here and you can show me Mr. Rossetter's cherry trees and what's left of his orange tree that he had planted much earlier and a beautiful palm.

Archie: Oh, this is it right here. This tree, but see the wind done blew it over. This one. I put cement in it and had my name and date of birth on it years ago, but all this stuff done fell out.

[00:34:00]

Roz: Can you still see where you put it in there?

Archie: Well, on the front, see all the cement done broke loose.

Roz: Oh, all the cement has broken loose.

Archie: Yeah. They had cement down to the bottom of it, but it all done came out.

Roz: Mr. Rossetter probably put that tree in in the early 1800s; *(Should say 1900's)* right?

Archie: Yeah. Right. She always had wanted me to save it. I had all of this full of cement.

Roz: Tried to save it.

Archie: To try to save it. Now it had oranges on it this year, but now it's gone. The cherry trees there, well, I set all of them out. The freeze kill everything over there. I set all of that out myself. I got just about two old cherry trees left. All of them I started out they were in little cups like this.

Roz: Did the ladies ever make jams or jellies from the cherries?

Archie: She always made guava jelly.

Roz: Guava.

[00:35:00]

Archie: See, I got guava trees here. Now that's one of the old trees. I'll show it to you. You make this over here. Now this thing right here, this is what you call a crown of thorns. On it was way up yonder so I just I cut it all back. This is the crown of thorns here. That's what you read about that in the Bible, I guess for Jesus.

Roz: That actually has fruit on it; doesn't it? Little red fruit?

Archie: Yeah. I eat some. They turn red and I eat it.

Roz: Yeah. That's right. That's right.

Archie: Now this is the old guava tree. She used to make guava off this tree right now. It ain't got not fruit on it. It's blooming, just the large side is guava. That over there, that's a calamondin. She used to make marmalades.

Roz: Oh, orange calamondin tree.

[00:36:00]

Archie: Right. That's the calamondin. No. No. That's a kumquat.

Roz: A kumquat.

Archie: That's a kumquat. I got a calamondin tree on the patio there . That's what you use to put in the drinks, you see. They drank the vodka and the scotch. Now here's full of calamondins now. There ain't nobody here to have the scotch.

Roz: I bet that was a real pleaser, wasn't it?

Archie: Yeah. When they had the parties she'd picked a little bowl full of them. You get on and just squeeze it in the drink. I guess that put the flavor to it.

Roz: It put some flavor to it, yeah. That's absolutely wonderful. Let me just span the house a bit. The portion of the new house that the Rossetter's added on is from the front portion and over to where the setback is over here. There is actually the middle section is a breezeway that connects the 2 buildings together. The old portion of the house is from the breezeway back. As I understand, the original house maybe from the time the Houston's had it, is where the last chimney is up to about approximately 10 foot. Because there is a definite division in the wood inside the house there.

[00:37:00]

As we walk this way you can see where the setback is on the house. It's a clear division where the new house that the Rossetter's added onto the old house is with the setback of the breezeway and the addition of the other chimney on this end. Let's go over to the other section of the yard so you can show us where you used to take Miss Carrie.

Archie: Okay. Now that tree right there.

[00:38:00]

Roz: Yes.

Archie: Miss Ella say that tree they have over in Africa and that's what they used to drink water out of.

Roz: I see. That's a fan palm. It's absolutely --

Archie: You can just stick some right in that little flat part down there, and the water run out just like you're pumping it.

Roz: Oh, really? Isn't that a beautiful specimen.

Archie: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Roz: That's a beautiful specimen of a fan palm. It's lovely. It's huge.

Archie: Yeah. She called it a travelers palm.

Roz: A crabless?

Archie: Palm.

Roz: Oh, travelers palm.

Archie: Right.

Roz: Yes. That's what it is, a travelers palm. Excuse me. Yes.

Archie: It had big blooms on it like that one yonder but they be much larger. She say the people used to drink water out of it over in Africa.

Roz: Isn't that interesting.

Archie: That's an old plant. You can just take a knife and stick down to the edge of there and the water run out of there just like you got a pump turned on.

[00:39:00]

Roz: Isn't that something. Let's go over to the other side.

Archie: Now you see that tree over there yonder with the stickers on it to the bottom?

Roz: Oh, yes.

Archie: Okay. Now that's a medicine. If you got a toothache you can take a piece of the bark and lay it inside your teeth. It'll numb it just like you're going to go to the dentist. That's what you call prickly ash.

Roz: Prickler ash?

Archie: Prickly ash.

Roz: Prickly ash.

Archie: Right.

Roz: Interesting.

Archie: I saved that from a little bush. If she have a toothache just get you the skin on it and lay

it up there and it'll deaden your whole.

Roz: Interesting.

Archie: I could take a bark off of that right now and I deaden your whole tongue.

Roz: Isn't that something. Probably the early pioneers used that in many medicinal purposes; correct?

Archie: Yeah. Miss Ella told me about it and I left it. It done made a big tree. If you ever have a toothache.

Roz: We know where to come; right?

Archie: That'll deaden it.

[00:40:00]

Lauritz: Okay. I got a warning, I need to...

Roz: We're on the north side of the house in these lovely botanical gardens. This is just an absolute beautiful specimen. What do you call this, Archie?

Archie: This is what you call a [brain 00:40:28] cactus. This is a piece I sawed off. After the freeze had killed everything out and I saved one little piece. I started it off in a pot. I taken it out of the pot and Miss Ella wanted me to put it in the ground right here. This is what you call a brain cactus.

Roz: When did you do that approximately?

Archie: '66, I say in -- what year was it the freeze came? What year was that?

[00:41:00]

Roz: In the '80s or the '60s? '60s? '80s?

Archie: Yeah, I think there come 2 freezes. That one killed out everything.

Roz: Yeah. I think that was in the '80s.

Archie: I say about '84.

Roz: '84. That's about right. That's about right. What is this interesting object on the ground down here, Archie?

Archie: That's a pot when I used to clean around the plants I just put it around -- laid it down around the plants just for decoration. Then I have another stone pot here. This pot right here I used to set it out around the bird of paradise when I edge and clean around the bird of paradise. I lay these 2 pots around there right where you see the bird bath, just

for decoration.

Roz: I understand there's an interesting plant down there near the house. Let's walk down there and tell us about that one.

[00:42:00]

Archie: Okay. This plant right here Miss Ella said this was her mother set this plant out. She always tried to protect it. When the freeze came and it killed a large part of it, I sawed it off. I left this part for it to sprout out to try to save the tree cause she always wanted to save this plant. What we're going to do is we're going to try to irrigate it and start it off again.

Roz: What is it called?

Archie: This is what you call a sweet sud tree.

Roz: A sweet syrup tree.

Archie: Sud. Sweet Sud. Sud. Just like a sud.

Roz: Okay. What did you say she used the buds for, the little flowers that came on there?

Archie: Well, she used the buds for perfume. It smell good. Just like you put perfume on. She put in a shirt pockets and use it in the car and it'd smell good like a perfume. That's why they call it sweet sud.
[00:43:00]

Roz: Isn't that wonderful. Well, I hope we can preserve that and start some more being it's so old. That was probably planted here when the Rossetter's built the house in the early 1900s.

Archie: Right. Right. That's the reason I told him to try to save it. She said they're aiming to move all this stuff when they get rid of --

Roz: Up here at the house. Yes.

Archie: Yeah. Going to move all of that.

Roz: Okay. This is interesting over here. Did you build this?

Archie: No. That was here. She had it redid. It's what you call a bird bath.

Roz: A little bird --

Archie: We always keep it -- when I first started here we didn't have sprinkler systems. I always had to hook up hoses and move them in different places. I always made sure I set one of the hoses down here for the bird baths to get full of water. The birds, she'll watch the bird come in and take a bath.

[00:44:00]

Roz: Oh. That's made out of coquina so that's quite old, too.

Archie: Yeah.

Roz: That was probably here at the first part of the 19th century.

Archie: Right. That's it.

Roz: Excuse me, the 20th century, 1900s. Let's walk through here. The next little garden is a pathway that Archie would like to show to us.

Archie: You want to go which way? You want to go through here?

Roz: Yeah, through there will be fine. I understand at one time this used to have quite a few shrimp plants in here.

Archie: Oh, yeah. Used to have plenty of them. I just mowed them down and they ain't never come back.

Roz: What was this called?

Archie: This is what you called a shrimp plant walk.

Roz: Shrimp plant walk.

Archie: Right. That's right. It's a shrimp plant walk.

Roz: I bet this was one of your favorite places to sit?

Archie: Oh, yeah. Miss Ella used to come here and she used to sit on this little -- Miss Ella used to sit on this right here. Sometimes Miss Carrie sit on it when it was good and clean.

Roz: You have a little fish pond in the background there.

Archie: Yep. I used to have a goldfish in it, but the birds came and somebody else came, and took all the fish out. I used to have lily's in there full of bloom and somebody taken them all out.

Roz: Now is the the calamon orange tree?

Archie: This is the calamondin tree.

Roz: Calamondin tree.

Archie: Yeah.

Roz: That makes the best orange marmalade that you would ever want to eat.

Archie: Right. See it have these kinds of things on it. That's the calamondins.

Roz: They're absolutely superb. Delicious taste.

Archie: They always used to get them and put them in the drinks.

[00:46:00]

Roz: Make a good drink. Now we'll go over here. Was there a garden gate over there, Archie, at one time?

Archie: That gate was just there you could [inaudible 00:46:04] and come in. It was never closed in. It was just a gate. That's the way they just had it decorated that way.

Roz: That was just decorated. Okay. I see a gazebo in the background. Let's walk over to the gazebo and you can tell us about the girls coming out and sitting in the gazebo. Then we'll come back this way. This is one of the favorite places for Carrie and Miss Ella to come in the evenings and the afternoons just to relax amongst their plants. I understand, Archie, that Miss Carrie had to you plant the plumbagoes on each side to frame it.

Archie: Yeah. Only the framing. These right here now used to have my measuring stick always cut these back just to 12 inches. Every year she wouldn't let them get. I used to do it by hand.
[00:47:00]

Roz: That was the rule 12 inches high.

Archie: Wide.

Roz: Wide. 12 inches wide. I bet that was a lovely border.

Archie: Right. I had to set them 3 feet apart.

Roz: They were very particular.

Archie: Real particular. They wanted their yard just like they did the house. Clean. You could stay in one spot. Sometime we stay in one spot all day long then come back the next day and finish it. She didn't want you to leave no tracks in it. She didn't want you to leave your tracks in it. Leave it clean.

Roz: What was a typical afternoon out here in the gazebo?

Archie: Well, when me and Miss Ella be out in the yard working Miss Carrie come, that's when they were moved out of here and were living to the boathouse. They had this built here after they moved. This is where Miss Carrie would sit when she'd come by to pick up
[00:48:00]

Miss Ella to take her back home after we get through with work. Miss Carrie sit right here until it's time to go home. Then she'd pick up Miss Ella and take her home. This was always used to be her seat right here. Right over yonder where the bench at they used to have a big mango tree. She used to sit on that bench. This here was her favorite seat when she'd come back to pick Miss Ella up to take her home.

Roz: I see. I know that when Miss Carrie was confined to a wheelchair you brought her out here in the afternoons quite often to see her beautiful flowers and bushes.
[00:49:00]

Archie: Right. Oh, yeah.

Roz: She had a very favorite spot to visit before you took her back in. Why don't you take us there and show us that place now.

Archie: Okay. all right. Okay. Now this is what you call the driftwood walk. She had a plant, this is her favorite plant. I got on this post here growing.

Roz: As I understand this was full lined with pieces of driftwood in here.

Archie: Right. Right. Driftwood were in here. Driftwood were all in here. That's why they named it the driftwood walk. This plant here used to be in the oak tree, but I had to cut it down. To keep from throwing the plant away, this was her favorite plant, so I put it on a post.
[00:50:00] All of this the last place I brought Miss Carrie in her wheelchair so she could watch the bloom on this plant right here. I tell everybody don't do it no harm. I want it to be here.

Roz: I believe that was called yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Archie: Right. That's right.

Roz: It has a beautiful white blossom on it that turns pink, different colors.

Archie: Right. Right. There you go. That's right.

Roz: She used to enjoy watching it turn colors. I imagine that was magnificent when it was all in bloom.

Archie: Yeah. I used to, when it was down low enough I cut her a bouquet and I'd mix it with other plants after she couldn't get out. I took it to her house in High Park Lane about every week when everything get full of blooms always go and take a bouquet of flowers. She couldn't say nothing, but she's just say, "Oh," she'd try to say that. Every time I go there she want me to come and kiss me by the hand. Every time. She couldn't talk, but every time I go over to see her she just do me that way. Then one day she told the lady she said, "Don't bother Archie, because Archie is my man."
[00:51:00]

Roz: Why you took wonderful care of her babies out here. Also, Archie, tell us about your sunflower over here and how you preserved that.

Archie: Well, that sunflower come voluntarily come up. A bird had dropped a seed and one year one came up. One year one came up and Miss Ella liked it. Every year I save one of these plants because Miss Ella always, this was one of her favorite plants. I always leave one or two every year just to remember her.

[00:52:00]

Roz: That's wonderful. I hope that you continue to save the seeds --

Archie: I do, too.

Roz: -- and spread the seeds so you can plant them. I want you to walk over to the back side of the staghorn fern to show the people the limb that that staghorn fern was on. Right over here, Archie.

Archie: Over here?

Roz: Yeah. This was the size of the limb that the staghorn fern was growing on. The weight of the fern brought that down. You can see how the cradle was built to hold it on top of the concrete blocks. It's absolutely magnificent. The log that it is on is just huge. You can see how it's anchored with a chain on the side of it.

[00:53:00]

Archie: Yeah, they chained it down.

Roz: When was that done, approximately? In the '60s also?

Archie: Yeah, this we did in the '60s. Hurricane Donna, there were 2 of them storms. Donna, I believe it was, and this limb broke down. It used to reach all the way across the shrimp plant walk all the way to the far side of the yard over there when it broke down. She hired a fella that run a nursery, Mr. Nelson to come with a crane and first sawed the limb off, just the length to hold the plant on. Then he took a winch and lifted it up and built this block form on it and set it back down on it. That's where it's been ever since. It just keep growing, growing. This thing weigh about 5 tons now.

Roz: Oh, I bet.

Archie: Oh, it will.

[00:54:00]

Roz: Yeah. I bet. That's a beautiful fern that's in back of you. There are many varieties of ferns here.

Archie: Now this is her dad's fern.

Roz: This was Mr. Rossetter's fern.

Archie: Right.

Roz: That's quite old also.

Archie: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Roz: It's lovely. It's absolutely lovely.

Archie: That belonged to her dad. He planted that.

Roz: This little white flower that's on the ground, Archie, that is part of that plant that, is it part of the plant that you have or is it something else?

Archie: No, that just voluntary comes up. I don't plant this.

Roz: That's something that's voluntary.

Archie: That voluntary and comes up; just an old vine.

Roz: I thought it might be something that --

Archie: That's just an old vine. It just voluntarily comes up.

Roz: Okay. Is there anything else that you can think of --

Archie: Now this was Miss Ella's special plant, too. I can't think of the name of it, but she had me put it down in this pot while she was alive. The name of this, I don't know.

Roz: I'm not familiar with it either, but it's lovely.

Archie: She never would get (inaudible 00:54:59) of it.

[00:55:00]

Roz: I'm sure that she was quite a horticulturalist that it was a specimen plant of some type.

Archie: Yeah. Right. She never would get (inaudible 00:55:07) of it.

Roz: Well, she truly has quite a collection of botanicals here and ferns, bromeliads, et cetera. Is there anything that you would like to relay to us about Miss Carrie and Miss Ella so we can -- fond memories that you have?

Archie: Well, there's one thing I can mention, they always were like a mother to me. Anything that I needed they always give it to me. Sometimes it would take them a week to decide on it. They were very close on that, but they never let me suffer for nothing that I need. They didn't want to waste nothing. They didn't want to throw nothing to waste. The last thing she told me, she said, "Okay, now you ain't got nothing to worry about. You'll be getting it as long as you live. Can't nobody else get it but you," and she put in a brown envelope, the last thing she had told me. Well, we added more onto you and said now

[00:56:00]

you ain't got nothing to worry about. That's the conversation we had. They were always just like a mother to me. I never say no to them and they never say no to me.

Roz: What a wonderful relationship. What happened to the Cadillac?

Archie: Well, Mr. Potter asked me did I want to buy it. I told him no, but I had liked that car. That's what I used to chauffeur them in.

Roz: Yeah. What did it look like, Archie?

Archie: Oh, it was beautiful. I broke that Cadillac in. I broke it in. That's what I used to chauffeur them around in.

Roz: What year was it?

Archie: That was '87.

Roz: '87 Cadillac.

Archie: '87 Cadillac. Yep. That's what I used to take them all around in to their parties and everything. I did that and the last thing that happened when she stopped driving they hired a lady called Annette. She started driving them around then after she had an accident in the first one where she broke her ankle. Let's see, she broke her ankle and had a knot on her head. Then after that they hired a lady to come in just to help see about the house

Roz: Like a caretaker.

Archie: Caretaker started off doing day work, but as she got weaker and Miss Ella got weaker she started staying in day and night. That's the way it's been. She stayed there, I guess, Annette stayed there about 6 or 7 years. Then she started driving and taking them then. Again, I just done the yard work by myself because Miss Ella would come down, but she couldn't do nothing but sit on that little stool and watch me work.

[00:58:00]

Roz: Well, it's understandable that you and the girls had a wonderful working relationship. You were dear friends and companions and you enjoyed each other's company and hospitality.

Archie: Yep. She tell everybody I was their family.

Roz: You were their family.

Archie: I was treated that way.

Roz: That's wonderful.

Archie: That's right.

Roz: That's wonderful.

Archie: That's right.

Roz: Well, thank you so much, Archie for being with us today.

Archie: I'm glad to do it. Glad to do it.

Roz: May I ask your age?

Archie: 73.

Roz: 73. Well God blesses and I know that -- what's in the future for you? Are you going to retire now? Again?

Archie: They asked me to stay on down here with them. They said they were going to get me some help. I ain't got it yet. This one time this 1 fella came and cut -- see they wouldn't never let me do no climbing of the trees. They always hired somebody else to do that.
[00:59:00] He did hire a guy to come down here and help me trim the trees and cut all of this out. Other than that I ain't had no more help. It all depends.

Roz: If you get some help or not; right.

Archie: If I get some help. I love to -- I don't work but three days no way. That's to keep me in action. If they want me to do so, I will, but I'll be glad when they get me what I got coming to me if they did right.

Roz: Yeah. I'm sure it will. I'm sure the girls have taken care of that.

Archie: Have to do it that way I won't have nothing to worry about. I can take me a vacation.

Roz: There you go, and go fishing; right.

Archie: Go fishing.

Roz: Thank you so much.

Archie: Glad to do so.

Roz: It's been an absolute pleasure talking with you, Archie.

Archie: Yeah. I hope a lot of this stuff stay here because that's what they liked. My ways I got are their ways. I don't want to see nothing happen to it.

Roz: Well, God's blessings, Archie.

Archie: Thank you.

Roz: Thank you. That was wonderful.

[01:00:00]

Speaker 5: Okay. My name is Vera Zimmerman. I'm a member of the Indian River Anthropological Society. Our group has been asked to do a survey of the yard of the Rossetter house before they start digging up the ground and disturbing any evidence that might be here of any previous habitation. We've started right close around the house. We laid out 10 meter squares on the whole property, and then divided it up into 1 meter squares with a string. We go through with a metal detector and a probe marking whatever we find looking for patterns that might show, perhaps, old house foundations, an old well, maybe an old kitchen.

[01:01:00]

We know that at one time on the property there was another house and a separate kitchen. It may have been from the time when John Carol Houston lived here. He came in 1859. We hoped to find some evidence of early settlement of the Civil War period. We've also been doing a shovel test at each corner going down in 10 meter increments and recording what we found. We found lots of little metal fragments, some shell, some bits of gravel. About the only real historic stuff we found so far is a fragment of a plate with a design on it, probably from the 1880s, and a button. A bone button that could be from the 1870s. Those are the only 2 things we found so far.

[01:02:00]

We've got a lot of work to do doing all of the shovel tests. Then eventually when they get it all mapped out they'll pick a 1 meter square area to do an excavation on and see maybe what some of these metal detector hits are showing. Some of the areas where there seems to be a lot of material; maybe a well or a privy where people would have thrown away a lot of their trash. That's all I can think of.

[01:03:00]

The front portion of the house that we think of as the front portion today was built by James Rossetter in 1907. It faces on Highland Avenue. He built it near a house that was already on the property that is probably from John Carol Houston period, and then connected the 2 with a breezeway that was eventually closed in. The breezeway is not exactly square because the original house faced on Houston Street and they're not parallel. Houston Street was parallel with the River and Highland Avenue was surveyed in later and was more north-south. The breezeway in the middle is a trapezoid.

[01:04:00]

The back section of the Rossetter house was actually the front section of the Houston house. You can see the 2 old chimneys all plastered over. The very far east room first floor is the oldest room. It's different. The wood is different. It's definitely earlier. It was added onto. They don't have an exact date for it, but it was before 1880.

The earliest picture that we found of the house appears to be taken about 1910 judging from the ages of the children in the picture. At that time Highland Avenue was a dirt road. In this particular picture there's a dog lying right in the middle of the road and he doesn't look like he's moved for a while. There was a chicken wire fence across the front

instead of the cast iron fence that's there now. The next picture we have is maybe 1915. Everything is still the same, except there's a hog wire fence across the front. We don't see pictures with the cast iron fence until after the 1930s.

[01:05:00]

James Rossetter bought the property from the Houston family in 1903. His 2 daughters, Carrie and Ella, lived here until just the last few years. They were both very much interested in plants and they planned a formal garden here on the north side. You can see on the left the older portion of the house, which was the Houston house, and the old front door right in the side. The address is still 1380 Houston Street, the same address that it was when the Houston's were here.

[01:06:00]

This is the Houston Street side of Rossetter house. The room on the first floor on this side appears to be the oldest part of the building. The woodwork inside is definitely of a different measurement. You can see where it was added onto immediately behind. It's assumed that this was one of the Houston family's homes. They originally built log cabins in 1859. John Houston's daughter memoirs say that it took them a year to build cabins for John Houston and his son and his 10 slaves that he brought here from Enterprise.

Later they built a wood frame house with wood that was washed up from a shipwreck. That happened sometimes after 1865. Laura Houston, Braddock's mother, died living in that house in 1885. It's believed that this may be that house.