

## **Video #1**

Jacoby: "OK, so today is October 17, Monday, and I'm sitting here with—I'll let you folks introduce yourselves. So, I guess I was just going to ask you to tell me your name and your birthdate and birthplace, if that's OK?"

S. Williams: "I'm Susie Williams. I was born in Los Angeles in May of 1931. I am the great-niece of Henry...I mean, excuse me, William H. Ellis. And I'm here with Professor Jacoby. And I'm trying to help him with some research in history of my uncle, great-uncle."

J. Williams: "OK. I'm Joan Moore Williams and I am a native Angeleno also, born July 1932. And as Susie stated, we're here to facilitate your notes and to enjoy what the rest of the day will bring."

Jacoby: "And so how did you both hear about William Ellis for the first time when you were kids?"

S. Williams: "Well, I remember hearing about it through my grandmother, Fanny Ellis, who was his sister, his younger sister. And she talked about her brother, but they called him Willie; they didn't call him William. And she talked about all his adventures from a young man until his death. I also learned about it through my mother, after he died, about how he died in Mexico, and how they did not hear from him after his death, from his family, basically."

J. Williams: "I remember hearing about him mostly from my mother, and in my mind, he was always this mysterious character that was off doing wonderful things, mysterious things. And...but then in those years, many times children were to be seen and not heard, so some of the questions we might have had weren't always answered, because—I don't know if they just didn't want to give the answers or they just left it alone."

Jacoby: "Were there pictures of him in the house?"

J. Williams: "In an album, but not up on the wall like the immediate family."

Jacoby: "What pictures were in the album?"

S. Williams: "Yes, yes, there was. There was a picture with his father, with the cape on, he was on a picture..."

J. Williams: "Oh, in grandmother's house, but not in the house I grew up in."

S. Williams: "At grandmother's house. Right."

Jacoby: "The grandmother would be...?"

S. Williams: "Fanny."

J. Williams: "Fanny, yes."

Jacoby: "Fanny. OK."

S. Williams: "She had a picture of him in a frame, a gold [unintelligible] frame, and it was Uncle Willie, his father Charles, sitting in the chair, and it was the two little boys. I do remember that being framed and on the wall."

J. Williams: "That's true, and what added to the mystique of that picture was that the clothing of that period was always so beautiful, with scalloped collars and great coats and top hats and all of that. So that just added to the mystery of it for me."

Jacoby: "I've seen that picture, I was going to ask you guys about that picture, because it was taken in Mexico City, actually..."

S. Williams: "Oh, was it? See, I didn't even remember that."

Jacoby: "And I was trying to—I just wondered if you knew, sort of, the circumstances, obviously...?"

S. Williams: "No, I think that Uncle Willie was a man who wanted his father's approval. Of everything he did. Now, why? I don't know if that was something just in him from youth, but it seemed like the few things that I've been able to read about him, or hear about him, and the pictures, and just from the way he would sign the pictures, *to Papa*, and it just said to me that he wanted his dad to be proud of him and his doings and what he was doing. And he wanted his father to know his grandchildren. That's the feeling I got, from a lot of the talk too, you know? Because he was always, in writing letters to my grandmother Fanny, about his father, regarding his father. Even up to what he was doing, you know? And he wanted to know how his father was, and tell Papa this, and tell Papa that, so that's what makes me think that he needed his father's approval. For whatever, I don't know, you know, since I didn't know the man personally. You know, it's just my own observation."

Jacoby: "One thing I was wondering too about that photo, since they're meeting in Mexico City: did William come back to Victoria or San Antonio much to see his family? Do you know?"

S. Williams: "Yes, he came back because he had a problem with the railroads, the segregation of the railroad car. That I do know. I don't know how often he came back, but I know he did come back there until, I guess, his father passed away. Now, I don't think he ever came to California to see his family. But they had just moved here about the same time; I think they'd only been here a couple of years when he passed away. So who knows, he might have."

Jacoby: "And you were telling me earlier at one point you asked your mother or grandmother about what ethnicity was William Ellis..."

S. Williams: "Yes."

Jacoby: "What answer...what was that story?"

S. Williams: "Well, they said he was, um...that he...well how did they...? Let me explain. Because he was on Wall Street, and that was so unusual at that time of the century, they said that the people in New York, and the people he were dealing with, did not really know who he was, his ethnicity. They wondered. And many of them said he was Cuban, some said he was mulatto, some said he was...there were a few that said he was mixed Afro-American. But he never acknowledged any of it. He just let them assume what he was, you know? And my mother, of course, visited him in New York—twice. My mother went to New York and stayed there with him, and I think he was in White Plains, or...?"

Jacoby: "Mount Vernon."

S. Williams: "Mount Vernon, yes, OK. I guess her brother was in the other city. I remember the two cities, though. But she visited him twice in New York."

J. Williams: "And that would not have necessarily been a tell-tale of what his race was because many people never knew what my mother was. And so you find that when you can fall into any group, that you just let people assume what they want to assume."

S. Williams: "Right."

Jacoby: "I was wondering if that was one reason he didn't visit his family in Texas sometimes, because it might be that that would...There's always these questions when people are, you know, passing about what the relationship is with the rest of the family."

S. Williams: "That's true. That's very true. So I don't know. Of course, his mother had died, so he wouldn't be worried about going to see his mother, necessarily. And he may...written and telegram. I do know he probably used the telegraph system to contact his family."

J. Williams: "But I would think being the kind of man that he was, he wouldn't care, really, what other people thought. That's how I see him. I think that he would have done what he wanted to do and then just let people..."

S. Williams: "Suffer the consequences."

J. Williams: "Well, no, I think he would let people assume what they wanted to ass-...and he would just keep on stepping, is the word. Really. It's how I view him."

S. Williams: "You might be right."

Jacoby: "And so, also, Susie you were telling me earlier, said that you sometimes asked your mother: what was Willie doing in Mexico? And what did she tell you when you asked her that kind of question?"

S. Williams: "She really didn't know. All she could say was that he had been there. And I couldn't get a lot out of them about Uncle Willie because at one point, when he died, I think they thought somebody had killed him. Because it was just during or before the uprising there in Mexico. With Porfirio Diaz? Or was it...whoever was that was..."

Jacoby: "Mexican Revolution."

S. Williams: "Yeah. Thank you. The Mexican Revolution. I think down deep they thought there was some...something that was not on the up-and-up, and that the Mexican government was not telling his family. That's the feeling I got from my mother. Now, I don't know whether she thought about that, or whether his wife put that in my mother's mind that that could possibly be, I don't know. I really don't. Because I really was surprised when I saw your first documents, that he died of heart attack. Because they made it sound like..."

J. Williams: "Mysterious."

S. Williams: "...he died mysteriously. They really did, didn't they Joan?"

J. Williams: "Mhm, I do remember that. And again, they didn't talk about it that much because that wasn't...they didn't...I'm sure they did not want us to have a view of him as being unsavory in any way."

Jacoby: "What do you think the family's sort of general attitude towards him was? I mean, was it proud, because he's doing these exciting things, or was it...did you have any sense of..."

S. Williams: "No, I never get...did you ever get that feeling?"

J. Williams: "That they were proud of him?"

S. Williams: "Mhm."

J. Williams: "Yeah, I think they were proud of him. Because he was able to travel the world, so to speak. In those days, that was exceptional. And people living in a little town in Texas, and they've got a relative that's out and about, and doing things, they had to be very proud of him."

S. Williams: "And another thing: he did send home a lot of things, souvenirs, artifacts..."

Jacoby: "Oh, like what?"

S. Williams: "Well, I can remember a cane that he sent to somebody. Maybe it was to his father; I don't know who he sent it to. But it was in my grandmother's house. And I can remember some other...like a...made out of some kind of woolen material that they had that he had sent from Ethiopia, I think. And there were several things in her house that I remember came from Uncle Willie. But, you know, to this day, I don't remember them

and don't even know where they are, you know, for that matter. But I can remember them talking about the things he brought back from Ethiopia."

J. Williams: "His travels."

S. Williams: "Yeah, from his travels."

Jacoby: "And then a lot of the documents, or at least in a lot of the newspaper coverage of him, they often described him as Mexican, right. And as you mentioned, Cuban earlier. So I guess, obviously it seems like the family knew he was sometimes either consciously or just letting people do this, right?"

S. Williams: "And then now when I think about it, it's like Joan said, when he...if he spoke Spanish, which I'm sure he did, pretty fluently, then there would be, you know...you wouldn't think anything about the fact that he could be Mexican, or part Mexican. Or Cuban, or part Cuban, you know."

J. Williams: "Well, the thing is, the majority group generally thinks of Afric-...of Negroes in those years, or black people, as having a certain look and type. And if you don't fit that..."

S. Williams: "Box."

J. Williams. "...that box, really, then you've got to be something else, because they don't want to accept that you are African-American or black or whatever you're calling yourself at the moment. And so it's very easy just to move in any circle you want to move in."

S. Williams: "Right. It's amazing to me to see the people that it has so much influence in this American history, that he was involved with. That they...evidently he had a personality or charisma or something, that people must have taken to him. That's the kind of feeling I got. Because...I didn't have it when I was young, because it didn't occur to me, but after reading so much of the articles about him and the things he did, I just...I think, well he must have been a real fascinating man even though he didn't necessarily have the success he wanted with his colonization, all that sort of thing. But he must have had something that people were drawn to, or he was able to make them believe in, you know, that's kind of the way I look at it. And I don't know, I could be wrong, but I don't know the man, you know, personally. But that's kind of...I would love to have known him, you know? Really."

J. Williams: "Well, I think in other members of the family speaking of him, it was kind of like in awe. And so, it made him special, that who is this person? And in fact I had the same feeling about my mother's brother, who also took off and lived what I think is a full life, but not in Texas, in other parts of the world. So Uncle Willie clearly drew people to him. Otherwise, how do you pick up and leave your home and start a new colony and do all these other things if you don't feel that this person that is needing you there is somebody that you want to follow?"

Jacoby: "So he's born in Victoria in 1864. And I was just curious if you had any family stories about Victoria. Anything about..."

S. Williams: "Only they talked about Victoria, didn't they Joan? They talked about Victoria. But to me...I don't know, I just never asked them a lot of questions about Victoria. They talked about Victoria, I knew Uncle Willie's daughter was born...was named Victoria and assuming he named her after the place where he was born, that I concluded myself, you know, but...Well, my mother mentioned my grandfather having property down near Port Lavaca, which is down in the same general area, and they had a hurricane, and the property was washed away, and she would talk about going to Port Lavaca, which is in that same general area, for summers."

J. Williams: "Well, what I remember is these names that were all foreign to me. Galveston, going to Galveston, Texas for the summer. And...I don't have the recall of it that Susie does. Both sides of the family being from Texas, I was always getting Victoria mixed up with Navasota and the rest of them. So Victoria, I knew that was where my mother's family was from. But other than that..."

Jacoby: "You guys had been saying earlier that there'd been a certain reticence to talk about slavery and that part of the past for people who'd been in there. Does that seem true, or...?"

S. Williams: "I think...You know, Karl, I think that most African-Americans are from that ethnicity (even if you aren't totally African-American), they tended not to want to talk about slavery issues, and relate what went on. I took it to mean because whatever happened was distasteful, ugly, and they didn't want to have anything...they were not slaves anymore, and they were living their lives now and going forward, and you didn't hear a lot of talk about what went on, did you?"

J. Williams: "No, in those years you didn't. But I think what's wonderful is that, in today's world, there is that interest, and we have decided as individuals that, you know what? That was our history, and that's just a part of who we are, and it's kind of like, that...I'm black and I'm proud. And it's also when black people quit straightening their hair and wore their hair in a natural state for a period of time (and now of course, it's quite fancy with all the African braids and everything). But it was like, you know what? This is who we are and I'm proud and we all...when you sit around with the group of black people, we all have in our background this same slavery thing, and so the younger you are, and the awareness you have of it, you talk about it. But the old folks, no."

S. Williams: "They didn't talk about it."

J. Williams: "They didn't talk about it."

S. Williams: "To the point where you would have...Another thing they used to do: everybody was cousin, you know? And one time I asked my mom, how come all these people are cousins? How are they cousins to us? Well then she explained it to me: they were all from the same plantation. And so they weren't biologically cousins, but they

called each other cousins, you know? And that was a revelation to me too, because, you know, and I mean: how are these people related to us?"

J. Williams: "Well, and going back to that other question about talking about slavery, the older folks talking about slavery: I think because of some of the children that were born out of wedlock..."

S. Williams: "Oh yeah, that's the other thing."

J. Williams: "...created by the power that was in place and the slaves, that was something that it happened, they could not have been proud of it, but they embraced the children and loved the children, and so you go on from there, but you don't talk about it."

S. Williams: "And then see, United States had the rule, the one-drop rule: if you were one 32<sup>nd</sup> black, you're black. So those people that were fair enough to look like they might be Caucasian or French or whatever, Italian, then if they could do better in their lives, they went ahead and did it, but you didn't despair them of doing it. So you just didn't talk about it, you know? I know that's for a fact, the way they thought about it. Not just in my family, but in families that they were in our lives, you know, other families."

Jacoby: "That you knew about."

S. Williams: "Yeah, I knew about them, and the thing is, when these families would come around to visit us, from Victoria or from San Antonio..."

J. Williams: "From Utah."

S. Williams: "Yeah, I told you about *that*. Then they were cousin and uncle and that's what you referred to them, you gave them the handle. You know, you didn't call them mister and missus, you called them cousins. Cousin Ann, or Cousin Mary, or whatever."

J. Williams: "Cousin Janey."

S. Williams: "Yeah."

Jacoby: "And then...but obviously your family did...you knew enough that you knew that the family had probably been on the Wizeger [sp?] Plantation in Victoria?"

S. Williams: "Yes, yeah. The thing is that here again, the name that I remember my...thinking my grandmother said was Whittier. And then this 'cousin' whose family was on the same plantation, she corrected me and told me the name was Wizeger. And that's how I found that out. Yeah, they did mention the name, but I misunderstood. See, I thought they said Whittier."

Jacoby: "Did they say anything about what the family was like or anything, or was it just the name of the place?"

S. Williams. "No, no. No, they never...no. They never said anything. Did they?"

J. Williams: "No, not that I recall."

S. Williams: "I don't remember them saying anything. I guess they were so happy to be in Texas, and not in Kentucky, because now when I think about it, I wish I had asked my grandmother how did they get from Kentucky to Texas, it never occurred to me to ask them, you know? And my mother never discussed it. She never discussed it either."

Jacoby: "And then, so...this sort of touches on what Joan was talking about, sort of some of the difficult aspects of the slavery period, but do you know where the Ellis name came from? How that came into the family?"

S. Williams: "I have no idea."

Jacoby: "Well isn't there a story about this, or...no? The overseer, or was that not...?"

S. Williams: "I would love to...I asked my cousin Mamie, who was Jody H. Ellis's niece, about the ethnicity, and she told me that her mother, who was Isabelle, told her that it was...that they were the product of the overseer...Charles Ellis was the product of the overseer, and he was Spanish, Afro-American, Spanish, and I think she said English. I'm going to find it. I have it here. I just don't want...I think I put it here with a book of mine. Because I wrote it down, you know. But she told me that. And she asked her mother, and I would figure that Aunt Belle would know. Of course that was her father, so she would know probably more than I would know, or maybe, her daughter. Don't you think?"

J. Williams: "Hope so."

S. Williams: "Right."

Jacoby: "And then, in the 1870 census (so this was like one of the first censuses we can find Charles and the family there), Charles was a shoemaker? I was curious if there was any...if you knew anything about how he learned shoemaking."

S. Williams: "I don't know. He must have trained under some probably German that could do it, taught him how to do it."

J. Williams: "Well those were trades that many of the people learned just to survive, they..."

S. Williams: "Well, that was their work."

J. Williams: "Yeah, living on a plantation, you know. Just making the shoes for the other slaves."

Jacoby: "And then, Charles had a brother named William."

S. Williams: "That I know."

Jacoby: "Right. And did you know anything about William? It's interesting, I mean William...Charles obviously named William H. Ellis after his brother."

S. Williams: "That I figured out. But yes, I didn't know...we didn't know William, but we knew William's son, Ernest. And he moved and lived in Salt Lake City, Utah, pretty much, I guess, the rest of his adult life."

J. Williams: "Right. And I could remember when he showed up at our house at 527, and of course, as a child hearing about all the Mormons are in Salt Lake, and I'm looking at him and thinking, you know..."

S. Williams: "Well he wasn't a Mormon."

J. Williams: "Well, whatever, he was still living in an area that there weren't any...there weren't many black people..."

## Video #2

Jacoby: "So, let me just start with the question again. So I was asking you about, I think, William Ellis is what I was asking you about, the...Charles's brother."

S. Williams: "Oh yeah, we were talking about William. His...William's son, Ernest...I don't know how many children William had. But I'm sure he had more than just Ernest. But he lived in Salt Lake City."

J. Williams: "But Ernest was the only one that we were acquainted with."

S. Williams: "Yeah. Right. I mean the rest of them probably were still in Victoria or wherever."

J. Williams: "Or they might have been passing."

S. Williams: "Hm?"

J. Williams: "The rest of the children might have passed."

S. Williams: "Oh, that's true too."

J. Williams: "Because there was nothing about him that looked like a black man."

S. Williams: "Yeah, that's right. He looked Caucasian."

Jacoby: "So, William Henry Ellis was not the only member of the family to pass sometimes. Is that...is that true?"

S. Williams: "Well, I don't know that William...you mean my uncle Willie?"

Jacoby: "I mean William, William Henry...Uncle Willie. Uncle Willie. That's what we're calling him, yeah."

S. Williams: "Uncle Willie we're talking about. OK."

Jacoby: "...was not the only member of the family to do that."

S. Williams: "Oh no, no, I'm sure...I know there were others because my mother told about a cousin that passed, and moved to Louisiana—New Orleans to be specific. And I think they were in the banking business or something, she said. This gentleman that she married and went to New Orleans with. But you know, I don't remember the name."

Jacoby: "And then, Charles's wife was Margaret Nelson, born in Kentucky according to the census information. And I guess I didn't know if you knew anything more about her. Was she also on one of the Wizeger plantations, do you think?"

S. Williams: "Yes, as far as I knew, that's how they knew each other there, and my mother said (or my grandmother said, really) that she worked in the field there on the plantation. And they married, Charles and Margaret married, at age 16. Now, my grandmother Elizabeth was their first child, so let's say she had to been born maybe when Margaret was 17. So I was curious about, was Elizabeth born in Kentucky or was she born in Victoria? I mean, I could get probably a death certificate and find out, but I mean I just don't know. But I kind of thought maybe they were all born, and they had gone on to Victoria."

Jacoby: "I think they...the Wizeger...well, you can't trace the Ellis families easy. The Wizeger family moves to Victoria in 1853."

S. Williams: "Oh, well, OK."

Jacoby: "...and then she's born in about 1858 or something, so I think she was born in Victoria."

S. Williams: "Yeah. Yeah, right, right. Right, so she was born in Victoria, yeah."

Jacoby: "Yeah, yeah. That's my guess. I don't know, but..."

S. Williams: "That's interesting. Very interesting."

Jacoby: "Did they have...did they know anything else about Margaret?"

S. Williams: "She died on Christmas Eve, I can tell you that. My mother used to talk about the grandmother, her grandmother dying on Christmas Eve, and that...They'd said she died from indigestion, but my mom said I'm sure it was a heart attack. And today, you know, today it would have been probably a heart attack."

J. Williams. "Or reflex. Or reflex."

S. Williams: "Well, she wouldn't have died from reflex, but...But they said indigestion, she said. They claimed that's what she died from. But I do remember her saying she died on Christmas Eve."

Jacoby: "So then 1880 census, it has Charles Ellis being a washerman?"

S. Williams: "What does that mean?"

Jacoby: "I think washing clothes."

S. Williams: "Oh really?"

Jacoby: "And Mary his mother is living with them, and they're washing clothes too. I was just wondering if there was any...if anyone knew anything about this. No?"

S. Williams: "I never heard anything of that."

Jacoby: "And was there anything...did people know any...say anything ever about Mary, who would have been Charles's mother? Because she did live with the family, assumingly."

S. Williams: "No. I don't remember that either."

Jacoby: "And then, by the 1890s—late 80s, early 90s—William H. Ellis, Uncle Willie, would have been involved in politics in Texas, with Republican politics, with Norris Cuney and also Bishop Turner. I don't know, again, if the family ever mentioned anything about any of that?"

S. Williams: "Well, you see, my mother was born 1895. So he was involved in all that before she came into the world. And possibly because her mother died, you know she wouldn't be so privy to a lot of information as a young, young child. I'm sure my mother got a lot of it as she got older, and of course I told you she went to visit Uncle Willie like at age 17 or 18. And she made two trips. Because I think her idea was to go to Julliard School of Music. But I don't know what happened behind that. You know, I mean, I don't know what happened that she couldn't get in, or I don't know. But I do know that was part of why she was in New York, was thinking about going to Julliard. In fact, see, my mother met this black producer musician, H. T. Burley [sp?], who was a well-known black musician, and..."

J. Williams: "Composer."

S. Williams: "Hm?"

J. Williams: "A composer."

S. Williams: "Yeah. Right. But I don't know all the little details, because of course she came back to San Antonio after making these trips, at some point met my father, and they got married. So I don't know how much my mother knew, to tell you the truth."

Jacoby: "So you mentioned San Antonio. At some point, the family moves from Victoria to San Antonio. And do you know when and why that happened?"

S. Williams: "I don't have a clue. The only thing I can tell you that I think could be: Elizabeth's husband, which was my grandfather G. J. Stearns [sp?], became a medical doctor. Now maybe he felt his treating people medically would be better in a bigger city and possibly that was the draw to San Antonio."

### Video #3

Jacoby: "OK, this is the morning of October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011, I'm Karl Jacoby and I'm sitting here with three lovely ladies. I'm going to introduce yourselves and explain your connection to William H. Ellis."

S. Williams: "I'm Susie Moore Williams, and William H. Ellis was my mother's brother...my mother's uncle. So he is my great-uncle."

Griffin: "I'm Fanny Johnson Griffin, and my connection to William H. Ellis is that he was my great-uncle on my mother's side."

J. Williams: "And I'm Joan Moore Williams, and I am also these ladies' sister, and I...Uncle Willie was my mother's uncle, my great-uncle."

Jacoby: "So one question I'd had was about the church, what church your family belonged to in either Victoria or San Antonio, and why they joined that particular church, if you know."

Griffin: "I do know that...I don't know in Victoria, but I do know that they were Methodists. I don't know exactly the name of the church, but I also know that in San Antonio, they belonged to Saint Paul's Methodist church."

S. Williams: "Correct."

Jacoby: "And then, just for the record, the cemetery where Charles and Margaret were buried is in San Antonio?"

Griffin: "In San Antonio, and it's what they used to say 'out' on Fredericksburg Road, and I do think it was called the Fredericksburg Cemetery. At that time, it was a long way out, but now I'm sure it isn't."

S. Williams: "No."

Jacoby: "And I guess, again for the record, there was some question about whether that was the colored cemetery or the white cemetery? Do you know anything about that?"

Griffin: "I'm not sure, but I think that some relatives ended up in the white cemetery, and some ended up in the black cemetery. But I'm really not sure about Mary and Charles."

Jacoby: "And then, do you...what...What was Charles doing in San Antonio? Do you know?"

S. Williams: "What'd you say?"

Jacoby: "What was Charles doing in San Antonio?"

Griffin: "What kind of work, you mean?"

Jacoby: "Yeah."

Griffin: "Um..."

S. Williams: "I don't know what work...was he...? I don't know."

Jacoby: "OK."

S. Williams: "I never heard them say."

J. Williams: "I would assume he was retired."

Griffin: "Somehow I think he had something to do with being..."

S. Williams: "Painting."

Griffin: "...like taking care of houses, or that kind of thing, you know? I'm not sure exactly how, but..."

J. Williams: "Like a carpenter?"

S. Williams: "No."

Griffin: "I don't know. Let me...I can recall later. I'm not sure exactly."

Jacoby: "And then a lot of family members went to university in Tennessee? It seems like that generation...William Ellis seems to have gone to university in Tennessee? I was just wondering if you had any thoughts about what school that might have been, and what he might have studied."

Griffin: "I don't know anything about him going to university in Tennessee, not William Ellis. I know that my mother's father went to the university in Tennessee, but I don't know about William Ellis."

S. Williams: "Well, I remember my grandmother Fanny talking about going to Tennessee Normal School, which became Tennessee State University. That I do know."

J. Williams: "That's where *she* went."

S. Williams: "Yeah, that's where *she* went."

J. Williams: "Right, right. That's where Fanny went."

Griffin: "Yeah."

J. Williams: "OK."

S. Williams: "And Avalonia. They both studied home economics. And I think Fanny studied some type of nursing, too. But Avalonia became a very...proficient seamstress, and taught sewing in the public schools in San Antonio. That I do know. In fact, Avalonia was working for the San Antonio public schools when she passed away I think in 1939, there in San Antonio."

Jacoby: "And just for the record, because I think you told me this a few minutes ago, but the...that photo that you have of the whole family of Charles Ellis, and with pretty much all his children except for William Ellis, right, there's also the white woman who's in that photo too. And so it seems like we finally remembered her name, is it..."

S. Williams: "Blanche."

Jacoby: "And she was boarding with the family?"

S. Williams: "She lived with them just like she was part of the family, extended family. And they all called her Aunt Blanche. And she called Charles 'Papa' like the rest of them. And she just wasn't a blood relative, but how she got with them, I don't even know. Because on your map of the San Antonio plots, acreage...I mean, land...you know...parcels, she had...she owned one, I guess. And one of the sisters I guess inherited it."

Griffin: "Well, I think when Charles died he divvied up some of that land to give to them. Yeah, so he...to each one of the women. Daughters, rather. And so Blanche, I think became one that also got some land."

J. Williams: "It seems to me (and I think this story came from Mamie McHorderer [sp?], Isabelle's daughter, that Blanche came to the family because she had been ill, I believe, and came there and was being attended to by...my grandfather, I think. And that...this is...And so being there in the home and being with the family on a daily basis, she was welcomed into the family.)"

Jacoby: "So she could have been a tuberculosis patient, or something."

J. Williams: "Right, right. Exactly."

Jacoby: "Yeah, that makes sense. And then...OK, I'm just trying to...realizing there's a lot to know about San Antonio. And I'd...after we...We spoke a fair amount about San Antonio yesterday, but there are a couple of sort of little silly questions that occurred to me later, actually when Susie and I were talking last night, I was wondering if the family...you know...whether they ate Mexican food, or if they liked Mexican food, yeah?"

Griffin: "Well, I'm pretty...I...from all that...you know...I heard them talk about that pretty much they did eat a lot of what we quote unquote call 'Mexican food.' You know, they cooked a lot of chili things..."

S. Williams: "Enchiladas..."

Griffin: "...and, you know, tortillas and all that kind of thing. Yeah, they did. In fact, you know, so much so that in all the way down to my generation, that was the first thing my mother taught me to make, was chili."

J. Williams: "And it is clearly a kind of Texas chili, which is different from what I have in...here in California. And when people eat my chili they tell me, 'oh this is so good, it's just, it's not like...it's OK, I guess. Whatever I put in the pot...put in the pot.'"

Jacoby: "Because the other thing I was noticing too about sort of Spanish influences is Elizabeth's middle name, Raina, which means queen, so obvious-...I'm guessing that someone in the family had some awareness of Spanish to figure that out."

S. Williams: "Could be."

Griffin: "Well I just thing being where it was in San Antonio, there was that sort of, you know, overlap of a lot of the Spanish languages."

S. Williams: "And she was born in Victoria, which is very Spanish, you know? Latino."

J. Williams: "Very beautiful name, Elizabeth Raina?"

S. Williams: "Well, I think my great-grandmother gave all of her girl children, female children, odd names. I mean different names, I should say. Fanny, Finny, Fern, you know, and...my grandmother, Elizabeth Nobel...Elizabeth Raina Nobel Ellis, and Avalonia...I don't even remember Avalonia's middle name now. I saw it, but I don't remember what it was."

Jacoby: "And then...I think I asked you...I'll just ask you this question again because Fanny's here, it's a sort of interesting one...So when the family moves from San Antonio to Los Angeles, do you know just sort of why that happened and what the story is there?"

Griffin: "I think basically it started with my mother who was young and newly married, in around 1921. My father was running what they called on the railroad, he was a cook on the railroad, came to California and came to Colorado on the train, working, and really liked it, and said to my mother, you know, 'I want...I want to take my fam...oh, well, you, as my wife, to California, and when we have children, they'll be raised there. So that's what they did. So once they were here, then my mother's mother followed, and her father followed, and my mother's Aunt Belle followed, so they all begin to come to California."

Jacoby: "And did they encounter like less, you think, better job opportunities, less segregation, a nicer climate?"

Griffin: "You know, obviously there was segregation in California at that point in terms of, you know, where you could buy a home and so forth, but on the other hand my mother's father, Green Joseph Stearns, who was a doctor, he was able to establish a business, a profession in Los Angeles, and my father was able to have work in a post office, and the only thing...my mother was a schoolteacher, trained schoolteacher, and she was not able to teach school in Los Angeles, they...you know, the only way she could go down toward El Centro or somewhere like that and teach. And so she didn't want to do that, but you know, the community that they started out in was a very, you know, growing community of people immigrating into Los Angeles, and, you know, finding jobs and making homes and families, so..."

J. Williams: "Part of the reason, though, that my mother wasn't able to obtain a teaching job within the city...my mother was crippled."

S. Williams: "No, that had nothing to do with it."

J. Williams: "I always heard that...that they had told her that she would have to go outside of the city because they felt that it would be a distraction for her to...my mother walked with a crutch. And it would be a distraction. Now, whether that's true or not I don't know, but I know for so many years, people with disabilities were turned away for whatever reason, I mean they thought they weren't capable or something. So it makes sense to me that they would have...that she may have really been turned away for that reason. I mean she had all the certification for it, in those years I know many women of color were hired as teachers, but they had to teach in a given area, they didn't have the luxury of teaching throughout the city. And so, who knows."

Jacoby: "And then...what was I going to say?...So we spoke a lot yesterday about Victoria, so I...but I just...since Fanny wasn't here, I guess I just wondered if Fanny had anything you wanted to add. Should we stop? OK, I got—"

#### **Video #4**

J. Williams: "...as opposed to me, I was only there as a child. And so they have a bigger view of what the city was like. I did go to Boston within recent time and got a little flavor of the city walk and all that, but to actually go to the area where our families grew up, where...I haven't had that opportunity as an adult."

Jacoby: "So, and then I just had some questions, really, about...which is what we were hoping to get to yesterday was...but it's great to have Fanny here, which was more about sort of what the life story of William Ellis might be able to offer people, sort of thinking about history and thinking about the past and everything else. And I was just wondering if you had any hopes about what someone might get out of reading a book or encountering something about William Ellis and the history of your family. It's a big question, I know, but sort of I'm curious to get your responses."

Griffin: "I think it really is indicative of what a young person can achieve if they have a vision of, you know, where they want to go, and also that sometimes it's not only the vision but it's opportunity that comes upon you when you are, you know, working toward

that vision. And I see him...I saw him as a young, adventurous gentleman who loved his family because it's very obvious all through the years, even as he took these different positions and whatnot, he always came back to his family, always wrote, he was always concerned, he was always giving advice, and so it's a...For somebody reading the book, it's like, to me, someone who say wow, you know. Here's a man who was of, you know, African-American ancestry who actually could slide in to different roles and use those roles to move himself ahead and, you know, take advantage of that. And in a time when you just really wouldn't think someone like him, who started out basically on a ranch doing, you know, horses and, you know, exchanging...selling off herds and so forth like that, that he would end up in Ethiopia with an audience with Kingman Lick [sp?], or even an audience with Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt, so I just think it's inspiring."

J. Williams: "Which says to me that, although we don't have the record of where he might have been receiving higher education, he must have been encouraged through his family to reach for the stars so to speak. And I don't get the feeling that anyone tried to hold him back, and he was able to...He must have been well-read, to aspire to go to Ethiopia, or aspire to take a colony of people to Mexico, that kind of thing, so clearly he just wasn't on the ranch doing what you do on the ranch all day and going home and going to bed. I imagine he was reading lots of history. And what the possibilities might be."

S. Williams: "And he was a man, I think, that beside him...beside encouraging him his also to do these things that he aspired to do...He thought about his people, because that was the reason why he went to Mexico to form the colony, because he wanted to make it better for the African-American here...there...that were here in this country, to be able to develop their land and have, you know, pris...what am I trying to say?...that they were able to do better in their lives. Unfortunately that, you know, he didn't think...they didn't think through the diseases and all the things they might encounter in a different country."

J. Williams: "So in a sense he had a dual role, because in gathering these people together, as I understand it, to go to Mexico, he was not presenting himself as a black man to these people. He was presenting himself as something other. Perhaps in those years, he could not have done that had he been presenting himself as a black man. He probably would have been shot down. You know, no you can't do that, where...you know, we're not going to let you do this. Whereas by saying that he was something other, he was able to convince people that he could do, and would achieve what he had set out to do. So he was playing a dual role there. He could see the part that 'doing for his people'..."

S. Williams: "Well, but going to Ethiopia is a different thing."

J. Williams: "Well I'm speaking about going to Mexico, speak...doing for his people to make it a better life, where they could have a better life, and have their own plot of land, raising cotton and all that, and now sharecropping. And...but yet he had to play this other role. So it kind of fits in with the various roles he might have been playing through his life, in my mind."

Griffin: "I think he really was, you know, this businessman. You know, he wanted to develop the cotton fields in Sonora, Mexico, but he also saw it as an opportunity to, for him to, you know, rise up and make money too. So he was a pretty sharp man. He could look beyond and see how things could develop. And so he used even that whole idea of developing, you know, growing things for people to survive on...when it didn't work in Mexico, then he wanted to take that to Ethiopia and see if that...he could get them to develop. So he was pretty sharp, I think, that he could do it. And like you said, he could maneuver...obviously he learned enough Spanish to maneuver in Mexico, and so it worked for him. It worked for him. And so as you read articles about him, you can see where those who are writing about him aren't even sure. You know, they describe him as all different kinds of, you know, ethnicities. And so he just let it happen. It worked for him. It worked for him."

J. Williams: "So to answer your question, I think it would be very interesting reading."

Griffin: "Motivating, motivating."

S. Williams: "Yeah, motivating to many young people in this country for sure. Because he is an American who is born an American. He was born at a time when there was very extreme segregation and it was hard for anybody to get ahead (of color, I mean). And young people today, since we have so many different ethnicities in this country now, I think it would be a wonderful teaching...teaching tool for young people in school today."

Jacoby: "I hope so."

S. Williams: "I wish I had known him, to tell you the truth."

Jacoby: "So I didn't get a chance to ask you yesterday, but Fanny, how did you first hear about your grand-uncle William Ellis? And what did you first hear when you heard about him?"

Griffin: "My mother talked about him. That's how I first heard about him. Well, let me go back: my grandmother also—his sister—because we would go and spend weekends up with my grandmother and she would talk and tell stories, like we would ask 'Granny, how did you grow up?' And 'Granny, did you pick cotton?' and 'Gran—'...you know, that kind of stuff. And then she would tell about her sisters and brothers, and that this brother that was one that left the family early, you know, to go out on his own, and then she would begin to tell all the things he did. And so it was fascinating, and also the pictures that you see when you'd see him as this man and a cape and a top hat, and it was totally different than like somebody on a ranch in, you know, Victoria."

S. Williams: "In cowboy boots."

Griffin: "Yeah. Right. And so he was fascinating. Plus, the letters that he would write home that he was asking about all the family, and she, you know...and Maude, his wife, to...she was...my grandmother was caring about her and he would talk about her, so...That was how I first heard. Just the family stories of my grandmother talking about her brother."

J. Williams: "And the penmanship on those letters suggest the flourishes that... I mean, as a child, I remember looking at that and thinking this was some very important person."

Jacoby: "So you would actually look at the letters as kids?"

J. Williams: "Well, whatever it was that I saw his signature on."

Jacoby: "So I've been asking you a lot of questions, but I also wanted to give you guys the opportunity, if there's anything you wanted to tell me, if there's anything we haven't spoken about, you know, just let me know what you think I should know."

Griffin: "As...Once he went into Mexico, I know about the fact that, you know, he tried to develop that entrepreneurship of, you know, growing cotton on the Mexican desert. But I wondered...at some point, I thought I heard that he was like in the development in railroads and that. Do you have any kind of information on that?"

Jacoby: "I've heard he was involved with a couple things in Mexico. I'm not sure how directly, but water? They were trying to bring him water to loop the water into Mexico City. Rubber was a big thing in Mexico, because once you get the automobile, before they could create rubber out of petroleum, they needed rubber, and that was from Mexico. And so that was a big boom involved in that. And he owned a furniture factory in Mexico City."

S. Williams: "Oh really?"

Griffin: "I didn't know that."

Jacoby: "Yeah, he owned a furniture factory."

S. Williams: "Where was that? In New York?"

Jacoby: "No, in Mexico City. On a street called Balderas. In Mexico City."

S. Williams: "Oh, OK. I didn't know that. I didn't even realize that. And then I think he tried to dabble in politics too a little bit."

Griffin: "In Mexico?"

S. Williams: "No, here. It was with whoever...not Roosevelt, but who was after Roosevelt? Who did...he went to Roosevelt and got permission to go to Ethiopia, right?"

Jacoby: "Right, right."

S. Williams: "I think he kind of tried...Maybe not. Maybe I just misinterpreted whatever I read thinking that."

Griffin: "But I guess that whole thing in Mexico was him seeing opportunities, that the need for consumer goods and so for, whenever it was, he could dabble in it and get up."

Jacoby: "I mean, I think one thing that's so fascinating about his stories, you don't always think... You think about the United States as a sort of land of immigrants and everyone coming here, and you don't think about Americans leaving, and particularly leaving and going to Mexico as sort of the land of opportunity, but I think that's a very interesting part of his story. Seeing that Mexico had more opportunities, in certain ways, in the nineteenth century, early twentieth century than he could find here lots of the time."

Griffin: "Right. I...I think basically because there was not the thing about color there, that you could be, you know, who you were and come into Mexico and if you could develop...[unintelligible]"

J. Williams: "I know one thing that has come about just with our talking over the last few months. It's more curiosity about Carlos Estarñez [sp?] for me, and to learn that he had been taken under Uncle Willie's wing, so to speak. And kind of living the same—I don't want to say clandestine life—but different life. It makes me wonder, after Willie died and Maude disappeared into Mexico or wherever, what happened to him before he came back to the United States, and what did he do? So that's something that is of real interest to me at this point."

Griffin: "I really kind of want to look at the time span, because I think he was already back in the United States when Uncle Willie, you know, died in Mexico. I think he had gone with him initially, but he had come back already, and... But that's not clear, you know, the dates around that, but..."

Jacoby: "You used the word *mysterious* a lot, yesterday..."

J. Williams: "Do I?"

Jacoby: "No, when we were talking, we used the word *mysterious* a lot, and I was thinking that Carlos has a little bit of that mystery to him as well. The other thing that's tricky is the Mexican Revolution, which is 1910 to 1920, is very chaotic, and he could have been there, he could not have been there, and who knows what was going on, and if there'll be any records."

S. Williams: "That's kind of the impression I got from my mom, that because of the revolution, that I think they thought—'they' meaning my mother and grandmother—thought that something mysterious or clandestine, whatever you want to call it, was...went on, and that's because of why they died. The son and the father. Because I could tell when she talked about it, she really...I think down deep inside, they didn't feel that he really a heart attack, you know, and died. That something else mysterious took place. Even though the Mexican government says he died from a heart attack, and the son had what, yellow fever?"

J. Williams: "Typhus."

Jacoby: "Typhus, yeah."

S. Williams: "Typhus, whatever. So. I don't know. I mean...We'll never know, probably. Not with the revolution going on."

Griffin: "No, because you have to go by what the death certificate says."

S. Williams: "Right."

Jacoby: "He's buried there, I showed you that picture."

S. Williams: "Yeah, you did."

Jacoby: "He's buried in Mexico City, so..."

Griffin: "And when you looked at those passports that you recently sent of Maude and the two children, they had...you could see where they came in to...that was when they came in to live there."

Jacoby: "Yeah, they came into Vera Cruz."

Griffin: "Through Vera Cruz, yeah."

Jacoby: "Right. Those are interesting because the passports are from the thirties and they came in the twenties, so at that point they'd already been in Mexico six, seven, eight years. It's been a long time they'd been down there. That's where the trail grows cold, basically."

Griffin: "Right, right."

S. Williams: "Isn't that something?"

Griffin: "There's no death certificate on her? That we know of?"

Jacoby: "No. I'm...I don't know that...I'm learning how to deal with Mexican documents, I don't know that...It's not as easy as going onto Ancestry.com, so I haven't unraveled that part yet. There is a 1930 census of Mexico on Ancestry.com, but it doesn't include Mexico City. And they're not anywhere...they must...if they're in Mexico...They don't show up in the census, and that's probably because if they were in Mexico, they were in Mexico City, so that's not helping us yet. But we'll get there. We'll get there."

S. Williams: "Isn't that interesting, you know?"

Jacoby: "But we...One thing we were talking about yesterday is that what would be really a neat part of the project is if we were able to reconnect possibly with those descendants who went to Mexico. They must assume...It's possible...It's possible that Sherwood or Victoria had children, right? Maybe they're..."

Griffin: "Got married there, and had total..."

Jacoby: "Yeah. I mean, one thing that occurred to me is...the family is interesting...part of the family becomes Mexican, part of the family is here in Los Angeles, and seems like part of the family also became, you know...passed over to being white, right? Is that right? It's a very interesting trajectory."

Griffin: "The other thing is, who might have been his, you know, compadres...who worked with him, or who was a, young know, really...a businessman with him, who, that might have, you know, encouraged him and influenced him too...the kinds of people he 'hung out' with, you know."

S. Williams: "You talking about Willie? Uncle Willie?"

Griffin: "William Ellis, yeah. Mhm."

S. Williams: "And I think he was closer to what...some of the things you've written or printed about him. I imagine he was close to whoever...like the Wizegers...somebody probably encouraged him on that farm, or ranch, because certainly he was fluent in Spanish, you know?"

Griffin: "Yeah, but when he moved...when he went from there and grew into crossing over into Mexico, and going to Alabama, Arkansas, wherever it was to bring people to Mexico, who..."

S. Williams: "Oh, I see what you're saying."

Griffin: "...you know, or in and out and working with in that sense, you know."

Jacoby: "He was seemingly close to Norris Cuney..."

J. Williams: "Yes, that name came up a lot."

Jacoby: "...who was the...sort of the head of Republican politics in Texas and was a very prominent African...probably the most prominent African-American in Texas in the nineteenth century. So that's one clue. But it's...and there's...the person he goes to Texas with in the 1880s is someone named Henry Ferguson, who's a business...I need to find out more about him, but a businessman or something from..."

S. Williams: "He was what?"

Jacoby: "A businessman or something from the San-Antonio/Austin area. Yeah. So anything else I didn't ask you about I should have asked you about?"

S. Williams: "I can't think of anything."

J. Williams: "Not really. I know just discussing him and all of this with my children, it has quickened their interest in family history, and it was just Savannah has asked to look at the printout that you have of his family. She's trying to keep both sides of the family straight in her head. She's very interested in where this is going. And so that's a good

thing. That's a good thing. Because that just keeps that alive, going down the generations."

Griffin: "I wonder in New York, you know, that when he was in New York...there was a connection with...he was taking care of books for...what he actually was, you know. Did he work on Wall Street? Or was he just taking care of the books for that mining company? The man that had he mining company, and seems like he died, and then he was doing the books for the wife, was that true?"

Jacoby: "I don't know. That's the...that seems to be the...I...the...Well, one more mystery. From what I can tell, the Hotchkiss family, which made the Hotchkiss machine gun, he seemingly represented Hotchkiss machine guns in Mexico, and then he became very...Hotchkiss had a much younger wife, and after he dies—Hotchkiss dies—William became close to this wife, and did a lot of the using the books and stuff for her. And in fact, in the...I just found documents from Mexico City, where seemingly they owned property together or something in Mexico. I'm not exactly sure what's going on there, but it seems to me that...my guess is that somehow that's where maybe he made a lot of his initial money. He also made a lot of initial money working the New York Water Company. I think he needed money to get into that water company first. It's hard to track the money, but that's what he does."

Griffin: "Do you think...it's interesting because people like that, you know, in a sense (if you use that phrase) rob from Peter to pay Paul. So do you think he was, you know, just making his way that way? That he could get into this? And get a little money from there to go over here, and do that?"

Jacoby: "Yeah, I can't...it's a...I can't tell exactly, but it seems like that the...from the...Around the turn of the century there's all this interest in investing in Mexico, sort of like the NAFTA of the nineteenth century, right? And...but they needed...everyone who wanted to invest needed sort of a local guy who could help you figure out how to invest, and he seemed to play that role, and so...and get a commission or something out of it. So that's seemingly how it works. I have no financial records, so I don't know exactly, but that seems to be what it was."

Griffin: "It seems as though in one letter that was written home after his death by Maude, she was sort of like, no money."

S. Williams: "Oh yeah. That was after he was dead."

Griffin: "That's what I said. After she...after he died there was, you know...she's like, well what am I going to do? You know, I don't know, there's no money to get...and I guess she didn't know how to deal with Mexico, to see what was..."

J. Williams: "And I had the impression that there were a number of people that were kind of envious, that looked at him kind of askance and weren't so sure about his whole being all up-and-up."

S. Williams: "Hm?"

J. Williams: "That he had some enemies. And you would in a business there, you can't please everybody all the time, so..."

S. Williams: "Well, and the fact that that gentleman fell overboard on that ship. That would pose a lot of speculation by and suspect by others, you know. Because he certainly wrote in one of the letters, I think, about he would be exonerated...he would be...he didn't use the word exonerated, but that's what he meant, I'll be cleared, that they'll see I had nothing to do with it. And so that suspicion would of course make investors suspicious, you know, if they were investing in whatever he was doing. So that part of his life might have begun to dry up, so to speak."

Jacoby: "Yeah, I think also the Mexican Revolution, was it just...that really makes it difficult for him. So he dies, you know, right at the tail end of that. So I think...I think that's one reason why Maude...there was no money. I think the other reason is he actually...I think his presentation of self was so, you know, he's dressed—I think you saw the pictures—the kids are dressed elegantly. He's dressed really elegantly. And that's important for him to have that persona. That's probably expensive to keep all that up. So...yeah. It's a really fascinating..."

S. Williams: "Well, there are others that did the same thing, you know?"

Jacoby: "Did I send you the documents? He was investigated by the FBI? [All murmur agreement.] Yeah. So there, when you were talking about enemies of sorts, there's definitely the people poking around in his business."

J. Williams: "But then you know, you think about Hoover investigating Martin Luther King, and all the people...that they made up stories about people just to influence...."

Griffin: "Well I think he was just...you know they couldn't figure out who was this guy? You know, and so that made it more intriguing for everybody to figure out and like, you know, the things that had happened, going to Ethiopia and all that, so and then, you know, here he comes with all the flashy rings and that sort of stuff. And is he a Cuban or he is a Negro, or is he...? Who is he, you know? And so, this is bound to be..."

S. Williams: "Or is he Mexican, or is he...you know. They didn't know what he was."

Griffin: "But how do you ...in starting, you know, looking at his life, how do you begin to start to write? I mean, from...from the beginning of his life, or do you go back? Start at where he ended up, and come back?"

Jacoby: "Well, good question. I'm supposed to interviewing you guys. [Laughter] But the...I'm only doing the rough draft right now, and I'm trying to do it sort of the arc of his life. So starting with Victoria and work my way to the end of his life. I've been trying to think about...it could be interesting to start with the end in the sense of who's this very...at least maybe...or least use the opening of a snapshot of who is this very elegant person who people are very confused about? And then maybe leave that mystery there. And if you start at the beginning, it will sort of solve the mystery for people. So I haven't quite resolved that narrative challenge yet. But there's lots of obvious drama there, but I

think the larger point has a lot to say about, you know, what life after emancipation was like, what opportunities were like, and what relations with Mexico were like. Because we tend to study U.S. history or Mexican history, but you don't think about the two immersed in one another. And they are."

Griffin: "That the open border really was like, you know...therefore people did cross over and do..."

S. Williams: "That's true."

Griffin: "Before Americans want to put up a fence." [Laughs]

S. Williams: "What'd you say?"

Griffin: "Before Americans want to put up the fence, right?"

S. Williams: "And now, what's-her-name, she wants one twenty feet high!"

Griffin: "But anyway, this is fasc-...you know, fascinating how you pose the big...because there's all...so much of the history of America in there and Mexico too, you know, happening while he's maneuvering."

Jacoby: "No, if you think about it, his life kind of...It's almost perfect in the sense that he's born before Juneteenth, so he's born in slavery, he lives through emancipation, and reconstruction, then he, you know, he's involved in the Mexican Revolution, he lives through the Mexican Revolution, so you can look at those...they're all, you know...Civil War and Emancipation, sort of *the* big events in American history, and the Mexican Revolution is sort of *the* big event of Mexican history. And he spans both of those."

Griffin: "And right before Depression, no?"

Jacoby: "Yeah."

S. Williams: "What'd you say?"

Griffin: "Just before Depression, he dies."

S. Williams: "Right."

Griffin: "The beginning of it, yeah."

Jacoby: "It's a really neat little story."

S. Williams: "Well there's no doubt about him being a very fascinating individual. You know, even though I'm happy that was my uncle, great-uncle, but he did live a very fascinating life, you know? Because I've enjoyed so much reading all the research you've done about his life, you know?"

Fanny: "I think if you don't have, you know, some of his letters it would be a part you would to include because it kind of really...no matter where he was, the letters home gave you this feeling of what kind of a son he was, and what kind of a brother he was."

Jacoby: "Right. So I've seen the letter...Susie showed me a letter yesterday, which was to...I want to say Abolonia? Is that right?"

Griffin: "Was it the letter yesterday to Abolonia?"

S. Williams: "No, it was to Fanny."

Jacoby: "To Fanny. OK. But there was a letter to Fanny. Sister Fanny, that's right. [Chatter among the women] And I've seen one letter I think he wrote to his father, is that right? And then the letter from Maude, I think those are the only three...I've seen a lot of his business and other letters, but in terms of letters to the family, home, those are the only ones I think I've seen. Are there others that I should be looking at?"

Griffin: "I don't know. I should look through and see if...I don't think I have any, but I'll continue to look because I might."

Jacoby: "But those are nice because it's...There's the public persona, but then there's what he's like in the family. And I think those are really different. And I think it's interesting, because often when people would pass or whatnot, they wouldn't connect with the rest of the family, right? But he's obviously still doing that."

S. Williams: "No. They would not. That's a good observation. They would certainly...If they're passing, they're not going to keep contact with...They'll keep in contact, I'll say, with the mother or the father at home, but they're not going to interact with the rest of the folks. Of course, all that has...so much of that has changed for the better. That kind of thing. You know, you don't have a lot of that going on like you used to."

Griffin: "I don't know what else I can say except that he has just always been a fascinating character in my family that, you know, my grandmother and my mother would talk about. And...But you know what I didn't know? I never heard...I knew the Ethiopia part. But then how he got to be invited to King George the...was it the fifth or sixth?...his wedding. Yeah. How he made it to that."

Jacoby: "I don't know yet. The coronation, I think, or something..."

J. Williams: "Especially since Maude was from New Jersey. I mean, before you kind of thought, well maybe Maude had something to do with that, but Maude now, it turns out, is from...originally from New Jersey."

S. Williams: "Well, maybe they had British connections. Friends."

Jacoby: "Good. Well we can always talk more later, but it's great to have...I, you know, I've been chatting with you guys informally, but this thing will help me remember things and get the words just right, and so it's really helpful, and I appreciate all your time. So

thank you. And of course if you ever think of things you want to tell me, just let me know.”

S. Williams: “And if we find anything...”

Griffin: “Well, we appreciate, you know, all the research you’ve done, because a lot of the newspaper articles and those kind of things, where even it’s involved in different little things, we had no access...well, we didn’t have that information, I should say. So it’s nice to have that filled in to what we know about him.”

Jacoby: “So one thing I thought would be nice: for my last book I did a website that sort of goes with it, and one thing to think about would be a website for this book that might, if you felt comfortable, put up one of those photos of William Ellis or something, so...That’s down the road, but just something to think about. It’s a sort of teaching...The idea is that for it to be a teaching tool so that people could, you know, look at the photos, or whatever. Good, good. Well thank you. I’ll turn this—”