

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Church, Sr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Church, Robert, Sr., 1909-2008
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Church, Sr.,
Dates:	March 17, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:31:40).
Abstract:	Agriculturalist Robert Church, Sr. (1909 - 2008) served as Peach County, Georgia's first black county agriculture agent. In this capacity, he taught African American farmers and their families the latest agricultural techniques in order to increase production, improving their living standards. Church was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 17, 2002, in Fort Valley, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_013
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Robert Church was born in Athens, Georgia, on September 26, 1909. His father, Arthur Church, worked as a sharecropper and an overseer on a corporate lawyer's farm. Church also worked in agriculture, improving the quality of life for poor African American farmers.

Church walked five miles each way to a segregated elementary school. In 1927, he enrolled at the Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, for both high school and college. Working his way through school, he cleaned rooms at the Hampton guest house, Holly Tree Inn, cleaning some of the same rooms Booker T. Washington had before him. Church also worked at a summer camp in New Hampshire, and during the school year, he milked cows and fed hogs. He earned a B.S. degree in agricultural education in 1934.

Church returned to Georgia and began work as a high school vocational agriculture teacher in Wilkes County. He became the assistant principal, and in 1937, this work took him to Jenkins County to serve as a school principal. Through the school, he became associated with the University of Georgia Agriculture Extension. This led him to become Peach County's first black county agriculture agent. In this capacity, he taught African American farmers and their families the latest agricultural techniques in order to increase production, improving their living standards. He also played a leading role with 4-H and conducted the Fort Valley Ham and Egg Show from 1949 to 1966. In 1958, Church earned an M.S. degree in agricultural education from the Tuskegee Institute.

After retiring from active professional work in 1969, Church spent the equivalent of another career in public service. He served two terms on the Fort Valley City Council, from 1974 to 1982. For twenty-five years, he served as a board member for the Department of Family and Children Services at both the local and state levels. He was also affiliated with Trinity Baptist Church, Peach County United Way and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Church passed away on December 31, 2008 at the age of 99.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Church, Sr. was conducted by Samuel Adams on March 17, 2002, in Fort Valley, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Agriculturalist Robert Church, Sr. (1909 - 2008) served as Peach County, Georgia's first black county agriculture agent. In this capacity, he taught African American farmers and their families the latest agricultural techniques in order to increase production, improving their living standards.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Church, Robert, Sr., 1909-2008

Adams, Samuel (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Church, Robert, Sr., 1909-2008--Interviews

African American teachers--Interviews.

African American agriculturalists--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Georgia

Occupations:

Agriculturalist

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Church, Sr., March 17, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Church, Sr., Section A2002_013_001_001, TRT: 0:31:22
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Agricultural educator Robert Church discusses his family background, describing his relationships with his mother, father, and siblings. He remembers his childhood home in Athens, Georgia and talks about his favorite activities and recreations as a child. Church also describes his experience in elementary school, which leads up to his enrollment at the Hampton Institute in Virginia.

African American families--Georgia--Athens.

Childhood and youth--Activities--Georgia--Athens.

Education, Primary--Georgia--Athens.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Church, Sr., Section A2002_013_001_002, TRT: 0:31:04
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Agricultural educator Robert Church describes his experience at Hampton Institute in Hampton Virginia, where he attended both high school and college. He recalls his days on the football team, and some of his best friends at Hampton. Church then explains how he became involved in education, first as a teacher and principal, and then as a county agricultural agent for the University of Georgia. Church also describes his involvement with the 4-H Club and his role in mentoring children.

Photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Church, Sr., Section A2002_013_001_003, TRT: 0:31:21
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Agricultural educator Robert Church details his work as a county agricultural agent in the state of Georgia. He states the methods and strategies he used to help the farmers of Georgia manage their crops and livestock herds with maximum success and efficiency. Church also explains how he helped raise money for farmers, discusses more of his involvement with the 4-H Club, and gives examples of racial discrimination he encountered as a county agent.

Hampton Institute.

Education, Secondary--Virginia--Hampton.

University of Georgia.

Agriculture--Georgia--20th century.

4-H clubs.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Church, Sr., Section A2002_013_001_004, TRT: 0:30:00
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Agricultural educator Robert Church discusses his tenure as a member of the Fort Valley, Georgia city council and his workshop at Fort Valley State University. He describes the farming community in Fort Valley, and explains the goals of the agricultural education extension program. Church then reflects on his and his family's accomplishments, and discusses his membership in the Sigma Pi Phi fraternity.

Agriculture--Georgia--20th century.

4-H clubs.

Tuskegee Institute.

University of Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Church, Sr., Section A2002_013_001_005, TRT: 0:27:53
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Fort Valley (Ga.)

City council members--Georgia--Fort Valley.

Agriculture--Georgia--20th century.

Sigma Pi Phi.