

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Beale

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Beale, Robert, 1911-2006
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Beale,
Dates:	September 25, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:20:10).
Abstract:	Chemistry professor and high school chemistry teacher Robert Beale (1911 - 2006) served as a teacher and administrator at eleven different colleges during his sixty-year career, and continued to teach high school into his nineties. Beale was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 25, 2003, in Forestville, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_234
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

At the age of ninety-one, Robert Beale was still teaching. Born in Camden, New Jersey, on November 19, 1911, Beale moved with his family to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1919. After graduating from high school, Beale went to West Virginia State University in 1929, and graduated cum laude in 1932. From there he attended the University of Pennsylvania, earning his M.S. degree in chemistry in 1934. He returned to school at Penn State University, where he received his PhD in chemistry in 1942.

Beale began his teaching career at what is now known as Hutson-Tillotson College in Austin, Texas, working in the chemistry department. After serving as a teacher and administrator at eleven different colleges during his career, including North Carolina A&T, the University of Maryland and Virginia Union, Beale retired in 1986. In 1990, Beale returned to teaching in the Prince George's County School District after hearing there was a shortage of black male teachers.

He taught at Suitland High School and took students on an annual "college tour," a five-day trip to various colleges in the South. He stayed active in the lives of his students, going to meet with parents and encouraging his students to further their education. His daughter, Joy Beale Mitchell, worked with him, serving as a media specialist at the school. He also had a son, Robert Beale, Jr.

Beale passed away on October 9, 2006 at age 94.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Beale was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 25, 2003, in Forestville, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Chemistry professor and high school

chemistry teacher Robert Beale (1911 - 2006) served as a teacher and administrator at eleven different colleges during his sixty-year career, and continued to teach high school into his nineties.

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:

Beale, Robert, 1911-2006

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Beale, Robert, 1911-2006 --Interviews

African American teachers--Maryland--Prince George's County--Interviews.

African American college teachers--Interviews.

African American chemists--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Prince George's County Public Schools

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

High School Chemistry Teacher

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Beale, September 25, 2003. 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 Beale, Section A2003_234_001_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Robert Beale was born on November 19, 1911 in Camden, New Jersey. His mother, Mary Ellen Porter, was born in Melville, New Jersey in 1875. Beale's Irish maternal grandmother came to North America as an indentured servant. She earned her freedom after seven years and purchased the freedom of an enslaved African American with her earnings. They migrated to Gouldtown, New Jersey. Beale's father, Charles Henry Beale, was born in 1868 in Middlesex County, Virginia. Charles Henry Beale migrated to northern New Jersey where he met Porter. He worked in a coke plant in Camden, New Jersey and taught himself engineering skills. He passed the stationary engineer examination in Pennsylvania and got a job in the Albert Schoenhut toy factory where he was responsible for making sure the factory had electricity and heat. Beale's mother and two of his siblings died in 1914. In 1920, the Beale family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Beale describes his childhood in 1920s Philadelphia as the youngest of six children.

African American teachers--Maryland--Prince George's County--Interviews.

African American college teachers--Interviews.

African American chemists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Beale, Section A2003_234_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Robert Beale describes the sights, sounds and smells of 1920s Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the time, automobiles were just coming into existence and trolleys were the primary form of transportation. The Beale family lived on Wharton Street in south Philadelphia. Beale remembers the Sequi-Centennial International Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1926, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. His neighborhood was culturally integrated with African American, Italian, and Jewish clusters. Beale attended Union Baptist Church in south Philadelphia. His mother played the organ and each member of his immediate family sang, read music and played an instrument. Beale attended James Logan Elementary School in Philadelphia and completed eighth grade two years ahead of his class. He attended Southern Manual Training High School for Boys a predominantly white school in Philadelphia. He graduated at sixteen years old and aspired to be an engineer.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Beale, Section A2003_234_001_003, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Robert Beale entered West Virginia State College, later West Virginia State University, a historically black land-grant University, in Institute, West Virginia in 1929. Beale earned his B.S. degree in chemistry in 1932 and returned to Philadelphia amidst the Great Depression; the best job he could find was with the Philadelphia Department of health taking down the addresses of vacant houses. Shortly afterward, Beale earned a M.A. degree in chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and joined the teaching faculty at Samuel Huston College in Austin, Texas. Beale taught all of the institution's chemistry courses, however, it was poorly equipped and he stayed only one year. He was offered a teaching position at Princess Anne College in Princess Anne, Maryland in 1936. In 1942, he earned his Ph.D. in chemistry from Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pennsylvania.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Beale, Section A2003_234_001_004, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Robert Beale met his wife while teaching at Samuel Houston College in Austin, Texas. The couple married in 1936 and had their first child in 1942. Since 1935, Beale has instructed chemistry at twelve collegiate institutions, including Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee, where he served two years as dean. Beale was not actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement, but did participate in a march in

Richmond, Virginia. His collegiate career ended in 1986 at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland where he was a chemistry teacher and later served as an assistant to the provost. In retirement, Beale worked with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) as regional vice president. In 1990, he joined the faculty at Suitland High School in Forestville, Maryland, at seventy-eight years old. He describes the challenges he faced as a high school educator as well as the most rewarding aspects of teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Beale, Section A2003_234_001_005, TRT: 0:22:50 ?

Robert Beale decided to become a high school teacher in order to serve as a role model for African American boys. He shares his teaching philosophy and the secret to maintaining the energy to teach, even though he is over ninety-one years old. He describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community as well as how he would like to be remembered. He ends by reflecting upon his legacy.