

BETTIE KENNEDY

Interview 170d

February 11, 2002, at Angelina Co. Historical Commission meeting, Lufkin, Texas

Dickie Dixon, Moderator

Patsy Colbert, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: The Rev. Bettie Kennedy speaks to the Angelina County Historical Commission meeting about Squire Long, a leader in Lufkin's African American Community in the years immediately following the Civil War. This was an informal speech, so there is some conversation between Reverend Kennedy and several unidentified members of the audience. She speaks about Squire Long's acquisition (or speculates about it) of land after the Civil War, his importance to the African American community, and the church, Long's Chapel CME, named in his honor. She also talks about some of the Long descendants – the Bradcliffs, the Lewis family, and the McKenzie family.

Dickie Dixon (hereafter DD): With us, Bettie is a graduate of Dunbar High School and she also graduated from Prairie View College. She spent about 30 years in the public school system teaching, and as you all know she does a great deal of community service. She is really a leader in the community. She is the pastor of College Chapel CME and she does a great deal of other work with the American Cancer Society. Today we are happy that she is going to be speaking on one of the leaders in African American Community, Square Long or Squire Long. He was closely associated with the Massingill family and their land was real near here. So, I hope that you will welcome her as she talks to us about Squire Long.

Bettie Kennedy (hereafter BK): Thank you. I am honored to have this opportunity and I hope as we share this moment together that we can understand the relationship that I have with Squire Long. The Emancipation Proclamation that Abraham Lincoln signed set the slaves free. It was 19 and 60...

Unknown: 1860.

BK: I know 1860 but in 1968 when the freedom came in a different light than it was in 1861, 1863. Colonel Granger who came in at Galveston stood in his balcony and read the Emancipation Proclamation. It is said that the slaves began to shout and celebrate that moment of freedom. If that be the case then it was later that we heard about it here in Angelina County. There were no televisions, telephones, or telegraphs or anything that we could have gotten communication earlier. So, I'm going to share with you now Squire Long.

This document is very important. I made it from the original one for this proves that he was one of the founders of the Masonic Lodge here that still stands on Beech Street. You will see his name appearing on this piece of document that he was Worshipful Master of the Prince Hall Chapter of the Masonic Lodge. Now this was in 1893, now I'm very

honored because my father served as the Worshipful Master in later years. The properties that he owned that I have found out about is in this area here which we are not far from it up where Al Myer Ford place is this area. It is said there were a hundred acres of land there. Chestnut and in that area, the land there and that is where I touch Squire Long again. My father, Will Ingram bought his property from Squire Long. I never knew Squire Long as a person but I knew his son, Bud Long and we called him Uncle Bud. There is a church here Long Chapel CME Church was named for Squire Long. It is said that he gave that property for the church. It is said that the property that the church first existed on was on Groesbeck so Squire Long evidently owned property at the end of Groesbeck where Chestnut runs into Groesbeck. This is very unique here, for his daughter...and I put a dot here that you might see her...Leacy Duke, Leacy Long Duke was a member of Long Chapel Choir. I remember her quite well. She sang soprano. I am in this picture and I'm over on this end. Now, I married into the Long family and we are going to talk about that. Garfield Lewis was Squire Long's grandson and this is my oldest child sitting right here. Garfield had a son, one son named S. T. Lewis and I married him. Now here is Garfield again receiving an award for service at the Texas Foundry. Garfield worked at the foundry but he had a service station. This is a picture of him putting gas in a car here and the little building where the service station was still stands, but this was a hotel across the street that no longer stands. This is Kelty's Street running in this area. Mr. S. T. Lewis, very handsome, I married him and to that union were two children, Bettel Brunette Lewis and Willette Ann Lewis.

Here I am here with my two children.

Unknown: Bettie what was the name of the second child?

BK: That was Willette, W-i-l-l-e-t-t-e.

Unknown: Amen.

BK: More Methodism. (laughter)

Unknown: We can leave. (laughter)

BK: You can sit here. (laughter)

Unknown: I guess Carol is the only non Methodist on this side of the room. (laughter)

BK: I am going to go back to Mr. Lewis.

Unknown: Was that S. T. that played the piano?

BK: Yes, he was much younger here.

Unknown: Wasn't he a postman?

BK: That is right I was going to say he was a postman here for many years. He played for the choir. I'll go back to the choir picture. He was director of the Long Chapel CME Choir. He is the great-great-grandson [great grandson] of Squire Long. We married in 1953 and to that union were two children, Bettell Brunette Lewis and Willette Ann Lewis. There were two children born of that union. One of Squire Long's daughters, Alice Lewis, who was the grandmother to S. T. Lewis thought that the grandchildren needed to come every Easter and have an Easter egg hunt so this is on the property of Alice Lewis. The house is still existing on Sunrise. This is my oldest daughter and this is Squire Long's grandson. This is Alice's baby son Jack and this is S. T. here and they are hiding the eggs. This is part of the celebration not only the Easter egg hunt we see in these pictures but the Easter program at Long Chapel CME Church. This was in the new building. The old building had been torn down and this building still stands on Lining Street. Your first mural downtown now has Squire Long and you can barely see it in this but it is depicting the four murals downtown, four of the five murals there and Squire Long is here.

I'm going to share some things with you now as I remember Bud Long and Leacy Long Duke. I had an opportunity to sing with them in the choir and they were devout Methodists. They were part of the foundation. They were on the trustee board and served on the Steward Board and were outstanding members of Long Chapel CME Church where I grew up. Bud Long came rather frequently to the church but Necie, his sister, was there for many years and a devout member every Sunday and was a part of the choir. You saw her in the choir.

The lineage of Long's that has been carried on are through the Bradcliffs, the Lewis and Patricia McKenzie is a great-great-granddaughter of Squire Long and that is through the Dunley's. Bud only had one child a daughter, Mary Dunley, and that was Patricia McKenzies grandmother. The other children had no children so the lineage did not...it's only three of the children and that is nine of the children that I've been able to locate. There was a son that lived in Kansas City but I have not been able to find him by his name. There is another daughter and I haven't located her name. I haven't been able to find out that name. But this is what I know about Squire Long. It is said that...my mother told me this story that Squire Long paid fifty cents an acre for this land. Now, how much he sold it to Will and Effie Ingram I do not know but, I do know the property that they bought on 402 Chestnut was acquired through Squire Long. I don't know how many lots or acreage but the house was built after the marriage of Will and Effie Ingram in 1924. The house is still existing. There are several houses that my father built so that property there was pretty large, maybe a half acre of three fourths of an acre.

Unknown: When did Squire Long acquire this land at fifty cents an acre?

BK: I do not know. That is a story my mother told me. Another story she said that Squire Long became very ill and back on the hill which is called the Squire Long Hill if you turn here on Lufkin Avenue and turn right back on the first street past the printing company that used to be a very steep hill. The house stood there. I've been to that house. That is where his daughter, Georgie Russell lived. Georgia Long Russell lived in that

house. She said he became very ill and his grandson, Sam Lewis, this is S. T.'s uncle, went just moved out and went and stayed with him and tended to him until he passed away.

Unknown: It had to be in the 1800's.

BK: It had to be because as far back as I can find out my father came here in 1896. He had land when he married his wife, Effie Bell Engram, so that is pretty close.

Unknown: Now is that the land...that is not the land he bought from Massingill though right?

BK: I don't know that. That was news to me when I read that.

Unknown: I got that from the Land of the Little Angel.

BK: Yes, yes. Something else I would like to point out, Squire Long was tall, about six feet three inches tall, very attractive, light skinned. His wife was short and dark skinned. The children and the descendents of the children are light skinned and some are dark skinned. Bud was dark skinned. Now Lisa was very fair and we can see that in her picture. She was tall, very attractive, very articulate, very soft spoken and you can see her here. She had a beautiful long hair, a very stately lady. In other words when she would come into your presence or you would go into her presence she just demanded the respect without words because of her...you can see how she is standing here very stately. She must have been very proud of her great nephew to be the director of the choir.

If you ask questions I can follow through with them pretty good, even better than I am doing...yes.

Unknown: When he approached Massingill to ask for a sponsor for protection after the Civil War was that just for his family or for others as well?

BK: I am not sure. I don't relate with the Massingills at all. I've never heard that name mentioned until I read that story. But as far as I can go back, let's go back to Bud's lineage. Bud had a buggy and he would come to Lufkin in town because this was way out of Lufkin and he would drive to Lufkin two to three times a week to collect the rent for the property there on Chestnut. There were two houses standing there in my childhood and he would come to collect the rent. The little buggy was a black buggy driven by one horse and you could just hear the little horse as he was coming down the road. At that time Chestnut was not paved. It was red dirt and hard surface.

Unknown: Was 402, was that on Paul or Groesbeck?

BK: It was right at Bremond. Bremond ran right into my dad's property.

Unknown: Oh okay.

Unknown: What was his (unintelligible).

BK: I had gone to Dianne's to ask why did they have that saw. If you look at that mural they have a saw as if he is holding it and my relation there maybe he worked and Dianne filled in the sawmill. There was a sawmill and you have to help me with this one now, in Lufkin Land, the pond is still there. I am not sure exactly where the mill was but the mill houses are still there. I think there are about four of them that are still standing on Wood Street and an adjacent street there. So, that mill was somewhere in that area. The lumber that came from that mill is what Daddy used to build the house at 402 Chestnut and they were large boards. They were not narrow boards, big boards. Yes sir?

Unknown: Many of the older churches also have cemeteries associated with them at least out in the rural area. Was there a cemetery ever associated with Long Chapel?

BK: No, not that I know of. Strangers Rest has been the closest one that we could relate to because so many of the members spoke of Strangers Rest. Cedar Grove is one of the older cemeteries. Maybe Mr. Gipson could fill that in. There was no cemetery related here with Long Chapel that I knew of. If you see Memorial Chapel CME Church, the cemetery is right next to that property. That is in the Cedar Grove Community and Long Chapel came out of the Memorial Chapel CME Church. Now, back to your question maybe he worked at the sawmill with that saw.

Unknown: Unintelligible

BK: I tried to do some calculations. I interviewed a person who is going to be ninety years old on his next birthday and what he said Squire Long had to be at least fifteen or sixteen when he was freed. That is my calculation and I need to go back over that again.

Unknown: Where was he living? Was he already in this area when he was freed or what?

BK: Evidently he was living in this area. Now, my father came from Winona Community out of Tyler and it wasn't called Winona in those years, the Gladewater area. He came here and evidently Squire Long was still living for him to purchase the land from him and evidently he knew Squire Long quite well. I can't see why I don't remember him. I don't know the record of his death, but I do remember three or four of his children who were up in age at my time.

Unknown: The land out there, was it farmed? I know the Massingills had where the high school is now they had operations in the '30's and...

BK: Okay Pastor you are bringing that to home now which means that is the high school right across that road there is where Squire Long lived, so that is bringing it in to focus there. Very good! As best I know it was farmed. Uncle Bud farmed and his house stood on this side of the road. It was on the property but it was on this side of the road. In fact

when Lufkin Avenue extended there they moved his house back when 287 came through. It was in that area. Now, S. T. sold the sand, it was priceless sand from that property in his lifetime. I understood the sand was very valuable and they sold the sand. I guess they were cutting the hill down and clearing it away for 287 to come through. So, it is rather ironic that we are here and can look out across and see his property. Oh, let me mention his wife. His wife was known as Behalia Long and I understood that she was a very attractive lady. I haven't gotten any details about her other than she was short. She was very attractive and she attended Long Chapel, dedication every Sunday.

DD: His leadership in the community, can you put that into perspective? Because I think that particular time his leadership at that time would have been very foundational.

BK: That is why I thought this piece of document here with this being in 1893, see that wasn't too far from 1865 when we were freed that he had to be an outstanding person and here they just have S. Long here and his name was the first name here. I wish you could have seen this document it was well in tact to have been this many years. I don't know where it is now but it was well taken care of.

Unknown: Is that the original charter?

BK: Yes, this is a copy of the original charter. I made a copy from the original. There are streets named for him, Long Street, the churches that bear his name prove that he had to be an outstanding well respected gentleman of the community. I can't think of anything else but he was looked up to.

Unknown: Where was his wife from?

BK: I haven't been able to find that out. My connection is that my children were the great-great-grandchildren of Squire Long, my two oldest children. Any other question?

R. L. Kuykendall (hereafter RLK): Is there any knowledge of his parents?

BK: No, the cousins that I've interviewed weren't able to go back that far. Mrs. Celia Boatwright, that name is a member of our community she moved here too late she said to know very much about him.

Unknown: What were some of the other names on the charter?

BK: Okay, now I can tell you about some of these people. S. Starks, remember I showed you the hotel? Dan Starks is a descendent of S. Sparks. I can't remember what the S is for. T. F. Jackson, now he lived out in the Cedar Grove Community and one of his daughters, the oldest daughter, is still living. She is 99 years old, very alert and is just a joy to even talk with her. I can't give you a run down on Peter Daniels. I don't know and there is a H. B. and looks like Butler. There is another R. Jackson and a Jacob Roberts, but I don't know that person. So, I can give you a run down on some of those persons whose names are penned.

Unknown: I wonder if the Daniels had any connection to Ames Daniels used to live out there?

BK: There is a possibility because it says Peter Daniels here. I don't know much about Peter Daniels. Now there might be a possibility if I talk with Mrs. Lillie Rankin is her name who is 99 years old. Maybe she would remember some of these names here. They were celebrating her birthday at Memorial Chapel and I gave them a copy of this document. They were so pleased they have it hanging on their wall.

Unknown: The name of that again was what?

BK: This is the Prince Hall Chapel. It's still standing the building is there on Leach Street next to I. D. Timm's Funeral Home. It is still standing, in need of repair but it is still standing.

Unknown: If you could interview Mrs. Rankin that would be a very nice thing because obviously she is not getting any younger.

BK: No she is not.

Unknown: This group could help get you the tape or whatever.

BK: Yes, Dickie what about that? What about you? One of you can help me.

DD: What is that?

BK: Get the tape and tape recorder.

DD: Yes, does she live here?

BK: Yes, she lives here and just as sharp as she can be. Now, I am guilty of talking to persons and we have such a rich history and I have not recorded or even write it down. I am guilty of that. I am going to leave these laying on the table and you certainly can look at them and enjoy them.

RLK: You might want to mention there are certain persons that will not allow you to record them also.

BK: Yes. Excuse me, Mr. Kuykendall pointed out there are people that are reluctant to be recorded. There is a deep embedded fear among our people of the bitterness that has happened to our people in this community that it's all right for me to talk with you one to one, black to black but, if I say let me bring my tape recorder the fear comes in. No, no, don't record it.

Unknown: So it might be possible with you where if I went out you'd be...especially if they find out I'm a school teacher.

BK: Yes, that is true.

Unknown: And a Methodist. (laughter)

BK: Mr. Kuykendall how long have we been doing this, three or four years? We've been working three or four years and we are doing reasonably well but we are running into snags where they don't want to if they see the recorder. I've been trying to decide to put one in my pocket and go and record them. (laughter)

Unknown: Bettie a lot of people supposedly things happen back there that they may not really want somebody to know. My experience has been that you can tell them you are going to record the conversation and after they get started they forget all about that stuff.

BK: Okay.

Unknown: I think the video camera might work.

DD: They may be afraid of a video camera. That would be out of the question.

BK: If you can think of a way that I might do that because we are losing so much of our heritage and deaths are occurring so much in the last weeks.

Unknown: Ma'am, the lady that worked in the coffee shop at (unintelligible) for many, many years, a very elderly black woman and a beautiful woman, I'm sure that I can remember her name but, it escapes me now, but I went out to her house and I got the best recording for about an hour and I probably don't look as troublesome as (unintelligible) (laughter). I've got a magnificent recording which I would be delighted to share with you. I can make a copy and so forth.

BK: Yes, that would help an awful lot.

Unknown: Bettie is there confusion over Square and Squire?

BK: No, I never knew it was Squire until later years because we all called him Uncle Square and I think maybe Dickie pointed out the spelling and we were questioning that whether it was English or how that spelling came about because we all said Uncle Square.

Unknown: There were two Squire girls that were twins and they married Massingill brothers and there might be a connection there.

BK: There is another connection there.

Unknown: At the end of the last meeting we actually settled that Squire Long was the Massingill slave.

BK: No.

Unknown: Oh okay, which may explain why he approached them according to the Land of Little Angel.

BK: Well the property adjoining or adjacent here had something to do with it too. Maybe the slave owner gave the property to his slave. That is a possibility. And the question was how did he acquire that and see my mother said he paid fifty cents an acre and that could be the property in town and this property here may have been given to him.

Unknown: Who owns the property now?

BK: His heirs are living on the property now but the property here has been sold but the property in town on Lubbock Street and on Sunrise that is his great grandchildren, Harold Hicks, Lee Ann Washington on Sunrise and the Bradford's on Sunrise. That is his great grandson.

RLK: Do you have any idea how much property that is that that you just mentioned?

BK: It is quite a bit because when they decided to build Hackney School they were looking at the Bradford property which is the Squire Long area and then they decided to build it on the Hackney property.

Unknown: Is it possible you think that his real name was like Squire, which as you indicated is English meaning an English gentleman and coming to Lufkin, Texas find it possible that people considered calling Squire Square.

BK: That is possible.

Unknown: But the Squire's were already here.

Unknown: Yes, they were but I think that might have been how you got Square out of it. Just maybe that is just a suggestion.

BK: That is a good comment you made.

(Unintelligible)

(clapping)