

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lafayette Frederick

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Frederick, Lafayette, 1923-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick,
Dates:	December 15, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:20:39).
Abstract:	Botanist Lafayette Frederick (1923 - 2018) developed the concentration in botany at Southern University and Atlanta University, and is professor emeritus in botany at Howard University. Frederick was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 15, 2012, in Tuskegee, Alabama. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_255
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Botanist Lafayette Frederick was born on March 9, 1923 in Dog Bog, Mississippi. Frederick's interest in botany began as an undergraduate student at Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) where he was inspired by the famous botanist and plant chemist George Washington Carver. After earning his B.S. degree in biology from Tuskegee Institute in 1943 and his M.S. degree in botany from the University of Rhode Island in 1950, Frederick went on to graduate from Washington State University with his Ph.D. degree in plant pathology and botany. His doctoral thesis focused on spore development in fungi, systematics and ecology of the myxomycetes, and the Dutch elm disease.

Upon completion of his postdoctoral studies at Cornell University, the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan, Fredrick was hired as an assistant professor at Southern University in the biology department. There, he developed a botany concentration during his ten years at the school. He also developed a botany concentration at Atlanta University, where he chaired the biology department during his fourteen-year tenure. In 1958, Frederick was responsible for integrating the Association of Southeastern Biologists meeting, which had not allowed its African American members to attend. He also served as director of the National Science Foundation (NSF) Academic Year Institute for Science Teachers. Frederick worked on several projects that involved studies on antifungal substances of a strain of bacterium. In 1976, Frederick was hired by Howard University where he went on to serve as a professor and chairman in the department of botany, acting dean for the College of Liberal Arts, and emeritus professor of biology.

Among Frederick's honors are an Honorary Doctorate of Science degree in botany and a Distinguished Alumni Award, from the University of Rhode Island; the Botanical Society of America Merit Award; the NSF Education and Human Resources Directorate Lifetime Achievement Award; the American Association for the Advancement of Science Lifetime Mentor Award; and a Tuskegee Institute Distinguished Alumni Merit Award. A species of Hawaiian shrub, *Cyrtandra Frederickii*, was named in his honor by Harold St. John, former chairman of the

University of Hawaii department of botany.

Lafayette Fredrick was interviewed on *The HistoryMakers* on December 12, 2012.

Frederick passed away on December 29, 2018.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lafayette Frederick was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 15, 2012, in Tuskegee, Alabama, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Botanist Lafayette Frederick (1923 - 2018) developed the concentration in botany at Southern University and Atlanta University, and is professor emeritus in botany at Howard University.

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:

Frederick, Lafayette, 1923-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Frederick, Lafayette, 1923- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Howard University. Dept. of Botany

Occupations:

Botanist

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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 Lafayette Frederick, December 15, 2012. 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 Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_001, TRT: 1:30:51 ?

Lafayette Frederick describes his family's background. Frederick was born March 19, 1923 in Dog Bog, Mississippi. Born as slaves, Frederick's maternal grandfather, Robert Johnson, was a wheelwright. His paternal grandfather, Oliver Frederick, was an African Methodist Episcopal minister in Coahoma County, Mississippi. Frederick's mother, Mary Ellen Johnson, graduated from high school at Southern Christian Institute in Edwards, Mississippi, in 1916 and afterwards became a school teacher. James Davis Frederick, Frederick's father, was educated at Stringers Academy in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and went on to become a school teacher. Frederick talks about how his parents met, their personalities, and who he takes after.

Affirmative action programs.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_002, TRT: 2:29:13 ?

Lafayette Frederick describes his siblings. Frederick discusses his earliest memories of his mother, Mary Ellen Johnson, picking cotton and his father, James Davis Frederick, teaching school in a church house. His father also taught at Dunbar Elementary School, a one-room school in Concord, Missouri named after the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. Frederick started elementary school at the age of three where he was taught by his father. He describes the sights, sounds and smells of his childhood. Frederick also talks about his family's exposure to magazines, newspapers, and radio.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_003, TRT: 3:29:50 ?

Lafayette Frederick talks about radio and his interest in baseball growing up. In the seventh grade Frederick's father, James Davis Frederick, had him take an evaluation test and the score allowed Frederick to graduate straight to high school. He was sent to live with his aunt in St. Louis, Missouri so that he could go to a better high school, and after a year he returned to attend Haytie High School, Haytie, Missouri and finished his high school education at Washington High School in Caruthersville, Missouri, where he graduated as valedictorian. Frederick describes the moment he became interested in botany and discusses the legacy of George Washington Carver. Frederick decided to attend Tuskegee University but did not have the money to travel to Tuskegee, Alabama. He raised the money by picking cotton but arrived two and a half weeks late and had to convince Tuskegee University to let him stay for the term.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_004, TRT: 4:30:42 ?

Lafayette Frederick describes his time at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama. Frederick excelled in biology and as a sophomore was placed in charge of teaching a biology laboratory class without the aid of a professor. While at Tuskegee University Frederick saw George Washington Carver and heard him speak, and Frederick remembers when he learned of Carver's death. He talks about his mentors, Dr. Rohm and Dr. Warren Henry. Frederick was involved with Dr. Charles Gomillion's efforts on voter's rights and he discusses the voting rights issues of the time. Frederick also talks about people he met at Tuskegee University, such as Daniel "Chappie" James and Nathaniel Colley.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_005, TRT: 5:29:43 ?

Lafayette Frederick talks about the Tuskegee Airmen. While at Tuskegee Frederick was drafted into World War II. He was able to get it deferred due to his status as a student, and after graduating from Tuskegee University he obtained a job at a turkey farm so that he could benefit from an agriculture deferment. He later became an electrical draftsman. He worked in the docks of Vancouver, Washington, and was drafted into the Navy in 1944. He received training as an electrician's mate and was stationed in Hawaii. Frederick talks about racial discrimination in the Navy. He also describes his feelings at that time of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. While in Hawaii Frederick was transferred to the engineering branch to work as a draftsman, a position he kept as a civilian even after World War II ended.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_006, TRT: 6:29:03 ?

Lafayette Frederick describes his graduate work in botany. He began as a part-time graduate student at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, Hawaii, where his work focused on two new species of plants: one of which was named after Frederick. He left Hawaii in 1948 to pursue a master's degree in botany at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, Rhode Island. There he researched Dutch elm disease. Frederick received his M.S. degree in botany and in 1950 attended Washington State University in Pullman, Washington to pursue his Ph.D. degree. His doctoral research centered around the crown-gall problem, a cancerous disease in trees. Upon receiving his Ph.D. in botany, Frederick was hired as a professor in 1952 at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Frederick also describes how he met his wife, Antoinette Reed, while attending the University of Rhode Island.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_007, TRT:
7:29:17 ?

Lafayette Frederick describes teaching at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Frederick created the botany major at Southern University. Although his primary focus was teaching, Frederick also researched fungi on the leaves of Louisiana plants. In 1962 Frederick left Southern University to teach at Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia because he disagreed with the actions of Southern University's president, Felton G. Clark. After students had taken part in demonstrations Clark closed Southern University. Because Clark was requiring students to sign an agreement that they would not participate in protests in order to return to Southern University, Frederick and other faculty wrote an open statement of disapproval. Frederick was then placed on a committee to talk to the student demonstrators, discovering afterwards that the committee was used as a pretense for hearings and the students were expelled. Frederick talks about Clark and the leaders of the student demonstrators.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_008, TRT:
8:31:38 ?

Lafayette Frederick discusses his students at Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia and their accomplishments. Here, Frederick recommenced his research on Dutch elm disease and west Pakistani fungi. Frederick describes the importance of taking students to professional conferences. In 1958, Frederick formed the TriBeta chapter at Southern University and integrated the Association of Southeastern Biologists by bringing the first group of African American students to their annual conference. Frederick later served as president of the Association of Southeastern Biologists. He describes his experience teaching at Howard University in Washington, D.C. , the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia and Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama. He is currently researching an endophytic bacterium that grows in plants.

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Video Oral History Interview with Lafayette Frederick, Section A2012_255_001_009, TRT:
9:20:22 ?

Lafayette Frederick reflects on his life and legacy, noting his work with his students in the plant and microbiological sciences. Frederick talks about his family, the education of his children, and his concerns for the African American community. Frederick describes attending scientific conferences as his hobby.

He talks about how he would like to be remembered. To conclude the interview Frederick describes his photographs.

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