

## [Mrs. John Albert Williams]

FORM A Circumstances of interview

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio St.

DATE 11-28-38 SUBJECT Negro History

1. Name and address of informant Mrs. John Albert Williams 2418 Maple St.
2. Date and time of interview November 27, 1938. 2:00 to 4:00
3. Place of interview In the home of Mrs. Williams.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant No one.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you No one.
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Mrs. Williams and son live in a very modest home. The house, [?] very recently painted a white color, is situated in the middle of the block. It is a two story, seven room house, well kept and commanding attention because of its structure. The rooms in the house although not elaborately furnished catch the attention of the eye because of the many wonderful paintings and pictures that are hung about the walls. The furniture is not very modern but is well kept. There are many relics in a cabinet that are very historical, as they have come from all over the world, being gifts from various friends. Mrs Williams has many books and they are in various places about the rooms as she is a constant reader. The neighborhood has many homes that are very beautiful as some of the higher income Negroes live in this block.

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### FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio Street

DATE November 28, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. John Albert Williams 2418 Maple St.

1. Ancestry French Canadian—Indian—Negro
2. Place and date of birth Lincoln Nebraska — Sept 9, 1875.
3. Family Mrs Williams live with her son Worthington Williams. She two daughters living in St. Louis and Tulsa Okla.
4. Place lived in, with dates

Lincoln Nebraska from 1875 to 1880. Omaha Nebraska from 1880 to present time.

5. Education, with dates Graduated from Pacific school in 1889. Graduated from Omaha High June 1893. Graduated from Omaha Normal June 1895.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Mrs. Williams is a teacher in the night school at the Y.W.C.A. North-side branch. She is paid by the board of education. Taught school in Omaha from 1895 to 1901.

7. Special skills and interests Mrs Williams is very much interested in the work of the Y. W. C. A. and spends a great deal of her time there helping in various ways.

8. Community and religious activities Mrs Williams is the oldest active member of the St. Phillips Episcopal church in time of actual service to the church. She is President of the

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women's auxiliary of the St. Phillips Church. She has served on the Board of the Colored Old Folks home, Y.W.C.A. and Woodson Center.

### 9. Description of informant

Mrs Willimas is a light brown skinned person, with startling Indian features. She is very intelligent looking and speaks with authority. Although she is 63 years of age she has very few gray hairs. She is of medium height.

### 10. Other points gained in interview

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio St.

DATE November 28, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. John Albert Williams 2418 Maple St.

I was born at Lincoln Nebr. Sept 9, 1875. I am the oldest of eight children. When I was five years old my father decided to move to Omaha as the city was larger than Lincoln and would afford him an opportunity to earn more money at his trade which was barbering. His first barber shop in Omaha was located in the basement of the old First National Bank building which was then located at 12th and Farnam Street. I attended the old Dodge school, which was then located where the present site of the city jail is. At that time I lived on tenth street between Capitol and Dodge. Later my father bought a home near Pacific school and I transferred to Pacific school from where I graduated. Then I started to Omaha High school, and graduated from there in 1893. During this time there was a Normal Training school, in Omaha which was run by the Board of Education and I attended it for two years finishing in 1895. My teacher in the Normal school tried very hard to discourage me from going to the school as she said that I never would secure employment in the school system. However I finished and was employed three month after my graduation

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and for the next six years I taught school in Omaha. My first teaching assignment in Omaha was at the old Dodge school, from where I first started to school. Later this school was abandoned and the students were either transferred to Pacific school or to the new Cass school. I was assigned to the Cass school and remained there until I resigned in 1901 when I was married, to Father John Albert Williams. My family together with the family of Cyrus D. Bell, and one or two other families, were attending the Trinity Cathedral which was then located near 13th and Farnam Street, when we decided that we wanted a place to worship. Trinity started a mission for us which was named St. Phillip Mission. The Mission was a part of the Trinity Cathedral and we had the services of the Cathedral twice a month, when we were called in to worship with them. When Trinity was moved to its present site we were unable to purchase adjoining property as the property was part of the estate of the Cleveland family and was in litigation. We decided to purchase property for the Church site and finally decided to take the property that was offered on North 21 St. The present St. Phillips church was built in 1892 as a memorial to Bishop Worthington's mother-in-law. Bishop Worthington was instrumental in securing John Albert Williams for the church as he had spent several summers in Omaha on his vacation and had helped in the Mission, and saw the need of continuing the work. John Albert Williams was born in London Ont. Canada, in 1866. While he was still a child his family moved to Detroit and he attended school there. He graduated from school in 1887, and attended Seabury seminary, graduating from there in 1891 and coming to Omaha the same year. He served St. Phillips Church for 42 years until his death four years ago. He was Historiographer and Secretary of the Diocese for many years, Editor and Co-Editor of the Crosier, the official Diocesan paper, first president of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, better known as the N.A.A.C.P., Editor of the Monitor, one of the first Negro newspaper's in Nebraska. He also taught in the Mission before the present church was built.

I was confirmed in the Episcopal church in 1887, the same year that my husband graduated from school, and I have served in the church ever since. Beside serving as

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president of the Women's Auxiliary of the church, I have served as Directoress of the Alter Guild, and as organist of the church for many years. I have served as Chairman of the Board of management of the Y.W.C.A., on the Board of the Colored Old Folks home, for a number of years, and on the Board of Woodson center.

Father Williams was responsible for many of the Negroes coming to Omaha from the South, as he sent his paper, The Monitor to various places over the United States, and in the paper he was urging them to come here. My father, William Gambol, came to Lincoln Nebraska about 1870, from Mobile Alabama his home and started a barber shop. My mother was born in New Hampshire and came to Lincoln shortly after my father. They were married in Lincoln about 1873. My father established one of the finest barber shops in Omaha and catered to White trade only. In this manner he was able to earn a better salary. By being able to earn as much as he did I was able to attend the Normal school, which in turn afforded me the opportunity to teach in the public schools of Omaha and be the first Negro to have this chance. The other Negro to teach in the public school was Mrs Eulie Britt, who at that time was Miss Eulie Overall. As the Normal school had ceased to function she attended Peru Normal school, at Peru Nebraska, for two years. She was employed about 1898 and taught for several years until she resigned as she like-wise was married. Mrs. Britt is now living in California, but her husband Dr. Britt yet lives here in Omaha. My oldest daughter Dorothy Isaac lives in Tulsa oklahoma, and is married to a professor at Langston University. My youngest daughter Catherine Walker is married to Arnold Walker, who is the Industrial Secretary of the St. Louis Urban League. They are both graduates of the University of Nebraska. Dorothy has the first Negro to graduate from the Omaha University, completing a four year course. Others graduated from there before but they did not spend four years at the University. My son Worthington, named in honor of Bishop Worthington, is an accomplished musician, playing the Violin. He is employed by Kimball laundry, as a driver on one of their trucks. He was the first Negro to

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be so employed by this company. Comments: Mrs John Albert Williams was formerly Miss Lucy Gambol, the first Negro teacher in the Omaha public schools.