

ABSTRACT: Reverend Jerome Fowler is a descendent of Adam Francis Plummer, a slave at Rivesdale Plantation who was freed in 1864 and founded Mount Rose Farm in present day Edmonston. Plummer was literate and community minded. He made sure everyone who needed help got it. Sarah Miranda Plummer, Adam’s sister, formed Colored Baptist Church in Bladensburg, now under a new name and new congregation. The Plummer family made great strides in building community and improving life despite obstacles. In this interview, Reverend Fowler tells about the stories he has heard from relatives and literature. Fowler holds that the life of Adam Francis Plummer should not be forgotten or overshadowed.

Reverend Folwer on Adam Francis Plummer: “All in all, people of all races had great respect for Adam Francis Plummer, even when he was a slave on Riversdale. They would come here to Riversdale to purchase his roses. People all over the area knew about his rose bushes, and so they would come and purchase them and whatever else he had. He was allowed to keep the money that he made from his sales to help take care of his family to provide for his families needs. I go back and think about the fact that there is an entry in his diary and that has been passed down through the years when he was a slave. It wasn’t against the law in Maryland, but it was frowned upon for slaves to be literate to be able to read and write. There was no laws against it, but sometimes the slave masters, if they found out their slaves could read and write they would sell them to the Deep South as punishment, where they would be harshly treated.”



Free Hope Baptist Church – Bladensburg, MD
Founded by Sarah Miranda Plummer



Lafayette St. , Edmonston – General Location of
Mount Rose Farm



Riversdale Plantation (Dependency left)



Riversdale Plantation Dependency – Contains a
Display about Adam Francis Plummer

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Location: UMPC HBK Maryland Room Maryland Stacks F205.N4 P58 1997, Riversdale Mansion Visitor'

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Location: UMCP HBK Maryland Room F187.P9 T48 1997; Riversdale Manison Visitor's Center; Prince George's County Library, Hyattsville, MDR 975.251 T

Port Towns Interview Project
Suzanne Stasiulatis interviewing Reverend Jerome Fowler
Interview at Riversdale Mansion: 4811 Riverdale Rd., Riverdale Park, MD 20737
October 31, 2007

Suzanne: OK. I need you to state your name, age, and where you're from.

Reverend Fowler: I am Reverend L. Jerome Fowler, age 60, and I am from Ft. Washington, Prince George's County, Maryland.

Suzanne: And what is your relationship to Mount Rose and Adam Francis Plummer?

Reverend Fowler: I am the great, great grandson of Adam Francis Plummer. I am the son of Fay Francis Plummer Fowler, who is the daughter of Robert Francis Plummer, who is the son of Nicholas Saunders Plummer, who is the fifth son of Adam Francis Plummer and Emily Saunders Plummer.

Suzanne: So, I couldn't find too much on the web about Mount Rose. Can you suggest some good books to read?

Reverend Fowler: Well, one good book to read is *Out of the Depths or the Triumphs of the Cross*, which was written by Nellie Arnold Plummer, the youngest daughter of Adam and Emily Plummer. Her book was written in 1927 and published. It is based on extractions from her father's diary as well as from her own recollections growing up in the Plummer home and on the Plummer Farm. In her book, she takes us back to the 18th century to her great grandfather Cupid Plummer, who was a slave in Marlboro and who served during the American Revolutionary War against Great Britain. She gives us a lot of information about the Plummer family, as well as, Washington D.C. and other areas. It is an excellent book to read. It is no long in print, but you can find it in some of your libraries.

Suzanne: Can you give me a basic history of Mount Rose?

Reverend Fowler: Mount Rose was a dream that my great, great grandfather had. When he was a slave for much of his life, he learned to read and write at a very young age. Adam Plummer was born in May of 1819. When he was about 10 years old, he was brought to Riversdale plantation from Goodwood, where he was born and raised. He was separated from his parents, and brought here to be a personal servant to Charles Benedict Calvert, the son of George Calvert. He learned to read and write here. He and young Calvert became very close and were loyal to each other. During his period as a slave here, he learned to do many things. One of things that he became involved with was agricultural research, working with Charles Benedict Calvert, who had studied at the University of Virginia, an agricultural school. Calvert was very interested in improving means and ways of producing crops. So, a lot of research was done. Charles Benedict Calvert, as a matter of fact, is credited with starting the Maryland Agricultural College,

which we now know at the University of Maryland at College Park. As matter of fact, he donated the land from Riversdale plantation for the school on which it now stands. He helped to build the first buildings, and appointed the first president of the school. Charles Benedict Calvert also lobbied for Congress and the presidency to start a department of agriculture, which was started during the Lincoln administration. Charles Benedict Calvert himself served as the first Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, until his death in 1864. Adam Francis Plummer learned and took an appreciation in growing vegetable and fruits, and crops and flowers. He loved flowers. He particularly loved roses. Working with Charles Calvert, he learned new ways of growing and developing rose bushes. So, 1868 he decided he that was going to be a land owner.

When he was freed in 1864, when the Maryland slaves were freed, he became the foreman on the plantation at Riversdale. He ran the whole plantation. In 1870 the plantation was sold, and the property would again be subdivided. In 1868, July 1868, Adam Francis Plummer negotiated with a gentleman in Hyattsville by the name of B.F. Guy, who was a realtor. He was selling some property. It was farmland, adjacent to Riversdale, which was about 10 acres more or less. He negotiated to sell that property to Adam Francis Plummer for 1,000 dollars. His intention was not honorable, however. The people in Hyattsville, the residents of Hyattsville, were very upset when they learned about this possible negotiation, because they didn't want a man of color owning property in their town. But B.F. Guy showed them they had nothing to worry about, because his plan was to extract as much money as he could from Adam Plummer. Take as much money as he could, get him to develop the land, and then take the land back from him. In July of 1868, Adam Plummer made a down payment of 344 dollars, as Guy had demanded, and signed the deed, the papers. The idea was whenever Guy wanted money, he would send a note to Plummer, telling him how much he had to pay and how soon he had to pay it. Adam Plummer some how or another would get that money together. He was given 18 months to pay for the land. All the while Guy was encouraging him to go ahead and put up a house on the property, to build a house on the property, move his family in. But Adam Plummer refused to do so, until the land was paid for. To Guy's surprise and to the surprise of the residents of Hyattsville, Plummer paid off that note in 15 months, rather than 18 months. After he paid it off, he moved his family home to the farm. He named it Mount Rose, for the beautiful flowers he started developing on the property. That is the history of Mount Rose.

Suzanne: What do you want others to know about Adam Francis Plummer and Mount Rose?

Reverend Fowler: I want the world to know, I want people to understand, that here was a man of character. Adam Francis Plummer believed in owing no person. Many times he had to borrow from his neighbors, from his family. People didn't mind, because they knew of his integrity. In 1864, he had started raising money to send his oldest son to New Orleans, to the deep south, in search of their oldest daughter Sarah Miranda Plummer, who had been taken there as a slave in 1860. By October of 1866, he had raised 250 dollars, which was used to send Henry, his oldest son, to New Orleans. He and his family had saved as much as they could. He had been a slave all of his life, and when he became

a free man in 1864, and became the foreman here at Riversdale, he was paid the enormous wages of 15 dollars a month. That was his salary as foreman. His wife was an excellent cook and house-servant. She was able to get a job cooking in homes, and she was earning 10 dollars a month, which was good money. So, they saved what they could. They had a large family. They had 8 children. Seven of them were at home. Well, 6 of them were at home. Sarah Miranda was somewhere in New Orleans. They didn't know where. Their son, Henry Plummer, was in the Navy, fighting in the Civil War. But they had 6 children to feed and Emily's mother to take care of. But they made it. They survived. There were sacrifices that had to be made. They didn't mind going without a meal, when necessary, to make those sacrifices. People knew of his integrity and so when he was trying to raise this money to go to New Orleans, his relatives, neighbors on the plantation, Black and White people didn't mind supporting him. We have records even today that show 250 dollars that was raised. He kept a record of it in his diary, his journal, and he paid it back within 6 months. Everybody who had lent him money he paid it all back to him. So, when he came back in 1868 and needed to borrow money again, they didn't mind. They gave him what they could, knowing they would get it back. Adam Plummer came from very humble beginnings. But he believed that he could do what he wanted to do. He believed in himself. He was a man of high self-esteem, and he wanted the best for his family. He built, he developed a farm. It made him successful. He lived to enjoy the fruits of his labor, and left a legacy behind for every member of his family to emulate to and to try to reach. To be the best you can, regardless of how you started. The best, and do your best and be honorable in all things.

Suzanne: What do you know about your great, great grandfather? What was he like?

Reverend Plummer: He was a very quiet man. When I was a small child, I spent a lot of time with my own grandfather, and he would tell me stories about his grandfather. He was stern. He was very strict. He didn't say too much. He pretty much stayed to himself. During his life as a slave, and the things that he had to endure to keep his family together, had caused him to become inverted. He didn't reach out to people. He was a man who had learned to express himself in his writing. So, he kept this diary from 1841 to the day of his death. He would write his feelings and expressions in his diary, rather than to share them with other people. I can imagine life had dealt him some serious blows, being a slave much of his younger life. The first 23 years of their marriage, of he and Emily's marriage, they were separated, constantly. They were never together. She was at one plantation. He was at Riversdale. She was at Three Sisters Plantation. Ten years after they were married, she was sold and was taken to Washington D.C. to Meridian Hill. The first 10 years, the relationship that he had with his master, Charles Benedict Clavert, allowed him on Saturday night, after his chores were done, to walk the eight miles between Riversdale and Three Sisters to be with his family, until early Monday morning and he would be back on the plantation, be back on his job. That I believe took its toll.

In 1845, he had sought to escape with his family on the Underground Railroad. Everything was in readiness for that escape. His plan was foiled, when a relative of his wife had taken his marriage license and given it to the mistress at Three Sisters and told of them of their plan, of his plan to escape with Emily and the two children at that time.

And, of course, he was punished for that and Emily was punished for that. Emily was put out to the fields for hard labor. That took a toll on him. The fact that he had taught one of his wife's younger brothers to read and write, and he had subsequently escaped himself on the Underground Railroad some 10 years later. Because of that, his wife's siblings and her mother were sold and separated. Some of her siblings were never heard from again. As matter of fact, we have a record that two of Emily's sisters died right here in this area in a snow blizzard in the winter of 1857. They had tried to go to Alexandria, Virginia, to visit their mother who was in a slave pen over there. Coming back, they got caught in a snow blizzard, and they died in the blizzard. They froze to death. That was heartbreaking. To the family, it was heartbreaking to Adam, because all of this was a result of his teaching one of her brothers to read and write and his escaping to Canada. For fear that he might come back and try to rescue other members of the family, they had sold them off. One brother was sold to Tennessee. Another sister was sold to Texas. She was never heard from again. It was a sad, very sad, situation. The things that he tried to do and tried to accomplish in life seemed to backfire. But he never gave up, but he did stop trusting people. So, he became closed-mouthed and introverted. But he was always an honorable man. My grandfather always spoke highly of him. He was a man of integrity. He never smoked. He never drank. He had one wife. She died almost 30 years before he died. But he was honorable to his family. He demanded the best from his children.

Suzanne: So, Mount Rose eventually developed into Edmonston. How was he (Adam Plummer) important to how the community grew?

Reverend Fowler: Well, I don't know that much about the community. It was just recently that we recognized that it was a part of the Edmonston community. We always knew it as being part of Hyattsville, even though it was on the other side of the track. I remember visiting those houses as a young child. The property stayed in the family until the mid-50s, when it was sold. It was heir property, and during my lifetime there were three houses and they rented them out: Adam Plummer's last house that he built, my great grandfather's house that was on the property and Uncle Robert's house that was on the property. As matter of fact, two ladies in our church lived in one of the houses. I used to visit Uncle Robert's daughter who lived directly across the tracks from the property and we would go out to visit her and her family. I used to run across the tracks and play over in the yard. The property was sold. That seemed the end of it. I guess they didn't know what was going to happen to the property. What did happen was that everything was torn down and it became commercial land, became warehouses and whatnot. And so, I think a heritage was lost. I have, as matter fact, in recent years, I have tried to retrace those steps and where the houses were located and the proximity to the railroad tracks and the railroad running through. I could still hear the whistle of the train in my head. I think it's important that we know our heritage and that we trace our heritage. And I think it's commendable the mayor of Edmonston and councilmen and to all those who are working to give recognition to this. It is important for Black, White, Hispanic, all of us, because we all need to know our heritage, need to know from whence we've come. In order so we can be the people we need to be in moving into the future. I think it's wonderful particularly at this time, in as much as, Adam Plummer's diary that he started writing in 1841 has now has its place in national history with the Smithsonian Institution.

The diary now has its own website. Anybody can go online and look the diary, read the diary itself and read the transcriptions that have been recorded from the diary. They can see for themselves, the spirituality of Adam Francis Plummer in his writing, and in things that he talks about in his diary, mentions in his diary. Also, they could see, the excitement, his youngest daughter Nellie, as she makes her own inscriptions in the diary, and adds to the diary, flavor that is very unique. We can feel it. We can read it. We can see it. We can taste it. As a matter of fact, and begin to know the man for ourselves. Then to drive through Edmonston and know that this is where he had once lived, the streets that he had once walked, the land he had once walked. It is wonderful. It is a heritage that will go down in the annals of time.

Suzanne: Are there any stories that you know that have been passed down from generation to generation?

Reverend Fowler: The stories pretty much are found in the book here, in Nellie's book. My grandfather when he was young used to tell his stories of his own boyhood and growing up. His father, my grandfather's father, when they were children had a large family, 15 children altogether. The boys, their responsibility was to go through the town of Hyattsville, at that time they had gas street lamps, and they had to go through each night, each evening, and turn those gas lamps on to illuminate the streets of the town. And then get up the very next morning and go back and extinguish those lamps before they did anything else. It was a rough, tough life, tough life but that was their responsibility and that's what their father had them doing. That was not when you felt like it, that was everyday, twice a day. You think about now, somebody just pushes a switch and the lights all over the city come on. The street lamps come on. Here you had to go one by one and extinguish or turn them on, each lamp. So, it was a lot of work. But he used to tell that story with pride. It was farm land so they had to work the farm and keep things going. To go to the 6th grade was an accomplishment, to accomplish 6th grade education was saying something. But their grandfather encouraged them. Their father encouraged them. They grew up in a strict environment, but they grew up with a lot of love around, aunts and uncles right there. It was almost like a compound, where the family was nurtured together, and extensions of the family. So, you had that village sort of situation growing up.

Suzanne: What went into the planning, community/family setting planning, of Mount Rose?

Reverend Fowler: Well, I believe Adam Plummer wanted a place that his family could be safe and be a family. At that time, everything centered on the home. Even when family members died, they were buried right there. Part of the land was set aside for the burial ground. So, it was a communal type atmosphere. They were very close. Emily died in 1876, just six years after they had moved onto the land. She was the first to be buried. But, many, many, many, grandchildren were buried there as well. Many of them died in childhood or in infancy. So, they were buried right there on the land. It was special. It was special. Matter of fact, when the oldest son Henry died in 1905, he was out in Kansas City, Kansas. He had pastored a church out there, after he left the military. His body was

brought home and he was buried next to his mother at Mount Rose. A month later, the daughter Sarah Miranda, the oldest daughter, succumbed to pneumonia and was buried on that property. So many members of the family were buried there together. It was a sad day for the family in reading the history, reading Aunt Nellie's notes. It was a sad day, when the state of Maryland had past a law saying that human remains could not be buried anywhere. They had to be buried in a recognized cemetery. That was in 1911. All of those bodies had to be exhumed from the farm and taken to a recognized cemetery. It kind of separated them from those spirits. So, you see that. Then you see in life, you see the family and the community working together. Nellie was a schoolteacher. She taught for more than 45 years, a schoolteacher and a principal. Her presence in the community was a powerful presence. Her twin brother Robert was a pharmacist, a businessman in Hyattsville and in Washington D.C. The Plummer presence was always there. Other siblings, other sisters, sisters Julia and Maggie, all were prominent. All the Plummer family was recognized in the community. People looked up to the Plummers. Even when I came along years and years later, there was still that aura about the family that everyone in the area had, in North Brentwood, in Hyattsville. When you mentioned the Plummer name, they looked at you a little differently. They responded a little differently to you, because of the impact I think that Adam and his children made on the community. It had carried over.

Suzanne: What was everyday life like? Work, school, transportation?

Reverend Fowler: Everyday life was rather rough, I would imagine. Work was pretty much on the farm, keeping things moving, keeping things growing, and going, overseeing the property. As we know, Adam had originally purchased 10 acres of land. His son, Henry, had a farm, another 13 acres adjoining. So, when Henry moved away and sold the land to his father, that was about 20 more acres there. Like most families you had your ups and your downs. You had squabbling sometimes and arguments. They had their share. But life, I think, was good. Transportation and the railroad were right there. There was a station here on Riversdale Plantation, where the train could stop. That was close enough to get to, walk to, to go to where they wanted to go. Being the type of family that they were, they had the means of horses and carriages and buggies and whatnot to get to where they wanted to go. Of course much of the life of the family centered around the church and community. Sarah Miranda, the oldest daughter, had started the Colored Baptist Church that was in Bladensburg, near Peace Cross. She started that church in October 1866. So much of their life was centered around church. The church still exists and is now the St. Paul Baptist Church, Prince George's County, Maryland, located now in Capital Heights and in Ft. Washington.

In 1870, Henry Plummer, the oldest son, had an incident. A man of color died in Hyattsville. Being an ex-slave his family didn't have the means to bury him. The funeral director then was Francis Gasch Funeral Home. That still exists here in Hyattsville. For whatever reason, Mr. Gasch refused to bury the man, because his family couldn't guarantee the payment. Henry Plummer and Adam Plummer decided they would stand for and guarantee that payment for the expenses for the man's burial. So, the man was taken care of and buried properly. From that incident, Henry Plummer sat down and

began developing a plan of action, which ended up being the organization and formulation of the Bladensburg Burial Association, which was designed to help to take care of the sick and bury the dead. It was a forerunner to today's insurance companies. People could join the association, the organization, and they would pay monthly dues into the organization. If they became ill and couldn't work, the organization would provide them with money on a weekly basis to take care of their medical bills and whatever they needed. Then on their death, would pay money to help to bury them. We have the story, that when he organized the group together in 1870, his sister Sarah Miranda took her entire month's wages, 10 dollars, and paid for her own membership, her own joining fee, and several of the family members. The whole 10 dollars a month wages to get it started. The union stayed, grew and flourished. It stayed in existence until 1986. At that time, I was serving as its president. We had reached the point by that time, that we just could not feasibly keep it going. People were not interested in joining something like that, because we weren't able to pay the big bucks that insurance companies were paying for illness and for death. Our payments could barely cover the expenses of flowers by that time. But it had served its purpose. The union's history still exists even today, because the memorabilia of the union, its banner that it used over 100 years, that it flew for over 100 years, the banner, the regalia that the members would wear when they turned out as a group is now in the possession of the Smithsonian Institution and sometimes on display. So, we have that legacy. So yes, we made a great impact, even in the 1800s. We made a great impact.

Suzanne: What were racial relationships like?

Reverend Fowler: Tense, even as they are today. But we do know, that Adam Plummer and his family maintained a very warm relationship with the slave owners, with the Calvert family. We know that in 1905, when Adam Plummer died, he was 87, one of Charles Benedict Calvert's sons wrote a beautiful condolence to the family, and mentioned the esteem that his father had for Adam Francis Plummer. Many of the Calvert family attended the funeral at the church in Bladensburg. Yes, there was tension. There was racial tension, because you had a family that stood up for what it believed in and did what was necessary. I don't know that Edmonston, the community of Edmonston at that time had that, because it was mostly the colored race in Edmonston. But in Hyattsville, you had the land owners, who had been around the Hyatt family, other families who had been around and had had slave themselves. So, there was a bit tension. All in all, people of all races had great respect for Adam Francis Plummer, even when he was a slave on Riversdale. They would come here to Riversdale to purchase his roses. People all over the area knew about his rose bushes, and so they would come and purchase them and whatever else he had. He was allowed to keep the money that he made from his sales to help take care of his family to provide for his families needs.

I go back and think about the fact that there is an entry in his diary and that has been passed down through the years when he was a slave. It wasn't against the law in Maryland, but it was frowned upon for slaves to be literate to be able to read and write. There were no laws against it, but sometimes the slave masters, if they found out their slaves could read and write, they would sell them to the Deep South as punishment,

where they would be harshly treated. But there was an incident beyond Riversdale. The custom was if you received a letter or you would write a letter, you had the foreman or someone over you to assist you or write the letter for you or read the letter for you. Charles Benedict Calvert himself would often read letters for his slaves. There was one incident, on particular day, when one of the slaves brought a letter that he received and asked Mr. Calvert to read this letter. It was so badly and poorly written that Calvert himself had trouble reading it. The slave became frustrated and told him what was in the letter. Calvert became angry and wanted to know, "Well, how did you know?" The slave had to tell the truth and said, "Well, Adam read it to me." But there was no record of him ever being punished or anything. We know that Calvert had a great esteem for Adam Plummer and it was reciprocated. He would trust this slave to carry messages or carry money or to receive money. They had no bounds. They had a relationship where they confided in each other. So, you have the good and you have the bad. You have both.

Suzanne: What was life like for children?

Reverend Folwer: Children...life for children was really rough. Not only did the slaves suffer during that period, but even in the mansions people suffered. Life was harsh and it was hard for children to survive. With the Calverts at Riversdale, George and Rosalie Calvert buried several of their children in childhood in infancy. The Plummers, even after slavery, buried several of their children. Even today, there is a weakness in most of Plummers that is centered in the pulmonary notions. Many of them died from pneumonia. They died as young ages. They died as children. My great grandfather and my great grandparents, Nicholas and Fanny Plummer, had 15 children. She birthed 15 children, but only 6 of those 15 lived to their 25 birthday, lived to be 25 years old. Most of them died, 11 of them died either in infancy or young people, youngsters. Many of the Plummers died young adults from pulmonary problems. Life was hard, but they survived. They bound together and they survived. But it was hard for the children to make it.

Suzanne: In what respects, was the settlement, family farm, unique?

Reverend Fowler: It was unique first of all because it was owned by a family of color. It was unusual for people of color at that time to own property. It was not welcome. Not only did they own the property, but they maintained it and made it workable. It was a sense of pride for the community. For years, Riversdale stood in shambles. The mansion stood in shambles when I was a young child. My grandfather would bring me out to see the mansion. Windows were broken. Doors were off the hinges. It was a place of danger. Now, it is being restored. Even in your community, you have homes that are not kept up like they should be. The Plummer compound, you might say, was a place of pride, not only for the family, but for the community. People knew that the Plummers were going to take care of theirs and take care of yours as well if they could.

Suzanne: In your eyes what changes do you see in the community in recent times?

Reverend Fowler: It's sad to see that much of the community has become so commercialized with warehouses. But it is wonderful to see us coming back. It's good to

see community pride coming back. I understand that the government of Edmonston is relatively new. With a mayor and, I think, 4 council members. It's relatively new. I think it's good to see that and the people of the community taking pride in what they have.

Suzanne: Do people recognize Mount Rose as a piece of history that represents the community?

Reverend Fowler: They will. They will. I am thankful to Mayor Ortiz and the council for that determination to make us aware. So often, Black history is obscured. We learned about Riversdale and the Steers family and the Calvert family, and now people are beginning to learn about the Plummers and the other families of color, that were on the plantation and helped to build it. That's important.

Suzanne: What is your favorite historical landmark or spot that today represents Mount Rose to you?

Reverend Fowler: The tracks, the train tracks. The same track that runs past Riversdale, runs past the house here now, that ran through the Riversdale Plantation, ran right in front of the farm, leads to the farm, and all the way down to Bladensburg and ran directly behind the church in Bladensburg, where I grew up in the family church. That train has always been a focal part of my life. All the time growing up in the church, it seemed like every Sunday morning, the pastor would get up to start the sermon and get into the sermon, then the train would come through. Sometimes it made a stop, right there behind the church and he had to stop until that train had gone. It would get so loud sometimes. But that's always been a focal point. Just coming out here and hearing the train go by takes me back, gives me a sense of nostalgia.

Suzanne: How can the memory of Adam Francis Plummer live on?

Reverend Fowler: The memory of Adam Francis Plummer will live on, through people like myself, who didn't know him personally, but see the sense of his spirit in our lives. When Nellie Arnold Plummer published her book in 1927, she made sure that every family member, every family or household, in the Plummer family, not only the Plummer family but her mother's side of the family as well, got copies of that book. People she didn't even know received copies of that book. There was a family that was living in Tennessee. Nellie had record of a letter that her mother's brother had written her in 1871. She had never met this uncle. He had been taken to Tennessee as a slave. He had been forced to change his name, but he had taught his children about their heritage. That's all the record she had. When she published her book in 1927, she sent a box of her books to the post master of this small town in Tennessee, with the instructions that any members of that family were still alive that he would see that he got those books. Well, there was a lady who was still there, a young woman raising a family, getting married and was raising a family. This post master knew of the relationship to her grandfather. When her husband came to town, he gave him the box of books to give to his wife. Took them home, and she saw that her aunts and uncles and cousins and all got copies of that book. That was in '27. This lady wrote a letter of thanks to Nellie Plummer here, thanking her

for the book and telling her who she was. They started corresponding back and forth. She was carrying at that time her fourth child. She promised Aunt Nellie that if that child was born a girl, she was going to name it Nellie after her. That child was born a girl and she named that child Nellie. I knew absolutely nothing about this family. I had read in the book about this brother, but had never connected anything. In September 2002, I received a phone call from the church. We have a day care center. They had gotten this phone call from Detroit, Michigan, inquiring about St. Paul Baptist Church of Bladensburg. This woman in Michigan had a copy of the book, the original book, and she had been reading and trying to connect the family, but she couldn't figure any connection. Finally, one night she was up, her husband worked at night, so she up studying and reading. She was a school principal. The idea came...find the church. See if the church still exists. So, 3:00 in the morning she called information, asked for Bladensburg, Maryland, and asked for the St. Paul Baptist Church. The operator said, "Well I don't have a St. Paul Baptist Church in Bladensburg, but I have one in Capital Heights, Maryland." Well this lady had been here several times, so she kind of knew the proximity of the county. She got the number. She called, and got one of the workers in the day care center, who was a member of our church. She inquired she was looking for the St. Paul Baptist Church that had been in Bladensburg. The lady said, "This is the church that was in Bladensburg. This is St. Paul." She said, "I believe my ancestor is the founder, Sarah Miranda Plummer." She said, "Well, this is the church that Sarah Miranda Plummer founded." I had taught the history enough that they knew. So, she got excited. She started asking questions. She said, "Wait a minute." She said, "The person you need to talk with is Reverend Fowler. He is a descendent of the Plummer family." We connected. The first thing she said to me, "Do you have a copy of the book?" I said, "Yes, I have the book." We all know what it means by, "the book." It's a term everybody uses in reference to this book. She said, "Turn to page 57." There's a letter at the bottom of the page. I turned to the page and began to read it. It was from Leverne, Tennessee dated 1871.

Suzanne: It's the same today. Looking for people.

Reverend Fowler: This lady that called was the great granddaughter of Dennis Arnold, Emily Plummer's brother who had been sold to Tennessee. It was her grandmother who had received that box of books in 1927. The books are still in the family. They still have them. So, by her having that book and reading it and trying to connect, we were able to connect as a family. Within 2 weeks, this woman, her uncle, and her aunt, his sister, her mother's brother and her mother's sister, and her uncle's daughter drove down here. The 4 of them drove down here from Detroit to meet me and to find out the family history. Of course, I brought them to Riversdale. I took them to what was once Three Sister's Plantation to let them know where their family had come from. I took them to the warehouse district down in Edmonston to show them where the farm was that's talked about in the book. I took them to the old church in Bladensburg that still exists. I took them around and showed them some of the highlights of the Plummer landmarks. They were so enthused. We call each other constantly, checking on each other. I have a wonderful relationship with that family. We have family members on the west coast, California, Oregon. We have family members in the Midwest. We have family members in the south. That we have connected through this book. So as long as that book...and

I'm in the process now of trying to get it reprinted...the family will be able to connect. This is a reprint here. This was reprinted in 1997 by Lewis Henry Gates. But in the original book, in her preface, Nellie Arnold Plummer writes in the preface, "Should this little world influence just a few of our young people to show the gratitude due to those who went before them, I shall rejoice at the hand of God in history." I have always believed this book was written for me. I was at least one who grabbed it and internalized it. I have been reading this book repeatedly since I was 7 years old. It has become a part of my life. I can lecture all about this book. I don't have to open it, but I have references I can give to people about this book about this book and its importance. I always thought this book was written for me. I was one of the young people that would be inspired by it. I'm hoping. I am trying to inspire other young people in that direction to carry that torch. I'm getting older. I won't be here much longer. But somebody needs to keep it going and keep that torch burning. So, we have determination to reprint this book so that every member of the family will have it. The generations to come will have it to show whence we've come. There have been some outstanding families of color that came out of slavery. One family that the Maryland prides itself in is the Plummer family that made some wonderful end roads in history. Now we begin to see the end roads of the Plummer family. As the name goes out, Adam Francis Plummer, and in years to come people are going to be flocking to find out more about Mount Rose. Who knows, something may have to be done at some point to recreate that farm. I don't know. Just like we are trying to recreate on a smaller basis Riversdale Plantation. But it's going to be important and I think it's going to be a great asset to Edmonston. I thank people like you who take it seriously.