Summary of Interview with S. Edward Hall
Interviewed by Steve Trimble
October and November, 1972

Cassette 1/side 1 (October 18, 1972)

Born in Batavia, Illinois 1878.
Father - Civil War Veteran out of Chicago.
Grandfather - barber from Pennsylvania.
Siblings - one brother, two sisters, one half-brother.
On the Hall side of the family, people were never slaves -- Grandfather Hall's mother was brought by an English sailor who kept this woman in Pennsylvania as his station, his home, his 'Queen of Africa' and her four sons all bore their English father's name Hall.
Grandfather Hall became a cabin boy, landed in Chicago and made his way to Michigan where he became a barber.
Ed Hall lived with his grandparents during part of his childhood while his father and siblings lived in Elgin.
Uncle Charlie Hall -- a compiler of Negro History.
Ed Hall's mother died at his birth.
Father died when Ed was twelve.
Grandfather Hall -- a preacher and a circuit-ride preacher in the 1880s.
Childhood memories of Batavia, illinois: living with grandparents - washday - cooper's shop - the milkman.
The Negro community in Batavia -- not large, but a solid 100 out of 10,000.
Moved to Elgin upon father's remarriage about 1885. Sold papers in Elgin and Chicago.
Upon father's death went to live in Chicago with uncle/cousin Johnny Grand (1890).
Mention of great prize-fighters John L. Sullivan and Peter Jackson.
Ed's friends in Chicago -- their parents were all of foreign extraction and the boys were called 'Tom the Dago, - The Sheeney, etc.'
The assault of the fruit vendor -- Ed and two of his friends sold papers on a particular street corner.
One day the three boys rivalled a fruit vendor for the corner. Pushed, the man fell and hit his head on the curb. The blow resulted in the man's death. The three boys appeared in court and one of the three confessed to the crime rather than have all three sent to the penitentiary. Ed was sent away from Chicago by his relatives.

Cassette 1/side 2 (October 18, 1972)

For Tony, the boy who confessed to the assault of the fruit vendor, his time in the penitentiary was a blessing in disguise because he got an education there. Tony died young.
The second friend, the Irish boy McCarthy, joined the fire department on the North Side.
Ed Hall returned to Elgin where he attended school, seventh or eighth grade.
Worked at night at the watch school (Elgin watches and clocks).

On Saturdays, Ed worked in his uncle's barber shop. Remembers the use of spider's webs to stop a flow of blood when a man was cut during a shave.

All Negroes in Elgin were ex-slaves except the Halls.

Inter-racial relations: Ed and a friend used to date two Scandinavian girls. Went to church, the ice cream parlor (in which Ed washed dishes Monday night). Ed's friend was named Amanda.

At age twenty-two Ed moved to St. Paul. Back to Elgin for a visit, Ed had a strange, chance encounter with Amanda after their early restrained relationship.

Various jobs Ed had in the community (Elgin) and how he became known and respected. Got his half brother out of jail one night.

The use of snoose by Negro women.

Older people talked about being slaves.

Before he was twelve, Ed read the newspapers to old ex-slaves.

At these gatherings, the old people told stories of the slave days.

Aunt Jane's Story. A black man Sam from another plantation was responsible for `putting Aunt Jane pregnant'. The slave master did not want his slave women breeding at their will and showed great cruelty to the woman: hanging her by her thumbs soon after the birth, whipping her on another occasion.

Cassette 2/side 1 (October 18, 1972)

Aunt Jane's story, continued. A man named Tom carried Aunt Jane and her baby on his back and they both stayed with Tom on a third plantation.

What became of that child? When the slaves were freed and had to leave the plantation, Aunt Jane had three children. She could not hold all of them in her arms. The boy was left behind. Aunt Jane last saw him running after the wagon, crying `mama, mama.'

Grandfather Smith -- Ed's mother's father -- worked at whitewashing barns, houses, etc., and he was something of a preacher. There may have been some sense of rivalry between the two preacher grandfathers. Grandfather Smith was a slave who ran away from the plantation.

Ed Hall's father talked about the Civil War, his and other Negroes' enlistment in the army.

Uncle Abe was the first Negro employed by the Chicago Postoffice.

Mention of Travan, a well-known writer, preacher and talker, who was thought of as we might think of Martin Luther King today. Travan was a white man.

Some of the Hall family, cousins of Ed, passed for white and got better employment than they could expect to get as Negroes.

Ed Hall's barber shop in St. Paul was located next to Field and Schlick (Fifth and Wabasha).

Ed Hall was one of the founders of the St. Paul Urban League.

A painting of Ed Hall hangs in the new office (of what?).

Ed Hall's meeting of his `white' cousin Dan Hall in Detroit; cousin Amy's fear of being found out to be black.
Cassette 2/side 2 (October 20, 1972)

More about ex-slaves:

There was a Mr. Grissom who brought his cow with him to St. Paul. Grissom had been a slave on a battleship; his wife, a housekeeper as a slave.

About 1863 a group of slaves came with the soldiers to Chicago and then to Elgin. The slaves slept outside their first night in the North and awoke to find a blanket of snow laid over their sleeping blankets -- they had never seen snow before!

The lost slave children -- after the war many ads appeared in newspapers by and for misplaced persons.

Older Negro people told tales as if the stories were their lives -- for example the story of the six dogs as told by an elderly slave woman (here Ed Hall tells the story).

How did Ed Hall come to St. Paul?

When Ed Hall was eighteen, he moved to Springfield, Illinois to join his brother Orrey (?) and did barbering in rented space. There was racial prejudice in Springfield -- it was apparent in service given in the Postoffice and in work opportunities.

Cassette 3/side 1 (October 20, 1972)

Orrey (?) Hall moved to Dixon, Illinois and Ed went there to work in the barbershop of a hotel. Entered Dixon College, but found no social life in the city. Entertainment: minstrel shows, musicals, bands, dramas, vaudeville (Ed saw Bo Jangles) for which students and negroes were seated downstairs and better folk up in the gallery. Moved to Creston, Illinois with brother. Ed sang in the choir of the all-white church Sunday night while prominent men of the community played poker in the barber shop where Ed worked. Ed's brother was losing the profits of the barbering business in these poker games and the wives of the prominent men objected to such Sunday activity, so it all came to an end.

Card playing involved crooked work. There was a professional card player on every train and one taught Ed the tricks of the trade.

The barbering business -- Ed got the 'squirrels', men with rough beards.

Ed went to work for Howard in South St. Paul at twelve dollars a week. Hall lived where the Farmers' Market is now in an unheated room. In the area of Jackson to Mississippi and Broadway lived Negroes, Jews and a few Mexicans.

Ed Hall moved to 552 Wabasha, paying four dollars a week for room and board. Hall managed to save five hundred dollars in gold pieces.

Harry Shepherd/Shephard (?) was a black photographer in the Twin Cities -- an outstanding business photographer around 1900-1905.

Ed and his brother Orrey (?) bought a barber shop on Fifth and Wabasha.

The two chair shop became a four chair shop and in 1920 they remodeled.

In 1910 a Mr. Reis (?) of the county auditor's office wanted a Negro in the office. Whether this desire was politics or recognition of talent isn't clear, but Ed refused the position because he liked independence and his brother accepted the job.
Ed Hall married Hattie Grissom(?), a girl who worked in the Golden Rule. The couple planned to live with Hattie's parents, but a Mr. Whitney offered Ed a nine room house and agreed to let Ed pay for the house as he could. The in-laws came instead to live with the newlyweds. It took Ed five years to pay for the house.

His family always had a live-in girl and were able to alter the house over the years.

How did Ed Hall meet the woman who was to be his wife?

Dave Howard took Ed to a masquerade party. After the party Ed watched Dave say goodbye to his girl Hattie and thought she seemed cold, but later realized she could not kiss a man who had TB. Hattie and Ed knew each other eight years before their marriage. Music seemed to bring them together.

Colored churches had their big services Sunday night because many Negroes had to work during the day.

Prostitution in St. Paul: the houses were licensed and most of them were in the area now occupied by the ramp to the St. Paul Civic Center. Number Seven was the only Negro house of prostitution: the girls were Negro, the customers were white. Negro men could go in for a few hours before business started and amuse the girls, drink beer.

Cassette 3/side 2 (October 25, 1972)

While the houses of prostitution in St. Paul were licensed, the houses in Minneapolis were not.

Nina Clifford was one of the first to have a house; hers was at the location of the present morgue.

There were at least twenty houses in that area.

Patrons on Ed Hall's barbershop included Chief of Police O'Conner and License-Inspector Jessering(?), the man who licensed the houses of prostitution.

The barbershop was a congregating place.

Jessering might ask Ed to shave and barber a man at a house of prostitution.

During O'Conner's time a criminal could find harbor in St. Paul as long as he did not commit crimes in St. Paul. O'Conner did not turn men over to state officials. The license inspector Jessering supported O'Conner.

In St. Paul: licensed prostitution and underworld gambling.

License inspector often paid Ed to barber the fugitives.

Story of the wounded bank robber from Wisconsin: Ed had barbered an injured man in a hotel room. Later three law officers from Wisconsin came to the barber shop to question Ed. Hall denied knowing anything; the officers unsuccessfully searched Ed's shop. Outside in a buggy sat the license inspector and the bank robber to whom Ed managed to signal and they drove quietly away.

After two or three days in a house of prostitution a man might have to be bailed out by the license inspector and allowed to recover for a few days before going home.

Many Negro women worked as maids in the houses of prostitution and these women were respected in the community.

The Dillinger affair and the death of Chief O'Conner ended 'the whole thing.'
St. Paul was orderly under O'Conner, even with prostitution and the harboring of fugitives. Customers in the houses of prostitution were primarily travelling men. Many jokes in the barber shop about the houses of prostitution. Secretary to Chief O'Conner was a man named Nugent(?) and he and O'Conner used to play tricks on each other: e.g., the candy/laxative switch. Mention made of Oliver Towne's book of jokes politicians have played on each other. Story of Dr. Quinn, his horse and buggy, and Ed's barber pole. The Hill family were customers of Ed. Story of Walter Hill, youngest son of J. J. Hill and his 'open automobile', a Duesenberg, 'it seems to me." (Duesenberg Motor Co., 1920-1937; Duesenberg Corporation, 1966 -- both in Indiana. The Duesenberg brothers had a shop in St. Paul at 2654 University Avenue that turned out engines and racing cars between 1915 and 1917. Hill's car probably did not come from the St. Paul shop). Walter Hill gave a Mr. Schroeder(?), owner of livery barns on Kellogg, a ride in the car. There was an accident on Summit Avenue and Schroeder died as a result. In the funeral parade Hill had his automobile pulled by two horses.

Cassette 4/side 1 (October 25, 1972)

Schroeder(?), the man who died as a result of the accident in Walter Hill's automobile, was cremated and his ashes scattered over the Mississippi. Some years later Dr. Quinn, who had stood on the bridge with Hall and others to scatter Schroeder's ashes, died, and because the doctor had asked for the same service, Ed Hall found himself performing the task. Only Mrs. Quinn was with Hall; the others were all dead. Negro house of prostitution was sort of a gathering place for Negroes. The girls were all Negro; the customers were all white. Negro boys did go down, drink beer with the girls while they waited for business. Fort Snelling always had a couple of Negro regiments, and these men could be patrons. The double standard: the town girls were protected, kept away from sexual side of life while prostitutes offered release for sexual energies. To private, invitational dances were taken or came nice girls. At public dances, other sorts including married women whose husbands were away. Ed's crowd formed a club The Social Five and gave invitational dances. Formalities included the use of the dance card. Music was provided by local bands, all colored. In the summer there were boat rides with dances on the water. Importance of music in the Negro community. Many travelling minstrel shows, including The Old Kentucky Band. Ed was in a band in Elgin. Many singing groups, especially quartets -- they'd stop in the beer halls Sunday night and sing. Different crowds had their clubs or lodges or card groups or checker groups -- some way of offering evening entertainment. The TSTC(?) Club (seventy years old) consisted of twelve men organized for personal and civic loyalty: to make better contact with the white community, to entertain visiting Negroes.
(Booker T. Washington, DuBois) to talk about the needs of the Negro with newspaper editors and presidents of colleges and universities..

Cassette 4/side 2 (October 25, 1972)
Booker T. Washington came to raise funds for Negro colleges, but not from the Negro community. DuBois and others did not come to address Negro audiences -- their target was the white community.

Was the difference in the philosophies of Washington and DuBois a factor in splitting the Negro community? -- No, St. Paul Negroes weren't militant.

Prejudice was felt more acutely with the Urban League's attempts to get Negroes into more jobs in more businesses. Some of the successes of the League included positions for secretaries at The Golden Rule, the West Publishing Company, the Boston Clothing, and clerks at Bannon Brothers, but when the Urban League began to push for further employment (perhaps diversification is implied), it met with resistance.

Any Negro arriving in St. Paul would be sent by the Red Caps at the depot to Ed Hall's barber shop. Ed would start by asking his customers for a day's work for a new man.

The Community Chest -- a successful effort was made by Negroes in their own community. Later blacks canvassed whites and whites canvassed blacks.

Black communities tend to gather about their churches.

Roy Wilkinson was a church-schoolmate of Ed Hall. (pupil?)
Hall describes Negroes of Twin Cities and the Urban League as not militant.

The Hallie Q. Brown Community Center was built by Black money.
A new gym required white money and Louis Hill, Jr., was chairman of the committee.
In 1972 the new Martin Luther King Center was built and dedicated on November 2. Hallie Q. Brown went to the Indians.

There were many lodges in the Negro community. A dance hall was built for the lodge women, but it proved to be too expensive to maintain (taxes).

Cassette 5/side 1 (October 30, 1972)
The lodges to which Negroes belonged: Odd Fellows, Masonic Lodge, Knights of Pythius. Men and women had to pass through the saloons to get to the lodge halls upstairs, and there was a desire to build a lodge hall.

Some blacks were invited to join the YMCA by President Driscoll. Hall and four or five others joined. But the word was: 'don't bring too many down here.'

Negro community determined to build a lodge for themselves with their own resources. Masons and Odd Fellows bought lots on Aurora and started building Union Hall, meaning 'for everybody'. There were two lodge halls upstairs, dance floor on main floor, and a gym in the basement. But the hall was too expensive to maintain because of taxes.
Ed Hall was President of Union Hall and working with the Urban League.
(Discussion of the inter-involvement of the YMCA, a community house/hall, Union Hall and the
Community Chest. Exactly who did what, where and when is not clear).
The beginning of inter-racial projects was with the Community Hall of which the board of
directors, etc. was/were inter-racial.
Lonny Atkins (a Negro) was the architect consulted about the plans for another building in the
complex with Union Hall.

Cassette 5/side 2 (October 30, 1972)
The Martin Luther King Center -- would the city or the community run it? Today the Center is
owned by the Hallie Q. Brown board and the city has agreed to build a theater, playground
and parks on the grounds.
The choice of Hallie Q. Brown for the first community center was the result of an essay contest won
by Herbert Howell.
At first, the Lodges and the Churches were all the Black community had in the way of community
organizations.
The unions -- it was a question of whether they were trying to organize or exclude Negroes. In 1938
when the unions were trying to get into the packing industry at Swift, Negroes were brought
up from the South as strike-breakers. The AFL and CIO also battled over the barber
business in which Blacks were heavily employed.

Cassette 6/side 1 (November 1, 1972)
The statue of a soldier by the Cathedral in St. Paul is of a captain who served in the First Minnesota
Regiment, the first regiment to volunteer in the Civil War. Hall knew the captain from about
1906-1925 for he spent much of his leisure time in uniform in Hall's barber shop.
1864-1865: Freed Negroes who had come to St. Paul with the First Regiment were to stay in caves
at Ft. Snelling until they could build houses. However, the caves were already inhabited by
Indians who challenged entry of the Blacks who were instead landed near what is now
Seven Corners, collected driftwood from the banks of the river and built one large house to
accommodate all. Later smaller cabins were built for every two or three families and the
large building became a church.
Work for Blacks -- cleaning snow, yard work up in town. The soldiers of Minnesota made
themselves a sort of welfare committee to help freed slaves. Hall's knowledge of post-Civil
War matters comes from the stories of the children of slaves.
The building of Pilgrim Church. The first church was a log house; the second was back of the
present day St. Paul Hotel. Many ex-slaves went to the First Baptist Church in lower town
and it was this church and the First Minnesota Regiment that gave financial assistance to the
other church.
Pilgrim Church had 400-500 seatings. Important work of church was taking care of its needy
members. First pastor: the Rev. Hickman; then Crane, Carter. Pilgrim Church -- focal point
of Black community.
During the building of the present Capitol, much of the marble work was done by Negroes from
Georgia and other southern states. The story of the mules escaped from the work team and
recaptured.
Negroes preferred to live in the area surrounding Pilgrim Church. Inter-marriage was discouraged, especially by the Lodges. A man's white wife would not be permitted to join the women's group.

Cassette 6/side 2 (November 1, 1972)

Pilgrim Baptist Church moves quarters from near the old Capitol to a formerly Lutheran Church building on Grotto Street.

The areas of Black settlement in St. Paul around 1910 were in the vicinity of the present day Farmers' Market (Tenth and Robert). Negroes owned these small single-family houses. Other area: Rice & Central, Sherburne & Charles. Frogtown.

First parsonage bought for a pastor and his large family was at 1716 St. Anthony Avenue. In 1963, 1964 a second parsonage located on Wheelock Parkway was purchased, and the first house was maintained as a rental.

Pilgrim Baptist Church sponsored the 132-family government project across the street (from the Church?).

Cassette 7/side 1 (November 3, 1972)

Employment of Blacks: when Hall moved to St. Paul, he met colored people who had been born in St. Cloud and others who had been brought to St. Cloud to work in the stone quarries. In Stillwater the lumber business drew some Blacks; fifty to sixty families were there. Near Mille Lacs in the Hill City area, a group of Blacks, perhaps fifteen families, farmed.

C. W. Scrutchin was a lawyer who came to St. Paul and then went up to the Bemidji area to the lumber camps to help injured jacks claim compensation.

William T. Francis, born in Nashville, TN, got his law experience in the Northern Pacific Railroad Office in St. Paul. In 1902 he was appointed general counsel of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Hoover appointed Billy minister to Haiti (here it seems Hall is confused -- in an interview with the St. Paul Dispatch, February 11, 1970, Hall is interviewed and information in that article reveals that Francis (1869-1929) was appointed U. S. Minister to Liberia by President Calvin Coolidge and died abroad while still in that post). The funeral for Francis was at Pilgrim Baptist.

Another office boy at the Northern Pacific Railroad was R. Truder(?), who became district claims agent for the company.

Hall claims that all these men were children of slaves and were educated in St. Paul.

The Ninth and Tenth Calvary regiments of the army were Black men.

Booker T. Washington and the Hampton Institute had connections with St. Paul -- now black history is taught in many universities and Blacks do not have to go south to find Negro culture.

Frederick L. McGhee was a black criminal lawyer and a Catholic from St. Paul (the first Negro lawyer to be admitted to the Minnesota bar and practice law in the state). Much publicity surrounded one case of McGhee's -- the heated discussion between the lawyers led to McGhee's being called a "damn nigger." McGhee retaliated by spitting in the other lawyer's face.
face.
Negro women usually had more education than men. The boys in the family would get out and hustle after the eighth grade.

Two sisters (the Fan sisters?) were teachers in St. Paul when Hall came in 1900.
Marion Cuthbert, a woman from the Twin Cities, was national secretary of the YWCA in the 1930s. Other women mentioned. The women made very aggressive efforts on behalf of the Community Chest.

Cassette 7/side 2 (November 3, 1972)
While Negro newspapers (those of J. Q. Adams and F. D. Parker) were important in keeping the St. Paul community together, Hall gives great importance to word-of-mouth (like on the plantations) and sees the church bulletins as great lines of communications; e.g., the Methodist Church bulletin read: "Find a job at Hall's barbershop."

Hall sings and talks about a slave song "Run Slave Run."

Hall sees a major change in the type of employment available for Blacks now in comparison with 1900.

Class distinction within the black community: the light/the dark, the straight hair/the kinky. The "blue veins" -- Pilgrim Church was called a "blue vein" church, and there were "blue vein" societies and clubs, but it wasn't talked about and was "just social." Hall claims there was no hostility attached to the "blue vein" distinction.

In the area of relations between Blacks and Whites, Hall sees employment as breaking the way.