

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## *ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE*

Interviewees: **James Madison Shamblin, IV**

Interview Date: 09/20/2012

Interviewer: Jane Goodsill

Transcriber: Carlos Rubalcaba

First interview with James Madison Shamblin IV in Richmond, Tx for the Fort Bend Historical Commission Oral History Committee.

Comments: Second interview follows the first interview within this transcript.

16 Pages



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*Transcript*

GOODSILL: Mr. Shamblin thank you for coming today for our interview. Lets start by you saying your full name.

SHAMBLIN: James Madison Shamblin IV.

GOODSILL: Would you tell us your date of birth.

SHAMBLIN: 7/8/25.

GOODSILL: July 8, 1925. Could we start today with your ancestor who was involved with the Jay Bird-Woodpecker feud. What was his name and maybe when he was born if you know it.

SHAMBLIN: His name was James Madison Shamblin. He was born, I think somewhere in Georgia. That information is on that monument down at the City Hall. The date that he was born and the date that he died.

GOODSILL: Do you know what brought him to Fort Bend County?

SHAMBLIN: I really don't, seems like something was going on in Texas and they came to Texas to make their fortune. I guess he was young and Texas was the place to be.

GOODSILL: Tell me his relationship to you.

SHAMBLIN: He was my great grandfather. Do you want me to go into to how he was killed, do you want to talk about that? My understanding is that he came to Fort Bend County and not long after he was here he married one of the Field's daughters, I really don't know her name but they used to talk about Sister Betty. It makes me think maybe her name was Betty, we called was Little Grandmother. She lived to be ninety-three or ninety-four years old.

GOODSILL: Do you remember her?

SHAMBLIN: Oh yea, I knew her well. Oh yes.

GOODSILL: Your great grandmother.

SHAMBLIN: Great grandmother, yes.

GOODSILL: Okay, what was she like?

SHAMBLIN: She was just a very SPIFFY little lady. She was on the move and she never left the house without being fully dressed with a hat. She had either a Model T or Model A Ford. I don't remember which one. When he was killed she had a little baby daughter. She and her sister were in another room and he was sitting by the window reading. I think somebody said reading a bible, but anyway he was reading. He was shot through the window. To show you how times have changed, his father-in-law lived a mile or so away and he heard the shot and got on his horse and came over. He was still alive at the time but bleeding bad. They got the doctor there but times are a lot different from now than. They said he'd probably last four or five hours and that's how he died. It seems to me they also had a young son, who would have been my grandfather. It seems like I heard my uncle say that after her husband was killed that they went to Louisiana. I am not sure if my father and my uncle were born in Louisiana. When I was born that young man had died....

GOODSILL: James the Second

SHAMBLIN: The Second, James II, who was my grandfather and my Daddy's father.

GOODSILL: Let me do a little bit of genealogy here and I'll get you back on your story.

SHAMBLIN: All right.

GOODSILL: Lets start with you. Your full name is James Madison the Fourth.

SHAMBLIN: Right

GOODSILL: And your father's name was James Shamblin, III. How many brothers and sisters did your father have?

SHAMBLIN: Had a brother and a sister. My daddy was first, and then my aunt Margarette, we called her Aunt Peet. My uncle was William A. Shamblin.

GOODSILL: What was your mother's name?

SHAMBLIN: My mother's name was Margaret Bryan and she was from Huntsville Texas.

GOODSILL: How many children did Margaret and James have?

SHAMBLIN: Two, a younger sister, Margaret Jean and myself.

GOODSILL: How many children do you have?

SHAMBLIN: I have three, when I got married my wife had two children who I adopted later on and then we had a daughter.

GOODSILL: What's is daughter's name?

SHAMBLIN: Daughter's name is Pamela Kay Shamblin.

GOODSILL: Okay good, now we are going to go back up a little bit. I have a drawing here I am showing. This is you, James the Fourth.

SHAMBLIN: All right.

GOODSILL: Your daddy was James the Third married to Margaret Bryan.

SHAMBLIN: Right.

GOODSILL: Now, your daddy's daddy was James the Second and his wife's name was, do you happen to know that?

SHAMBLIN: No I don't. I was just a real small kid when she died and at that time his sister and brother moved in with us. They were a little younger, she was a little younger than my daddy and she died young. I don't remember how she died. My Uncle Bill was a linguist he spoke Spanish and French. Later went to work for the government, U.S. government in Washington teaching English to foreign students. They had a program where, United States taught English to foreign students who then went back to their country and taught English there. He married a girl from Brazil that had been one of his students before and they had three children, if you want to get into that.

GOODSILL: Yes, do you know their names?

SHAMBLIN: I know one was Bill, Billy they called him. I swear I can't come up with the name of the other two, the two girls.

GOODSILL: So, your fathers was James the Third, your grandfather was James the Second, his wife died early.

SHAMBLIN: Yes

GOODSILL: And did James the Second die early as well?

SHAMBLIN: Oh he died before she did, he died before I was born.

GOODSILL: But his mother, Betty lived quite a long time and you knew her.

SHAMBLIN: Oh yes, Oh yes. She was a super little lady. She was about five feet tall. The way I understand it, kind of running around and back and fourth. Her husband, James Madison Shamblin, bought a two hundred acre plot of ground from her father who was a Fields. He was a big landowner. The only place I knew that she lived was at the bottom of Oyster Creek. Had a beautiful place there.

GOODSILL: The plantation, did he buy it or inherit it from Mr. Fields?

SHAMBLIN: No, no Fields was alive when he died. He bought it.

GOODSILL: He bought it, so it was two hundred acres? Where was it exactly?

SHAMBLIN: To tell you exactly, I can't. But I've got believe it was bounded by Oyster Creek. Because it was in the bottom down there and it had lots of pecan trees. She ended up selling that place to a car man named Simpson and then she bought a place in Spring, Texas and it was about a quarter of a mile off of highway seventy-five. Which is now forty-five. A week or two before she died walked down there to that station that was on the corner and caught a Boeing bus and came to Sugar Land to visit her sister who lived with Paul and Lucille Schumann. Her sister lived to be around ninety also.

GOODSILL: The Schumann's from Sugar Land?

SHAMBLIN: Yea

GOODSILL: I did an interview with Mr. Robert Schumann. Let's see were back at Betty, remind me what you called Betty.

SHAMBLIN: Little Grandmother.

GOODSILL: Little Grandmother. (chuckles)

SHAMBLIN: That's the only thing I ever knew, from infancy. She was always Little Grandmother but dressed and let me say this... you might be interested in this. The little daughter who was in the other room (at the time of James Madison Shamblin's death) was a very young baby. She ended up being Maude Shamblin Staples. She was the daughter of the original James Madison Shamblin.

GOODSILL: Do you know Betty's sister's name?

SHAMBLIN: We called her Aunt Ennie, she was a McGlocklin or something...if it wasn't McGlocklin it was so close that would get us by.

GOODSILL: Do you know anything about James Madison's involvement with the Jaybirds, is there a family legend about the feud?

SHAMBLIN: It seems like there were two factions. Back in those days the republicans had all the offices in Fort Bend County. Consequently the blacks ruled... they had the elected offices.

GOODSILL: The blacks had the offices but the republicans were the power behind the office?

SHAMBLIN: Oh they were the republicans. The Jaybirds, the way I understand it were a faction of the Democratic Party. James Madison Shamblin was part of that group. They had meetings... like the little lady says [in the book], thundered since I read that so I don't remember all that. Anyway they had an election and all this and that and he... was killed.

GOODSILL: Is there any family lore about who killed him or why?

SHAMBLIN: Oh yes, oh yes. It's all in the book... it was a black man shot him and was eventually hung, I believe for it.

GOODSILL: Are we talking about Pauline Yelder's book, The Jaybird Woodpecker Feud?

SHAMBLIN: I wish I could tell you because I didn't see the book. The only thing I had were pages that were copied out of it.

SHAMBLIN: Okay the other books that were mentioned before we started were Thomas Sowell's book on Fort Bend County and also Wharton's book The History of Fort Bend County. So, in one of those three books.

SHAMBLIN: I don't think it's Wharton, I believe Wharton was the one I bought at the museum.

GOODSILL: So they said a black man killed him? I did a little research; I think his name might have been William Caldwell?

SHAMBLIN: It very easily could have been, but that was the beginning of them doing away with... or running a lot of them out of Fort Bend County.

GOODSILL: What happened in Little Grandmother, Betty's, life after her husband, James Madison Shamblin, died?

SHAMBLIN: She outlived two or three husbands and she ended up married to a fellow by the name of Gaffney. Like I said earlier she sold that place down on Oyster Creek.

GOODSILL: Oyster Creek at Hodges Bend, near there?

SHAMBLIN: Yes because that's where he's buried.

GOODSILL: Hodges Bend Cemetery?

SHAMBLIN: Yes, and you can look out there...

GOODSILL: And that's where who is buried?

SHAMBLIN: The original James Madison, yes it had to be real close there, I'm sure.

GOODSILL: What was the name of the two hundred acre plantation that he bought from his father-in-law?

SHAMBLIN: If there was a name, I don't think it was ever... that I ever saw a name on it. He did have slaves you know and that caught up in a book...

GOODSILL: What did they grow on his plantation?

SHAMBLIN: If I had to guess I'd say cotton.

GOODSILL: Do you know how many slaves he had?

SHAMBLIN: No, but I'm going to keep going back to this book. That's where most of my information comes from and like I say I'll look and see if I can find... because I have it.

GOODSILL: So your speculation is that Little Grandmother, Betty, stayed there for some time and then she remarried and moved?

SHAMBLIN: After her husband was killed? I just can't tell you, but if she stayed it evidently couldn't have been... Well it could have been because her son, who became my father's daddy, evidently went to Louisiana and they may have lived in Louisiana for a while. Little Grandmother could have been there with them.

GOODSILL: And where was your father born?

SHAMBLIN: I don't know.

GOODSILL: Don't know where he was born. At some time in his life did he come back to Fort Bend County?

SHAMBLIN: No, the only person that ever came back to Fort Bend County was me and I played two or three games of baseball down there and that was it.

GOODSILL: At what point in your life?

SHAMBLIN: Oh Lord, it was in 1951. In 51, I was twenty-six years old.

GOODSILL: And you were playing baseball?

SHAMBLIN: Well, if you want to get into that.

GOODSILL: Well let's get into it. Start by telling me where you were born.

SHAMBLIN: I was born in Huntsville Texas. In those days Mama went home to have the baby at her Mama's house and they lived, say Huntsville, Texas -- but they lived out of town.

GOODSILL: Where were your mom and dad living when you were born?

SHAMBLIN: They were living in Houston.

GOODSILL: In Houston, but you went to Huntsville to be born?

SHAMBLIN: Right

SHAMBLIN: My daddy was running an icehouse in those days and the working conditions... just having a job was something. He worked twelve hours a day, seven days a week and after I was five six seven years old he went to law school at night. Working those hours and went to law school at night! He went to South Texas I believe was the name of it in Houston. The same times Roy Hofheinz went there. He became an attorney and he got his law degree when I was in the fifth grade. I probably was ten years old or something like that.



In those days elementary school was one through five. I went to Lanier but when he got his law degree he went in with J.S. Braswell and my mother and my sister and I went to Huntsville to live with my aunt during that semester while he got established a little bit. Then we came back to Houston and I went to Lanier Junior High School and then to San Jacinto High School. Then I went into service and came out and went to University of Texas.

GOODSILL: What year did you go into the service?

SHAMBLIN: 1943.

GOODSILL: What did you do during your time of service?

SHAMBLIN: Well, I went into a program, they called it the V12. It was an officers training deal and they sent three hundred of us to S.L.I. which was later been called Southwest Louisiana Lafayette or Lafayette something... anyway it was S.L.I. - Southwestern Louisiana Institute. Rice was Rice Institute at that time. A bunch of the people from Rice, athletes, went over there at the same time. It was three hundred Marines and three hundred sailors.

GOODSILL: Where you a Marine?

SHAMBLIN: Yes, I was a Marine. Then I played baseball and a few games of football there and in October...

GOODSILL: And they sent you to college?

SHAMBLIN: Yes

GOODSILL: Not active military service?

SHAMBLIN: Not active military service, but we wore uniforms.

GOODSILL: It was 1943?

SHAMBLIN: It was an officers training deal and we got paid fifty dollars a month and we went to school. Just like if you went to radar school or something. Anyway we were going to school; they had a freshman, sophomore, junior and senior in each room. So there were four of us in a room. Every four months they sent a group out to boot camp. Paris Island South Carolina, from there you went to Quantico or Camp Lejeune North Carolina waiting to get into Quantico.

I had hurt a hip and a back playing football at S L I and if you went to the sick bay at Quantico you couldn't go out in the field on field trips, consequently I ended up busting out of there and was sent back to Camp Lejeune and then on to, I can't think of the name of the place in California. Anyway it was a big camp there and that train ride from North Carolina to California in those days with them swinging bunks... I don't know how long it took. It took a long time because the train we were on was always on the side of the track.

Anyway while there they dropped the atomic bomb, thank goodness and the Japanese surrendered. They didn't know it was another Japanese trick or what. We left San Diego going in a convoy and we ended up in transit center in Honolulu on Oahu. Ended up then at the brig there. They had had some problems and they took all them Marines out there. It was our kids and I stayed there for a few months. The lieutenant came and told me to get my bags packed that I was going to the rifle range. I told him what in the world would I be going to a rifle range for - I can't SPELL rifle. He said what did you shoot on the rifle range? I said a high expert and he said that is why you're on this team.

The war was over and peace had been declared and you accumulated point to get released. I said, see if you can't get me out of that. I was playing baseball there on my days off. Anyway he came back and said there was an order out of the Pearl Harbor Generals office. That meant that I was going, so I went out there and came back to California. We shot there and then I got out of the Service in San Diego, in 1946, in May of 1946. I came home to Houston and went to University of Texas in September of '46.

GOODSILL: And what did you get a degree in?

SHAMBLIN: I didn't get a degree, I was studying business and baseball.

GOODSILL: (giggles) You were an athlete!

SHAMBLIN: Well, so called, I was very lucky, I was lucky enough to letter in 1947, '48 and '49 and be on the first team to win a national championship to represent the University of Texas and that was the highlight of my career.

GOODSILL: Where did you go to represent them?

SHAMBLIN: Wichita, Kansas

GOODSILL: Quite an event?

SHAMBLIN: Oh yes, we played for the national championship, in 1947 they started

getting it together. They had four teams that went to Denver and four teams that went to Michigan. California beat us on a horrible call at the plate - everybody that gets beat, has to say something like that. Anyway our coach was so hot about it that we won the conference again in '48 and qualified to go but he wouldn't go in '48. But in '49e everybody talked him into going and we went and won the championship.

GOODSILL: I can see how that could be a highlight for you!

SHAMBLIN: That definitely was, that definitely definitely was.

GOODSILL: That's why you happened to come play baseball in Fort Bend County.

SHAMBLIN: Well in those days - a lot of people don't think there was a time before T.V. and air conditioning, but at this time TV was just it's very infancy. And air-conditioning... the movies had air conditioning. They had big signs out on Sunday, Come In - Air Conditioning, Enjoy... you know. Every little town had a team and some of them had better teams than others. Towns like Weimer, Victoria and Alpine, Conroe, Baytown and Sinton all these had real good teams. They got college kids to come play on their teams. We came back that year and came in fourth in the national tournament at Weimer. A little town of less than two thousand people. Anyway it was quite a year... happy.

Right about that time, I want to say about 1950, either my Little Grandmother died or my Aunt Lucille Schumann died. I came home to that funeral and I went back. I think Little Grandmother died, I am going to say in 1950. No in 1951. I said '51, anyway somewhere in that era. Like I said she was ninety-three or ninety-four years old.

GOODSILL: Wow

SHAMBLIN: Then I ended up around the builder business for a long time selling brick and air conditioning and I opened a business. I got married, I didn't get married until I was forty-one, and I was married for forty-one years and my wife died in 2008.

GOODSILL: What was her name?

SHAMBLIN: Audrey Jean Nelson.

GOODSILL: And you were married for forty-one years?

SHAMBLIN: Yes

GOODSILL: Wow!

SHAMBLIN: Anyway we had a good marriage and ended up her two little boys I adopted when they were five and six. My daughter was born the next year. Where are we?

GOODSILL: Well, you were telling me you were in the building supply business.

SHAMBLIN: Oh yea, then in '70... I got married in '66, October of '66 and Pam was born in November of '67 and I was in the builder supply business. Then I went into business on my own.

GOODSILL: So you went into business for yourself?

SHAMBLIN: In '72 I believe it was.

GOODSILL: What business was that?

SHAMBLIN: Called the company Mr. Fireplace, we were in the brick business and the fireplace business. Metal fireplaces were just coming into their own at that time. I was in business until '90... November of '93, we shut it down.

GOODSILL: Was there a Mr. Fireplace along the Southwest Freeway?

SHAMBLIN: No a lot of people get it confused... he called himself the Fireplace Man and he came along a couple of years or so after. People told me I should have sued him over the name, but I didn't think it made that much difference.

GOODSILL: Was Mr. Fireplace a prosperous business for you?

SHAMBLIN: Yea, at one time. I had a partner; I ended up buying him out of it. Everything was going great until...80's when savings and loans went down and the banks went down and I went down in '93. Last part of '93. I don't know what... that's about all of me I guess.

GOODSILL: There is one little thing that comes to my attention here. Is it true that you played baseball for a team called the Fort Bend Jaybirds?

SHAMBLIN: Yes, I was playing awhile in Alpine. This was in 1951 and we played the Jaybirds out there and the manager of that team, Mr. Don Utt, made me such a deal. Alpine was probably the best to play around. I was having a real good year out there. He made me such a deal I couldn't turn it down and I came to play for the Jaybirds and I think I played three games, two or three games, and the job that he had gotten me turned out not to be in Houston but in Corpus and therefore I could not play... I couldn't work in Corpus and play here, so after a couple of weeks I went back out to Alpine.

GOODSILL: That's fairly ironic that you played for a team called the Fort Bend Jaybirds, given your family history.

SHAMBLIN: Yea, it really... I didn't know that much about it at the time, but Lou (Payton) is the one that really got me going into the history and all. He came up with this book and wrote me... anyway. He took me down and showed me that statue down there and all of that. Then we went out to the graveyard where he is buried and... so anyway it's, it's kind of ironic.

GOODSILL: It is ironic. Well there is one other thing I want to point out with this family tree I've made. Your great grandfather James had one son who died early who had one son who moved to Louisiana...

SHAMBLIN: And died early.

GOODSILL: And died early, who had one son who is you. All these men died early and you're the last...

SHAMBLIN: Yes they did. My father died at thirty-seven, he died in 1939. My uncle who was his brother lived to be eighty-six and looks like I'm going to be the one to live the longest.

GOODSILL: Do you know, you've been telling me about James Madison Shamblin, but do you know anything about a J.B. Shamblin? B as in boy.

SHAMBLIN: No.

GOODSILL: Never heard that in any of the family history?

SHAMBLIN: No

GOODSILL: I understand the name J.B. Shamblin comes up in the Yelderman book. Maybe we will do some research and maybe she misunderstood the initials.

SHAMBLIN: Misremembered. (both GOODSILL and SHAMBLIN break into laughter) I'll tell you when I was a kid coming up, we were the only Shamblin in the Houston telephone directory, since then a lot have come in. Then, oh my goodness we left there...we had a beach house down in Surfside and we sold our house out there in Greenwood Forest and moved to Surfside. People would call and ask for Jim, I would either answer the phone or my wife, and they were looking for a Jim Shamblin who worked for Brown and Root. If JB or whoever this is could have been that deal.

GOODSILL: Feels to me like we have covered most of the things that I had on my list of questions. Is there anything that you can think of that I have forgotten to ask?

SHAMBLIN: We didn't really finish Bill Shamblin, my Daddy's brother.

GOODSILL: Well tell me about him.

SHAMBLIN: Okay you know I told you he had thee children.

GOODSILL: Yep.

SHAMBLIN: Then he got divorced and married another one of his ex-students that lived in Mexico. I want to say Guadalajara, but it's not the name of that town. Are you familiar with some those resort places there? They have a big tennis tournament there. It's out of Mexico City anyway that's where he lived...she had a house there. They lived there and he died there. Her name was Delores and I don't know what her maiden name was.

GOODSILL: And what ever happened to Peep, Margarete?

SHAMBLIN: She died early. She died probably within two years after they moved in with us.

GOODSILL: I am glad to know about Pamela Kay Shamblin because she is the last of a long line.

SHAMBLIN: Yea, she is something else.

GOODSILL: Is she something else?

SHAMBLIN: Yes she is.

GOODSILL: Does she have children?

SHAMBLIN: No she is not married. She seems to be having a great time right now.

GOODSILL: Good, good. It's an interesting family line and we have a man in the county whose has done some research on the Jaybird Woodpecker Feud. When we put together his information with some of the information we have from you it will make a good story.

SHAMBLIN: This book that I keep referring to...that statue over there I am sure you know that Gibson and that other name, Frost. I don't know if it was a year after my grandfather had been killed, they had a thing (battle) which made the OK Coral look little because they were walking down the street shooting up in the buildings... and they were in the buildings shooting back down at them. Frost was the one that asked to have a statue built in their honor because evidently he knew it was inevitable he was going to be killed. He wanted that Jaybird put on top of that monument, which it is there today.

GOODSILL: That monument is right beside City Hall, on the east side. Near Fourth Street and Morton.

SHAMBLIN: And the statue of Mayor Hilmar Moore is on the other side of City Hall.

GOODSILL: Yea, that's right. All right, I think we did a great interview. It was such a pleasure talking to you.

SHAMBLIN: Thank you very much.

First Interview ends. Second interviews starts already in progress

SHAMBLIN: A truck hit her

GOODSILL: What relationship was Lucille Schumann to you?

SHAMBLIN: Lucille Schumann was a daughter of Aunt Ennie. Who was the sister of Betty.

GOODSILL: Oh Aunt Ennie was the daughter of...

SHAMBLIN: Of Little Grandmother.

GOODSILL: Yea, and Aunt Ennie had Lucille?

SHAMBLIN: Yes and she married Paul Schumann.

GOODSILL: What did you say about her? She got killed...

SHAMBLIN: She got killed pulling into her driveway one night. Ninety was the highway and she was pulling out of their house right there on that corner where ninety-nine is. The big house was in those oak trees and she was pulling in there and got hit by a truck and killed.

GOODSILL: Can you believe that? Bad luck

Second interview ends