

I Am Annie Mae

**AN EXTRAORDINARY
BLACK TEXAS WOMAN IN
HER OWN WORDS**



Annie Mae Hunt
Ruthe Winegarten

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BLACK TEXAS WOMAN
IN HER OWN WORDS



BY ANNIE MAE HUNT
AND RUTHE WINEGARTEN
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Cover photograph of Annie Mae Hunt during the Depression,
from Hunt scrapbook

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Printed in the United States of America

First University of Texas Press edition, 1996
Published by agreement with Ruthe Winegarten

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Ⓢ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum
requirements of American National Standard for Information
Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials,
ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hunt, Annie Mae, 1909—

I am Annie Mae : an extraordinary Black Texas woman in her own
words / by Annie Mae Hunt and Ruthe Winegarten ; assistant editor, Frieda
Werden. — 1st University of Texas Press ed.

p. cm.

Originally published: Austin : Rosegarden Press, 1983.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-292-79099-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Hunt, Annie Mae, 1909— . 2. Afro-American women—Texas.
3. Texas—Biography. I. Winegarten, Ruthe. II. Werden, Frieda.
III. Title.

E185.93.T4H864 1996

976.4'00496073'0092—dc20

[B]

95-52883





Dallas



TV interview

Dallas Morning News



PREFACE

An “impertinent” remark made by young Annie Mae Hunt’s stepdaddy to a white East Texas plantation owner in 1922 provoked a brutal attack on her mother, sister, and herself. Annie Mae Hunt’s handwritten, partly finished manuscript of that account, begun when she was only 14, lay untouched in a cardboard box for over 50 years. During numerous moves, she carried that story with her, determined to bear witness some day. In 1977, introduced by a mutual friend, Mrs. Hunt and I signed a partnership contract to complete her work. I taped interviews with her over a five-year period, and together we published *I Am Annie Mae*.

The book was launched on June 3, 1983, at the American Booksellers Convention in Dallas. The response, both to the book and to Mrs. Hunt, has been overwhelming. The first printing of 1000 copies was sold out in three months, following dozens of newspaper and magazine articles, TV and radio appearances, and autograph parties, as we traveled all across Texas and to Miami, Memphis, and New York City. Meeting in private homes, public libraries and churches, speaking at colleges, women’s groups, IBPOE Elks’ and political conventions, we talked to Americans from all walks of life, eager to honor Mrs. Hunt and buy the book.

The book began to take on new forms. In August 1983, dramatic excerpts were included in a showcase production of Texas writers staged at the world-renowned White Barn Theatre in Westport, Connecticut. And in October 1987, Women and Their Work produced a musical version, “I Am Annie Mae,” at St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas. The lyrics and music were composed by a Houston poet and educator, Naomi Carrier, and together we wrote the script for an ensemble production. The eight

Houston Post



Houston

Houston Chronicle

[illegible]

performances played to sold-out houses and standing-room-only crowds. The enthusiasm propelled us to acceptance as the showcase of the Texas Playwrights Festival in Houston in June and July 1989 in a production by Stages Theatre. Since then, a one-woman version has traveled to dozens of college campuses and communities, delighting (and educating) audiences.

Members of black communities have rallied around Mrs. Hunt, not only as a symbol of one woman's strength and survival, but as a testament of community pride and achievement. On one emotion-packed Saturday afternoon in Houston's Johnson Branch Library, with all seats packed, including many Hunt grandchildren and "greats," one young woman was so moved by Mrs. Hunt's remarks that she wrote a poem while Mrs. Hunt was talking and read it, to the audience's delight. Ada Simond, an Austin historian, wrote, "*I Am Annie Mae* is priceless. I could not put it down. It might well have been the story of many of my aunts and uncles." Mrs. Hunt was given the keys to Austin, and designated a "Yellow Rose of Texas" by the Governor.

Book orders have come from both coasts and mid-America—from Harvard, Antioch, Princeton, Winston-Salem, Mt. Holyoke, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Dallas Public Library, University of Texas, and Somerset, Texas, High School, among many. Professors use the book in courses of African American and Women's Studies, history, sociology, and literature. Excerpts have also been used in anthologies of black history and literature.

Mrs. Hunt sells the book to strangers as she travels on buses and planes. Wherever she goes, the book goes with her. Her children and grandchildren, with a new sense of their family history, have been her biggest boosters.

Oral history is an ongoing, opening-up process. It does not end with the publication of a book. Mrs. Hunt continues to remember incidents from her life and work. We can all relate to her because she is a real woman. Being real, her story is believable and touches us in familiar ways. It is warm and personal. It is like reading a diary.

Annie Mae Hunt hears advice from her “own self’s mind,” and she listens to it. Her inner wisdom has seen her family through hard times with their spirits intact. It has made her a self-styled “queen bee,” the focus of a rich community life, a source of support and guidance for her neighbors, friends, children, and many grandchildren. It has taken her from picking cotton under near-slavery conditions, to housework, to sewing and selling Avon, to retirement in a home she owns, to active participation in politics and club work, and to attending a presidential inauguration.

This material represents the best promise of oral history—the ability to document the lives of ordinary working class people who are at the base of all political structures, but who are seldom included in the history books. Augmented by what she remembers of her grandmother’s tales, and by events in the lives of her children and grandchildren, Mrs. Hunt’s narrative covers a span of roughly 120 years in the history of black women in Texas. Her grandmother Matilda Boozie was a slave; her daughter Leona operates a computer.

Sociologist Rose Brewer has pointed out that there is no “prototypical” black Texas woman; but she observed that Mrs. Hunt’s story personifies a wide range of the experiences of women of African descent in this state. There is a deep segmentation of the labor market along racial and gender as well as class lines; the lowest-paid tier of the Texas work force has always been occupied by black women. Today they are still overrepresented among domestic and service occupations, such as those performed

*I want to dedicate this book to my grandmother,
Matilda Boozie Randon, and my mother,
Callie Randon McDade.*

—Annie Mae Hunt

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Annie Mae Hunt Day in
Austin



Austin

Austin American-Statesman

Miami

Miami Herald

News

Health center hopes to avoid late rush for shots

By ELLEN YERGENSON

Most of those centers, paid for these shots, have about a year to last before they are scheduled for replacement. The Miami Health Center, 1301 NW 34th Ave., will be a last-minute rush of patients, unless the center is properly scheduled.

Last year, the center had a rush of patients in June. This year, the center is scheduled for June 1981.

The center is scheduled for June 1981.

ing shots for the center, the health center is scheduled to have a rush of patients in June. The center is scheduled for June 1981.

Many people were caught by surprise in the rush for shots. The center is scheduled for June 1981.

Health fair facts

When: 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
Where: 1301 NW 34th Ave.
What: Health fair facts

Panel sets Nile Gardens discussion

By JONATHAN STOLTZ

According to an early report, the Nile Gardens Community Health Center, 1301 NW 34th Ave., will be a last-minute rush of patients, unless the center is properly scheduled.

The center is scheduled for June 1981.

The center is scheduled for June 1981.

The center is scheduled for June 1981.

The center is scheduled for June 1981.

The center is scheduled for June 1981.

The center is scheduled for June 1981.

Amir Mar Hone, right, and her grandfather, who was a soldier in a picture from the book.



A story of pain and joy

By JONATHAN STOLTZ

The book "A Story of Pain and Joy" by Amir Mar Hone, 1301 NW 34th Ave., will be a last-minute rush of patients, unless the center is properly scheduled.

The center is scheduled for June 1981.

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Neighbors

Thursday, August 11, 1981

Quiet refuge for the souls of the streets

Unnoticed in a neighborhood plagued by crime and crime, the Women's Association Rescue Home offers a refuge to the homeless. Its founder, Mother J., offers something more to her troubled tenants — a feeling of family.

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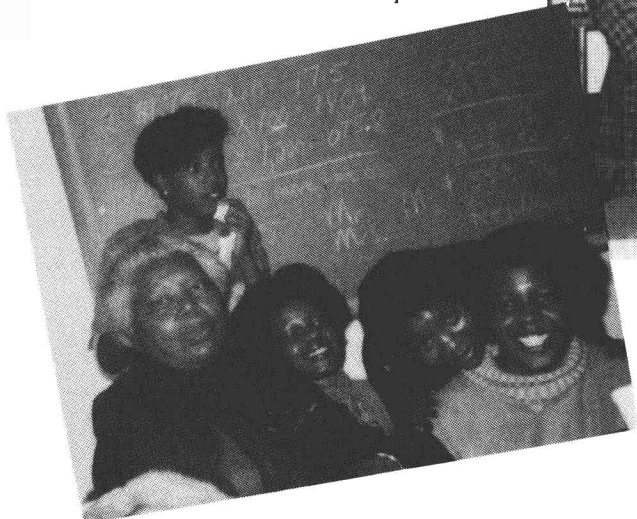
Amir Mar Hone photographs a look for Theron and Brenda Williams.

Black author writes of life from slavery to computers

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NYC autograph party
Womanbooks

NYC National Council of
Negro Women, Women's
Center Workshop



New York

Grandmother remembered
very well the day they
sold her mother 1

I am Annie Mae Hunt. My name now is Hunt. And
my first three children don't want me to lose "Prosper," so I
kept it. But really my name should be Annie Mae McDade.
That's what I was born. That's my daddy's name, George
McDade. Annie Mae McDade Prosper Hunt, that's what it
really is.

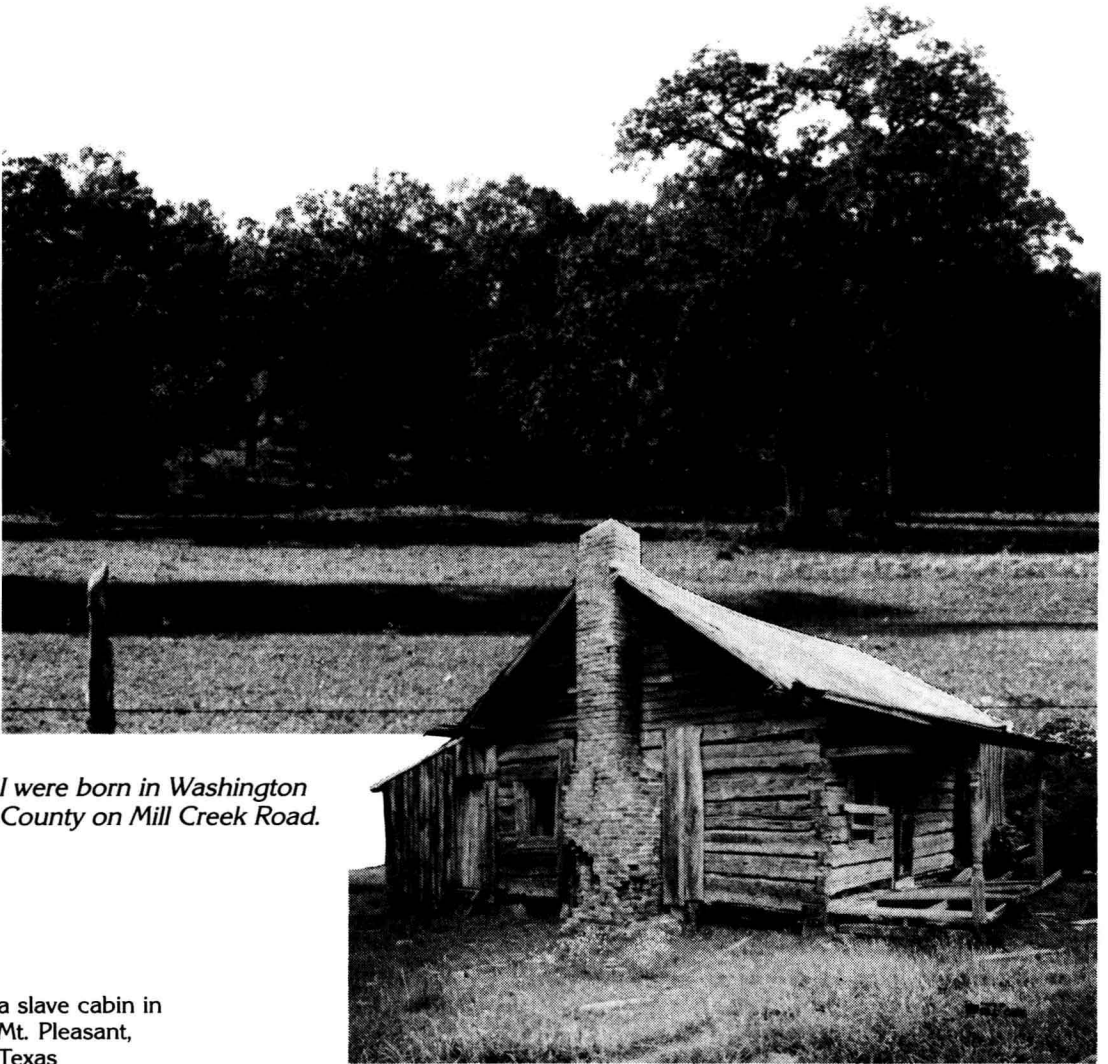
I were born in 1909 in Washington County on Mill Creek
Road, 13 miles out from Brenham near Wesley. I were reared
there until I were eight, when my mother moved to Dallas.
Five or six years later, it was Depression time and we moved
to Navasota, on a plantation where we met a little tragedy. And
from then on we went back to Brenham where my grand-
mother was.

c. 1922
an agricultural
depression

Well, when I were born, my grandmother was 60-some-
thing, 62, 63 years old. But she lived to be 101 years old. And
she died in 1947 when I was pregnant with Othella. My grand-
mother was a very wonderful woman. She told me many a
stories about herself and slavery. She was born in South Caro-
lina¹ and her white people was Boozies, and I understand that
some of them live there now, but she left there, and they came
to Mt. Pleasant in Texas. When my grandma was moved down
to Brenham, Texas, in Washington County, I know it was after
slavery. Now I don't know how they got down in Washington
County. I never could understand how they got there from Mt.
Pleasant.² At that time it was a long way. But Washington

c. 1846–1849 ?

Titus County
1850s ?



*I were born in Washington
County on Mill Creek Road.*

a slave cabin in
Mt. Pleasant,
Texas

*My grandmother was born
in South Carolina and her
white people was Boozies.
But she left there and they
came to Mt. Pleasant in
Texas.*

County³ is where I were born, my mother and them was born and raised there, too.

My grandmother's name was Matilda, Matilda Boozie, cause her white people was Boozies, so she was a Boozie.⁴ Cause when you were sold, you took whoever bought you, their name. Like, if George Washington bought you, then you were Annie Washington.⁵ Her name was Matilda Boozie, but they called her Tildy.

My grandmother was known as a house girl. That means you worked in the house with Old Mistress and they liked you, you had more than anybody else . . . you had more than any of the other black slaves. There was another slave named Calvin, was her age. She always slipped him food and stuff.

My grandmother always said she remembered very well the day they sold her mother.⁶ I don't know how old she was, but she was able to work, she was in the house with Old Mistress. And grandmother cried and cried, and Old Mistress hugged her and told her, "Don't worry, Tildy. I'll take care of you." And she did. She took care of her.

c. 1850s ?

"Don't worry, Tildy. I'll take care of you." That's all Grandma knew. She had sisters and a brother, and she never heard from them no more.⁷ When I got to be a grown woman and had all these children, there was a lady lived down in Fayetteville, Texas, near where we were, who had the same name that Grandma had, come from the same place—South Carolina. It was my boyfriend's grandmother. And my grandmother and his grandmother looked just alike. But by them being old, it was hard for Grandma to go see about her. She always said, "I'm going down there and talk to Mrs. Dobb's mother." But she never did.

Fayette County

Fayette County Ordinance ⁸

1862

Any male slave

about the age of 16 years

who may be found by the patrol on any night visit
to be absent from the premises of his master
without a lawful pass in writing shall be liable
to be punished *with not more than*

twenty-five lashes.

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