

**Etta:** Good Morning, I am Etta Johnson Huff, lifelong resident of Royal, a Board of Director with the Community Of Royal, Inc. and a Trustee of Ebenezer AME Church, Royal.

**Ms. Dorthine:** Hello my name is Dorthine Williams; I am, also, a lifelong resident of Royal and an officer of Second Bethel Baptist Church, Royal. We ask that you hold all applause until the end of this presentation.

**Etta:** First, we would like to take a moment to thank God for the years that He allowed the late Bishop Hannah to partake of this special occasion called the Royal Homecoming Worship Service. We thanked him and his wife for their commitment to this service.

**Ms. Dorthine:** Also, we give honor and thanks to Pastor Goldsmith and First Lady Goldsmith for helping us, the community to keep the continuity in our giving thanks to Almighty God for all His works. Thank you and welcome to our community of Royal.

**Etta:** We stand before you as products of Royal's rich heritage including our strong religious and educational roots.

**Ms. Dorthine:** Yes Royal, once, had a school where I attended as a student and then returned as a Teacher's Aide.

**Etta:** All of you are aware of our community's history; how it once was called Pickettsville then called Royal. We all know how it was given the name Pickettsville because of the picket fences that surrounded each family's property but, Why the name Royal?

**Ms. Dorthine:** Before now, no one knew how our beloved community was given its name - Royal. Even, our noted historian, Sister Catherine Latimer, don't know how the community was given the name Royal.

**Etta:** With our historical center established, a neighbor donated a book entitled 'Long Hammock Memories' by Mr. Hulon H. Nichols with the answer to "Why the name Royal?"

**Ms. Dorthine:** Are you aware that the first slaves were brought from Africa in 1619? The United States' African slave trade had a direct effect to the naming of our dear beloved Community Of Royal.

**Etta:** Were our early ancestors Africans? Were they of African royalty? Were they African Kings and Queens? Was it called Royal before 1835? Yes and the story reads: Before there were any towns in Sumter County and even before it was Sumter, there was, as is still the case, the Long Hammock.

**Ms. Dorthine:** It was so named by the first surveyors, and is on their first maps. It was later known as Gator which is, today, the area at County Road 475 and County Road 466.

**Etta:** It is on the north side of Sumter County. Before 1835 there was an “old Negro Town” with free blacks (African slaves) living there. They were not bothered by the Seminoles and were even considered as allies with them.

**Ms. Dorthine:** Some were killed by the United States Government during Andrew Jackson’s term in office or shipped west to Arkansas and Oklahoma. A few that hid and remained were befriended by the first whites not believing in slavery. The small group of Blacks’ community, today, is known as Royal.

**Etta:** It was handed down that upon arriving in 1848, the white settlers found Free Blacks living near the head of Gum Springs. As more Whites came and settled near Gum Springs, because of the abundance of clear water at the springhead, they pushed and the Blacks slowly moved away.

**Ms. Dorthine:** By the beginning of the War Between the States, the ‘clean blooded’ Blacks were living in Long Hammock where they felt safe. Clean blooded meant that they were Black Africans whose parents were tribal leaders (Kings & Queens) that were killed by rival warring tribes and their families were marched hundreds of miles and sold into slavery, and they were to keep to themselves. They or their parents had escaped in Spanish Florida.

**Etta:** They did not mix blood with Native Americans or any race, and as soon as they could they or their children intended to someday return home to Africa and retake their family properties. Before the War Between the States, the Long Hammock settlement of Blacks that had first been quietly known as “Royalville” had become known as “Picketsville”.

**Ms. Dorthine:** “Picketsville was so named because each cabin had sand yards with picket type fences around them to keep cattle and hogs away from the house. The yards had no grass so the rattlesnakes could be seen. After the war, residents quietly changed its name back to “Royal”, and documented it by 1880.

**Etta:** It was done so future generations of all races would always know some of the first Blacks at least, were of African Royalty..... And, so to answer the questions: Were our ancestors Africans? Were they of African royalty? Were they African Kings and Queens? Was it called Royal before 1835? Yes! Yes! Yes! And Yes!

**Ms. Dorthine:** Yes, we are from African Royalty thus, our beloved community’s name of ROYAL. For in [1 Peter 2:9-10](#) it states: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

**Etta:** Let us, Thank God for our African heritage with a loud hallelujah!! It is so important for us, including our children, to be aware of our heritage and to know our past and present history.

**Ms. Dorthine:** An example of our present history, Jonathan James is a senior at the University of Florida, studying Anthropology. He has been accepted to study abroad in Kenya Africa. Congratulations to Jonathan James, a Royal native, for a job well done.

**Etta:** Now, we ask Cliff Hughes, Chairman of Community Of Royal, Inc. to come forth.

**Cliff:** Thank you and Good morning. I stand before you to recognize one of our very own youth who recently made history by receiving **the highest FCAT score in Math and Reading among 1<sup>st</sup> graders across the entire state of Florida.** Please, help me to recognize this great achievement of Vanity ‘Angel’ Kelly, a resident of Royal. Congratulations Angel; we present you a small token from the Community Of Royal, Inc. We pray that **you and all our children of Royal** will continue to succeed and always put God, first, in your lives. Thank you.

**Ms. Dorthine:** Thank you, Mr. Hughes. Now, we turn the service back into the hands of the MC. ***Sound Tech***: start the African music and dancers lead us out. Hallelujah for our rich African heritage!!!!