

JACKSON Y. W. C. A.
and
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of ARCHIVES and HISTORY
and
JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
THE FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

RESIDENT IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

O. H. 81.50

JOSEPHINE TIBBS

Interviewed
by

ALMA COUSINS

on

September 26, 1981

ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT
FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PROJECT

I agree that this magnetic tape recording of my voice made during an interview with Alma Cousin and a transcript made there-
(interviewer)

from, may be catalogued and deposited in the Jackson State University library (and some designated place in the Farish Street Historical District) with the records of the Farish Street Historic District Humanities project. The tape recording and transcript may be made available for research use in the preparation of the final products of the NEH Humanities Project in 1983 and after 1983 for research by scholars. Any title or literary rights to this material are hereby relinquished to Jackson State University.

Mrs. Josephine B. Tibbs
Oral Author (interviewee) Signature

9-26-81
date

Alma Cousin
Oral Recorder (interviewer) Signature

9-26-81
date

D.H. 81.50
Tape number

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History Program at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer, and a typescript of the tape will be made and submitted to you for editing. The final retyped and edited transcript, together with the tape of the interview will then be placed in the oral history collection at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. Other institutions or persons may obtain a copy. These materials may be used for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publication, or for other related purposes.

I, Josephine B. Tibbs have read the above and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, and in return for a final typed copy of the transcript, I knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University, Jackson, the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized, or contemplated, to Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

Josephine B. Tibbs
Interviewee (Signature)

Nov. 22, '82
Date

Introduction

Mrs. Josephine Tibbs was born January 22, 1904 in Jackson, Mississippi. She attended Smith Robertson and Jim Hill High School. She moved to the Farish Street Historic District in 1910. She is a member of the Mt. Helm Missionary Baptist Church.

Mrs. Tibbs talks about her early school days at Smith Robertson School, religious activities that she participated in and her occupational experiences. She talks about the school's recreational program and about President Taft's visit to Jackson, Mississippi. She talks about some of the businesses in the District and some of the black doctors on Farish Street.

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Josephine Tibbs
INTERVIEWER: Alma Cousin
DATE OF INTERVIEW: September 26, 1981
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Cousin: Mrs. Tibbs, would you share some of your experiences with us about this Historical District?

Tibbs: My earliest recollection of this district?

Cousin: Yes.

Tibbs: Smith Robertson was the only public school. We would come here from west Jackson for school everyday. The morning they brought me to school, they carried me to Mrs. Dawson's room. She opened the primer to the longest lesson and said, "Read this." I read it and they said, "This little girl is too high for here." They carried me to Mrs. Irene Deer. She taught first grade. This is my earliest recollection of this district.

Cousin: What age were you and what year was it when you started school?

Tibbs: I was about eight years old and I don't remember what year it was. It has been a long time ago.

Cousin: Can you describe how the school looked during this time?

Tibbs: It wasn't much different than it is now. It wasn't as large as it is now. They have added on to it through the years. The back yard was fenced in.

We all had to line up on the front when the bell rang. Whatever room you were in, you would get in that line then we would march in school. If you were late, you had to go to the principal's office and get a whipping.

Cousin: How would you describe good times during this time at school, home and church?

Tibbs: I don't know. I've never been to school in these times.

Cousin: How were they during the time you were going?

Tibbs: We played out on the front. The girls would be on the front and the boys would be on the back.

Someone had a store on the corner and we would go up there and buy candy, sardines, bread, etc. We would make a sardine loaf.

Tibbs: In the evening when school was out Professor Lanier would follow us a short distance because someone would usually start a fight. Most of the times he would walk us as far as Church Street.

I remember Frazier had a funeral home. On the way home we would pass by the funeral home and Mr. Henry Denton would be lining coffins. He would ask me about my folks, and how my grandmother was getting along.

Cousin: What church are you a member of?

Tibbs: I am a member of Mt. Helm Missionary Baptist Church.

Cousin: Since Mt. Helm is the oldest church in Jackson, could you tell me something about the history of Mt. Helm? When was it built?

Tibbs: I really don't know. I've been a member of Mt. Helm for 50 years. When I joined it was under the pastorage of Rev. Rice.

Cousin: Could you describe some of the songs they sang in church? Are they different from the ones today?

Tibbs: It is somewhat the same. Mrs. Gooden was the painist. We sang practically the same songs as we sing today.

Cousin: Could you tell me about some of the black businesses on Farish Street?

Tibbs: Vaughn Brothers use to have a shop along where the Alamo Theatre is now. Mrs. Sadie Jones had a beauty parlor upstairs, that was a long time ago.

When I was a child the Alamo was close to Capitol Street. Heildelberg had a furniture store down in the district. Mr. Beadle's Studio was on the other side of the street. Redmond's Drug Store was down there, this was back in 1917. There was a bakery near Capitol Street, that we use to stop at on our way from town.

I remember when President Taff came to Jackson. Mr. Evans had a shop on Farish Street and his wife had a cafe. We use to go and eat dinner there. Medgar Evers would come down and get his dinner sometimes. He was a charming young man.

Cousin: Mrs. Tibbs, could you tell me something about where you worked.

Tibbs: I worked at the War Memorial Building for 27 years. I also worked at the State Archives.

Cousin: Could you tell me something about that work?

Tibbs: I was a maid. I cleaned up and cut out and posted clippings that were historical outstanding news and Mississippi authors, and etc. I would also go to the post office and mail packages.

Cousin: Was it a pleasant place to work?

Tibbs: Very much so.

Cousin: Where did you go for entertainment on Farish Street?

Tibbs: We would go to the picture show.

Cousin: Did you ever go to any of the big dances and things on Farish Street?

Tibbs: Yes, when Bud Scott would come to town. Mr. Hodges built that place right by the brick building. It was a dance hall upstairs and Bud Scott would come from Natchez for dances at Christmas and we would go. A lot of times you would have to have an invitation to get in the door. It was a very nice place.

Cousin: Do you recall anything about the State Fair?

Tibbs: Yes, we would line up and go. They had a day for colored people. That day all school would get together in Poindexter Park and march to the fairgrounds. We would have a good time. I usually had two or three children to take care of. People just figured I could do it. They would tell me to look after their children while we were at the fair.

Cousin: What is your earliest recollections of public parks?

Tibbs; I don't remember any public parks. We didn't go to them and play or anything like that. I remember passing through Smith's Park, the part that is behind the Governor's mansion. It had a fence around it and some steps.

Cousin: What type of health services did Jackson offer when you were a child?

Tibbs: They would come around to the schools and vaccinate us.

Cousin: Were there any black doctors then?

Tibbs: Yes, there was Dr. Johnson. He lived on Rose Street. He treated me when I had the measles. He is only black doctor I can remember.

Cousin: Mrs. Tibbs, what changes would you like to see made in the community as it stands now?

Tibbs: I guess there is a whole lot of things that needs to be done in the community. Most of the houses Crime looks like it is so revelant in some places. We need more police protection. People are afraid to get out at night.

Cousin: Thank you, Mrs. Tibbs, for you interview. I enjoyed talking with you.