



JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39217

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

February 15, 1977

Mrs. Ann S. Parkman, Director
Mississippi American Revolution
Bicentennial Commission
P.O. Box 571
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Dear Mrs. Parkman:

Enclosed is the narrative of the "Senior Citizens Recollections of the 'Good Old Days' in Jackson and Vicinity." The following exhibits are attached:

- Exhibits A. Questionnaire
- B. Bibliography of interviews
- C. Library of Congress Data Sheet for the National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections.

In a few days copies of the tapes and first drafts of all the interviews will be housed in the Jackson State University Library Special Collections. Also, when pictures have been developed we will submit an item to the newspapers if this is not done sooner.

Working with this project has been a rewarding experience. Through it we have created sources which the public and scholars can use for many years to come. We plan to use it ourselves to write scholarly papers.

Mrs. Parkman, thanks for the personal assistance you provided in securing the funds and in completing the project.

Sincerely yours,

Alferdteen Harrison, Director
Senior Citizens Recollections of the
"Good Old Days"

AH/m

Final Report

to

MISSISSIPPI AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
P. O. BOX 571
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39205

of completed

BICENTENNIAL PROJECT

Under the Auspices of

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

Sponsored by

The History Department

In Conjunction With the Center for Urban Affairs

Jackson State University
Jackson, Mississippi

1976

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NARRATIVE

SENIOR CITIZENS' RECOLLECTION OF "GOOD OLD DAYS" IN JACKSON AND VICINITY

INTRODUCTION

The expertise and wisdom of senior citizens are valuable resources for a community. They provide the essential elements that give both stability and hope for the future. This project was needed for the purpose of focusing on the sharing of experiences and wisdom by senior citizens in Jackson, Mississippi and vicinity.

NEED

This project served the following needs and purposes:

1. Captured some aspects of the rich heritage that helped to mold our present way of life.
2. Preserved verbal revelations of our history.
3. Provided for the participation of senior citizens in the Bicentennial Celebration.
4. Made the public aware of the variety of resources that exist through senior citizens in our community.

OBJECTIVES

The project accomplished the following:

1. Conducted taped interviews with senior citizens to determine what they consider to have been the "good old days" in Jackson, Mississippi.
2. Taped musical performances in categories that represented little change through the years.
3. Publicize the project in relation to the Bicentennial celebration.

II. METHODOLOGY

This project was carried out by student internees in Oral History 301, (History course offering) an Oral History graduate assistant, two work-study students, a part-time lecturer, a faculty technical assistant, and the project director. The following steps were executed by the students with the director's assistance.

Step I -- January 1976

Development of a Research Plan:

Graduate Assistant, Debroah Denard and internees in Oral History 301, Shawn Knox and Tommy Johnson were directed to research the history of Jackson and to take notes. Their research was guided by the preparation of "Chronological Charts of the City of Jackson from 1821 to the present." In work sessions students were asked to fill in notations of information learned from their research. Their trips to the library was further guided by conversations in the Oral History Office with Mrs. Aurilia Young, a long-time resident in Jackson, Mr. Art James, a researcher at the Research and Development Center who was working on a book on Black Banks in Mississippi; and Dr. Kathryn Weathersby, the Outreach Director in the Jackson State University Center for Urban Affairs.

Step II --

Questions were formulated which were not answered in the written sources. The result was a questionnaire with eighteen different categories, and ninety-six major questions most of which had several sub-questions, See Exhibit A which is attached.

Step III -- Testing of the interview questions:

Preliminary use of the questionnaire with Mr. Cecil Stift dictated the first interview that provided a workable guide for structuring others interviews.

All interviewees were randomly selected from six Senior Citizens' Nutrition Sites. These centers were contacted by Dr. Kathryn Weathersby, the outreach person for the Center for Urban Affairs, Jackson State University.

Dr. Alferdteen Harrison, project director, Dr. Weathersby and Deborah Denard, graduate assistant, visited the centers to solicit the cooperation of persons selected for interview. These visits also entailed an explanation of the project and the making of appointments for interviews. Any questions the participants had about the project were also answered during these visits.

All interviewees were telephoned prior to the scheduled date of the interview as a reminder of the appointment. For the comfort and convenience of the interviewees, the interviews were all to be conducted in the centers. Upon the invitation of a few of the interviewees, some interviews were conducted in the homes of the interviewees.

The prepared questionnaire served as a guide for conducting of the interview. The subject matter listed was generally covered except in those instances where some items did not apply to the particular interviewee.

Summaries of the interviews and brief biographical sketches were written immediately following each interview. When this was not done, the summary and biographical sketch were written later. Each interviewer wrote his/her own summary and biographical sketch.

Legal releases were usually obtained immediately following each interview. In instances where they were not, they were secured later. Photographs were taken and dealt with in the same manner. All interviewees did not sign releases and all did not wish to be photographed.

Tapes and other materials were then deposited in the Oral History Office for processing which included:

1. Labeling & Filing
2. Accessioning
3. Transcribing
4. Audit-Editing
5. Indexing
6. Editing
7. Final Typing
8. Cataloging
9. Compiling a Bibliography
10. Preparing an entry with the Library of Congress

The following have been housed in the Jackson State University

Henry T. Sampson Library:

1. The indexed, audit-edited of verbatim transcription copies to be supplemented later by edited versions in the Jackson State University Library.
2. Dubbed copies of the original tapes with the J.S.U. Library.
3. The annotated bibliography, Oral History Study Of: Senior Citizen's Recollections of the "Good Old Days" Bibliography (will be mailed to Public Institutions)

4. The Prepared Questionnaire
5. This Final Report

Final Report Contributions to
Bicentennial Objectives

Materials will be housed in the Oral History Office at Jackson State University and made available to the public through loans.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BICENTENNIAL OBJECTIVE

The contributions that such an endeavor can make to our society are fourfold. First, it can raise the general level in awareness of historical values such as respect for the mother figure and concern for formal education. Secondly, it can show that the perceived values of the "good old days" in terms of economic well-being will continue to shape the general philosophy of our country. Thirdly, the project makes citizens aware of some unique contributions that southerners have made to our heritage--none of the black nor white interviewees expressed bitterness relative to racial matters. Finally, the project can serve as a source of reference in determining the direction we take in planning future goals.

Many of the Senior Citizens enjoyed the attention and perhaps some projects can be devised where they are involved in discussing their lives and recollections. From their age and perspective, we could have interesting views of our society. The process of selecting interviewees left many persons yearning to be interviewed, many of whom had equally as significant contributions to be made as those chosen.

LOCATION OF PROJECT

Though the project was implemented in the Oral History Office of the Jackson State University History Department, it will be housed for public use in the H.T. Sampson Library of Jackson State University.

SUMMARY

Because of limited funding these objectives were accomplished in somewhat more limited scale than originally envisioned. However, this project is a demonstration of what can be accomplished with student aid and assistance.

Though the oral history collecting, processing and retrieval capability of this project are completed as provided for in this grant, these materials form the basis for other projects involving the use of oral history data. They reveal a source of data which explain first of all how individuals have perceived their past experience relative to good times or the "Good Old Days." The following are some examples:

- Mrs. Julia Brooks - Remembers the "Good Old Days" as those days centered around recreation such as ball games and picnics.
- Mr. Alphonso Alexander Barron - Recalls the "Good Old Days" when he taught at the Lawrence County Training School, after graduating from Alcorn College, Lorman, Mississippi.
- Mrs. Lula Cheatham - Remembers that the "Good Old Days" was going to Church.
- Mr. Newt Dallas - Remembers the "Good Old Days" as those days one did nothing but work every-day.
- Mrs. Lela Ellis - Remembers the "Good Old Days" when

prices were cheaper and when she could pick cotton and earn a living.

Mr. James Gary - Remembers the "Good Old Days" as being the days when big bands, such as Louis Armstrong and Johnny Jones came to College Park when he worked there as caretaker for fifteen years.

Mrs. Dolly Smith - Remembers the "Good Old Days" as being when prices were small and goods were many, and long ago everything seemed to go well with people.

Mr. Brown Scott - Recalls that the "Good Old Days" are a comparison between the good days today and the days of yesterday.

Mrs. Serena Walton - Recalls the "Good Old Days" as being days of fun, misery, and the everyday existence during the 1930's and 1950's.

Mr. Cecil Stiff - Recalls that there were no "Good Old Days."

In addition, through these interviews one gets a good idea of entertainment on Farish Street around the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's; attitudes toward race relations; the Civil Rights Movement in Jackson; and the Church. In yet another vein the interviewee, Miss Smith, discusses how her mother taught her to cope with racism. There are many others all of which demonstrate freshness of the information which can be captured through Oral History interviews.