

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 OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

O. H. 81.52A

ERNEST LUCKETT

Interviewed  
by

ALFERDTEEN HARRISON

on

September 28, 1981



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FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PROJECT

I agree that this magnetic tape recording of my voice made during an interview with Cheryl A. Payne (interviewer) and a transcript made therefrom, 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.

Ernest Luckett  
Oral Author (interviewee) Signature

9/28/81  
date

Ms. Cheryl A. Payne  
Oral Recorder (interviewer) Signature

9/28/81  
date

Alferden Harrison (Wm)

81.52A  
Tape number



## Introduction

Mr. Ernest Lockett, was born in Jackson, Mississippi, on the corner of Lynch and Rose Street. He moved to the Farish Street area at the age of six for schooling.

Mr. Lockett tells of his first experiences attending public school. He talked of his admiration for his instructor and her talents. He discussed mainly his acquaintance with a black lawyer, P. G. Cooper, who collected the rent and helped the youths of that area enjoy playing baseball to keep them off the streets.

Mr. Lockett talked of his parents and their early beginning, also about his birthplace and how he became a citizen of the Farish Street Historic District.



INTERVIEWEE: Ernest Lockett  
INTERVIEWER: Alferdteen Harrison  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: September 28, 1981  
O.H. 81.52

Harrison: This interview is with Mr. Ernest Lockett. It is for the Jackson State University Historic District Project.

Mr. Ernest Lockett, how long have you lived in the Farish Street Historic District?

Lockett: I've lived in the Farish Street area since 1922.

Harrison: Where did you live prior to that?

Lockett: I lived two blocks from this area on South Farish Street.

Harrison: Where is that in relationship to the Farish Street Historic District?

Lockett: It is joining the Historic District on the southside.

Harrison: Does the Farish Street Historic District take up the north end of Farish Street?

Lockett: Starting with Capitol Street.

Harrison: Were you born down on the other end?

Lockett: No, I was born on Lynch Street, corner of Lynch and Rose Street. However, I moved down on Farish Street when I was about six years old. I started coming up into the Farish Street area for school at the age of six.

Harrison: Tell us about your experience of going to school in the Farish Street Historic area. Where was it and that kind of thing?

Lockett: During that time we only had one public school on this side of town. It was Smith Robertson School. Before I started to Smith Robertson, I attended a private school on South Valley Street, the sponsor was the Pearly Grove Baptist Church and the principal was Mrs. Mary Osborne. At the age of six I was eligible for the public schools and we were living in the 200 block of South Farish Street. Therefore, I had to come up into this area to the Smith Robertson School for my early education.

Harrison: Can you recall when you were six years old and the first day of school?



Lockett: The first day of public school, yes I can. The first day that I was in school I had a teacher by the name of Miss Kinnebrew. She was a young teacher and quite active. The first day of school she had us to stand up and take ✓ three deep breaths and just relax and stretch, and I enjoyed that very much. She was trying to get all of the fear out of us on our first day of entering school. She was trying to make us feel comfortable, which she did.

At the beginning of class she went to the blackboard and printed her name in large letters. She did some beautiful writing. I was carried away with her writing and I said I'm going to be writing like that. That was about what happened on the first day and my first experience at the public schools.

Harrison: I am curious about why you were so impressed with her writing.

Lockett: Before I started to school I wasn't writing, I was printing. I thought I had a pretty good hand at printing.

I was quite fond of looking into the sports magazines. My father was a hotel porter and on Sunday he would bring the newspaper home with the sports section or rather a sports book. I would get that book and it had such printing in it as English Printing, and I use to turn the pages and find the English Printing. I would get my pencil and I would imitate the printing. That is what impressed me about Mrs. Kinnebrew's writing.

Harrison: You mentioned you father, you want to tell us a little more about him?

Lockett: My father's name is Eugene Lockett. He was the third son in a family of eleven children. His parents were George and Mary Lockett. They came to Jackson from Bolton, Mississippi.

My father's parents died at an early age. He was fourteen years of age when his mother passed, however, his father had passed some years before.

He dropped out of school and started working. My father, always thought that he was a little man. They wanted him to continue going to school, but he thought it was best for him to find employment. He found employment as a porter in a hotel.

Harrison: Do you know which hotel?

↓ porter ?



Luckett: The Edwards Hotel was the first hotel he worked in. During the period of his life time he worked at the Edwards Hotel, the Royal Hotel and the the Heidleburg Hotel.

When the Waldorf Hotel was about to open, the manager knew him very well as being the kind of poter that he would like to have, so he promised him employment. As soon as the doors of the hotel were opened he started to work there.

Harrison: Let's get back to Farish Street. Do you recall ever seeing a lawyer when you were growing up?

Luckett: A lawyer?

Harrison: Yes, what I want to know is your first contact, or your first impression about a lawyer in this area.

Luckett: My first contact with a lawyer was at the age of six. It was with Lawyer P. G. Cooper, a negro lawyer. He had an office in the Redmond Building.

Harrison: Where was this located?

Luckett: The building on Farish Street at the corner of Farish and Capitol, the Redmond Building. He was the first negro lawyer that I knew. In other words, I came in contact with hin when he use to come to the house to collect rent.

Harrison: Your family was renting from him?

Luckett: No, he was collecting rent for the owner of the property, who was a negro.

Harrison: He was representing someone else?

Luckett: The individual had left out of the Jackson area and moved to Chicago.

Harrison: What were your impressions of him?

Luckett: I thought he was a great man. Knowing that he was a lawyer, my early desires was to become a lawyer. After we moved into this area on Monument Street there was a large field behind Lawyer Cooper's house. He use to let us play ball in the field, since we had no playground and to get us out of the streets.

Harrison: Where was his house located?



- Luckett: His house was located on Lamar Street, the first house south of the Graystone Hotel.
- Harrison: The Graystone Hotel was there at that time?
- Luckett: Yes, but it was not a hotel during that time. It was a home occupied by an ex-school teacher, Mrs. Betty Marino.
- Harrison: Did you have any other associations with Lawyer Cooper?
- Luckett: No, no more than he use to come over sometimes when we were playing ball. He would come over and maybe ask for the bat. One of his arms was cut off just above the elbow, he would take the bat and place it on the nub . . . .
- Harrison: This is another man?
- Luckett: No, this is Mr. Cooper.
- Harrison: He was one armed?
- Luckett: Yes, he was a one armed negro lawyer. He would swing the bat from that nub, in other words, he use to come out and join in the games with us, which would make a boy or now a man take time in the kind of activities that he liked. I know some more lawyers.
- Harrison: Could we go back to Mr. Cooper for a moment?
- Luckett: Yes.
- Harrison: Could you describe him physically other than a one-armed man?
- Luckett: Mr. Cooper was about six feet tall with broad and stout shoulders. His step was very quick. He was a friendly man. He would speak to everyone that he would meet along the street. He would speak and carry on some form of conversation along the streets.
- Harrison: What about skin coloration?
- Luckett: He was about the complexion of Mrs. Cousins.
- Harrison: What do you call that, chocolate, brown or something?
- Luckett: I would call that kind of a chocolate turning to brown, not a burned chocolate burned brown.



Harrison: Ginger Brown?

Luckett: No, a lighter color than that, let's say light brown skin.

Harrison: In those day it was also important to tell what kind of hair people had.

Luckett: He had the straight hair, about the average type of hair that negroes would have.

Harrison: Straight hair?

Luckett: Yes, straight. I mean it is not curly, it was not nappy.

Harrison: It wasn't nappy. It was not kinky like my hair?

Luckett: I don't know, it might have been a better grade.

Harrison: That's interesting. So, Lawyer Cooper was a handsome man?

Luckett: Yes, he was.

Harrison: Do you know about his church affiliation?

Luckett: No, I don't know.

Harrison: I guess as a youth growing up in the community you've given us a pretty accurate description. What happened to him?

Luckett: He took sick and died.

Question from Audience: Mr. Luckett, did Mr. Cooper have a family, was he married?

Luckett: No, he was single. His aunt lived in the house with him and took care of the house. He had one nephew, Howard Turner, he also lived with him.

Question from Audience: What was his aunt's name?

Luckett: I can't think of her name, but I knew her very well.

Question from Audience: The house that you are speaking of where Mr. Cooper lived, is it still standing, what has taken place since then?

Luckett: If I make no mistake, the house he lived in is the house that has been moved down a bit from where it originally was to make way for a street that runs on the northside of the Graystone Hotel. The boundry line was moved back a bit southward, but I think the house is still there.



Question from Audience: Could you give me the street name that you are talking about where they moved the house?

Lockett: It's Julia Barnes Circle, I think.

Question from Audience: Are you saying that the house was moved from . . .

Lockett: No, it was moved from it was originally back to a point southward.

Question from Audience: From Julia Barnes Circle?

Lockett: No, from where it originally was. It was beside the Graystone Hotel and then moved back. That was Grayson Street during that time, it is Lamar Street now.

Question from Audience: What about other street up in that area?

Lockett: After they began to build houses in that area all of the property from Graystone to Monument, and from what is now Lamar Street to the Creek comes out from the area and runs into Monument Street at Dryphus Street, which was owned by Professor Brinkley. Professor Brinkley was a negro educator and Principal of Jim Hill School.



DRAFT

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY  
Oral History Project  
Farish Street Community  
Jackson, Mississippi 39217

INTERVIEWEE: ERNEST LUCKETT  
INTERVIEWER: Alferdteen Harrison  
DATE: September 28, 1982 (Date of Interview)  
OH 81.56B

(Continuation from another interview)

Please note, this interview is tied in with another  
however, they are on the same tape.

- L: . . . .Redmond lived on Pearl Street during the time. That was his  
brother, Gus.
- (?) Along Pearl Street and Dalton Street?
- L: I was living on the corner of Pearl and Rose.
- (?) That wasn't the Lawyer Redmond's wife?
- L: No, that was the Pharmacist Redmond's wife, Gus Redmond, his brother,  
and he had another brother by the name of Andrew.
- (?) Where did the REDmonds come from to Jackson, were they born here,  
did the come here?
- L: They came out of North Mississippi someplace out of North Mississippi
- (?) They say they come from Lexington or someplace up there.
- H: Lexington?
- (?) In \_\_\_\_\_ County up there.  
What school did they attend?
- L: Well, I remember seeing the diploma on the wall where he was at the  
University of Illinois or Chicago University or something like that  
one of those schools.
- H: Yes, we can find that out.
- L: Oh, and I think he also went to Rust College.
- (?) Okay, so he went to Rust College rather than Tougaloo.
- L: I don't know of his being at Tougaloo.

*Cover letter mailed 9-3-82 with a copy of transcripts. Xerox machine is  
out of order. The cover letter is a standard one. Sh. Dr. Dr. = Clerk*



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- H: Okay we will take about five more minutes for additional questions  
I think with our topic tonight "The Legal History of . . .other things we will talk about later. . .we did want to have everybody participate and ask questions but tonight we are pursuing the legal aspect and I believe Doris has a question. I don't tend to be an interpreter, I may be one this time, you mentioned something about the Lily White . . .was then when you changed your mind and you said it was the Black and Tan . . .party.
- L: Yes, it was the Black and Tan but the Lily White was the, that was an organization I believe that was gotten up. . .was taht a White organization. Was that a White organization or a Colored?
- (?) I think that I think that they came in there somewhere, there was a Lily White. . .but I may be confused. . .
- H: About the Lily White party, I do know from talking to and having interviews with Mr. James Gooden, there have been, there were other parties among Black folk. Now, I don't know, I remember something. . .people described very vividly to me on tape about the Mulattoes Blue Vein Club. Now I don't know if that's a Lily White club?
- L: Now, I think that is the Lily White Club, the Blue Vein, all of them that had Blue Veins could join that party but later on they found that some of the people of the darker complexion had Blue Veins. I think that's because of oxygen or something. . .through the blood vein. I think that that might be the Lily White, I'm not too clear on it.
- H: Do you know any persons who would have been members of this club?
- L: Of waht?
- H: The Lily White Club?
- (?) We are talking about the Black and Tan, the Republican political . . .
- H: I am not sure if it was called the Blue Vein Society or the Lily White Society in this particular community. But in Black communities throughout America, unless Jackson would be very different and I doubt it, if that is the case, there were those clubs.



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L: Well, Jackson had a party. . . .

H: And there are people still living in this area, I don't know if they live in this area but in the City, who were members of that. The Blue Vein Society or the Lily White, I don't know if they would have called themselves Lily White. . . .

(?) You mentioned Pearl Street, Pearl Street probably has the members of the oldest Black families who have been in this City, than I think anywhere else . . . .

H: Now they also lived on Farish Street.

L: I think some of the Atwoods are still, some of the Atwoods family are still on Pearl Street.

H: Edwards?

L: Atwoods. Yes, some of his people. Isn't Latham out there on Pearl Street at the funeral home? Is Latham still there? That's a very old family.

(?) Were the Dawsons suppose to be in this group too?

L: Who, the Dawsons? Well, they could have been in this group but I don't know whether the Dawsons were ever engaged in politics. However, they came here around 1900 from Tougaloo, and the husband of that family, I can't call his name right now, but he was a plaster contractor.

H: Now as the Black and Tan political party, that's true, but there were other kinds of social clubs, . . . you know and this Lily White thing was probably one of those social clubs. They were names for them and we do have some testimony relevant to those persons and who they were and where they lived. So it did in fact exist.

(?) There was also some talk of many Black lawyers. What do you know about. . . say Lawyer Young, Carsie Hall . . . .

L: I do not know about the teaching there but I do know he opened his office to those lawyers to use his books. In other words, he had one of the best, it is said that he had one of the best libraries as to anyone in the legal profession and I do know that a number of younger Whites use to come down sometimes to study in his office. I know that.



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(?) Was he, did he devote most of his time earlier to doctoring and then later to lawering or where do you think he put most of his interest or was it sort of equally divided?

L: I could not say anything about the division of time but when he first started out he was in the medical field as a doctor and I understand that he gained great hominance during an epedimic that broke out during that time. He was a very outstanding doctor and he won quite a place in the medical world for the work that he did during that epedimic. Later on he went off and studied law and in his practice he was recognized as being one of the best lawyers in the country.

(?) Do you remember any particular case that he practiced in terms of law that may have been race related, something that we might describe like a Civil Rights case?

L: Well, rape cases, he pleaded rape cases in the Courts. He and his brother-in-law, Perry Howard, and his brother-in-law is said to have had one of the most famous cases that had ever been tried in Mississippi, which was a rape case of a Negro boy of a White lady. And they called this case, let's see, they called this case, "The One Hundred Reason Case."

(?) Why did they call it the "One Hundred Reason Case?"

L: Well, that's the deed of politics of which the people don't care to explain.

(?) Well, we need to know the history though, why did they call it that?

L: It was the way the Perry Howard gained freedom for the boy with the Judge.

(?) So then he won the case and he . . .

L: Oh yes, he won the case and they sent the boy out of Mississippi.

(?) Immediately?

L: After the case was over.



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(?) Were there other cases that were. . .that Perry Howard was involved in?

L: Oh that's about the only one that I do remember.

(?) That was a very famous case?

L: Yes, that was what they called a famous case. The "One Hundred Reason Case."

(?) What year was this?

L: Oh I don't know what year that was, but that was during the time that Perry Howard was practicing law here in the City of Jackson, but what year that was I don't know.

H: We have about five more minutes.

(?) Mr. Lockett, what standings did lawyers have during those days? In other words, you might be associated with . . .civil rights meetings for the community. . . in those days what was the lawyer, a legal practitioner. . .what standing did they have in the community among the Negro race?

L: Among the Negro race? Well, I

(?) Were they well respected?

L: Oh yes they were well respected, not only by the Negro race but by the White as well. In other words, after Perry Howard left from here, and went into Washington, I think he was the Assistant Attorney General and Mississippi depended upon their getting advice and aid from the Federal Government through Perry Howard, through Redmond and through the other Black politicians that were left in the area, such as Patton.

(?) Did they all belong to the Black and Tan Party? Or do you recall?

L: I am sure that if one was a member the other was.

(?) So it was during the time that the Black and Tan Party was in operation?

L: Yes, however, during that time a number of the Negroes I think still followee the Republican Party.

H: Okay, we have time for one more question.



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(?) I would like to say that in Dr. Redmond's earlier life and his earlier work, he use to teach school down at Meridian, Mississippi. I learned that from my mother-in-law because her family was from Meridian. Also Mrs. Harvey could tell you more about him because her family lived there . . .before mama moved.

(?) He was a doctor, teacher, lawyer  
He was a very smart man.

(?) How much money did he have?

L: Well that is the question that was asked after his death, how much money did he have? But Doctor Redmond always said that he did not have any money, no more than the money that he carried around with him in his pocket, but he said that his wife and his children had his little money. He use to tell the fellows, if you want some money, see my wife and my children, they have a little money they may let you have some but all I have is what's here in my pockets. So we don't know how much money Redmond had.

(?) He owned quite a bit of real estate I understand.

L: Oh yes, and I am quite sure he had quite a bit of money. He was a leader in the medical field, he was the organizer of the first medical board of Mississippi of White and Colored.

H: Okay, maybe I should just call this to a halt at this point, since we will be pushed out of here in a matter of few minutes, and the Medical History is the subject for our discussion tomorrow night. We will be continuing this. . .we have invited some persons to come tomorrow night, Who has been invited?

Mr. Harmon and Dr. White, and if they do not show up we will have Mr. Lockett on hand.