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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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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, Mary L. Kendrick 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.

Mrs Mary L. Kendrick
Interviewee (Signature)

11/30/82
Date

I have returned written transcript.

ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT
FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PROJECT

I agree that this magnetic tape recording of my voice made during an interview with Mrs. Mary Louise Smith Kendrick (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.

Mrs. Mary Louise Smith Kendrick
Oral Author (interviewee) Signature

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

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9/19/81

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FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Jackson, Mississippi 39213

INTERVIEWEE: Mary L. Smith Kendricks
INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Cheryl A. Payne
DATE: September 19, 1981
SUBJ: Farish Street Historic District

This is an interview with Mrs. Mary Louise Smith Kendricks for the Jackson Jackson State University , Farish Street Historic District Project by Cheryl Payne, located at 208 East Monument on September 19, 1981 at 3:54 P.M.

P: Mrs. Kendricks, will you tell me your occupation?

K: I manage Richmond's Boarding home for the Aged.

P: How long have you been there?

K: Eleven years.

P: What were some of your other occupations before going to Richmond's Boarding Home?

K: File Clerk for Security Life Insurance Company, Secretary and Assistant Editor of the Jackson Advocate.

P: Where were these businesses located?

K: ~~In~~ Farish Street District.

P: ~~In Farish Street District.~~

P: What year?

K: 1944 to 1969.

P: Okay. What year did you move into the Farish Street District?

K: 1929.

P: ~~Where about~~, what street did you live on when you moved here?

K: North Lamar, corner of Lamar and Davis Street. (Grayson St + Davis St)

P: That means that . . .

K: The house is still there.

P: That means that when you moved to Jackson in 1929, you were in the Farish Street District at that time. ~~I would like for you to tell me,~~ can you remember some of the streets? Were all these streets included in the area or have some streets been added and some streets been eliminated?

K: Lamar Street was Grayson Street during the time and Henry Street was there ~~but~~ . . . Hampton Street was there, Sun-N-Sand and all of those buildings

Hamilton
Grayson Alley has been eliminated.

mark

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except Grayson Alley - 2 -

K: they weren't there. No streets have been eliminated from around in the District some names have been changed but the streets are still there.

P: How far did the black ^{business} district go down there on Farish Street?

K: To Capitol.

P: It's always been from ^{Davis} all the way to Capitol.

K: On the right to Capitol because that's where Percy Green's office and Security Life Insurance and Dr. Hall and Dr. Barnes, it went to Capitol Street on the right side of the street.

P: Did you belong to any of the churches that were in this district? ^{K: yes}

K: I joined Central Methodist Church at the age of seven, and I was an active member there until the year of 1972 when I moved my membership to Greater Blair Street A. M. E. Zion Church on Blair Street.

P: Back in 1929, what groups and things were active . . . were known . . . you know, organizations and groups that people tried to become members of because of their influence in the community, and all.

K: I was really too small to know anything about, ^{that} back then, you know, I was too young.

P: Well from the time . . .

K: But I can remember vaguely from when I was six years old on forward, I remember hearing my mother 'nem talk about the depression during 1932. My first year in school, everything was so bad that I didn't have shoes to wear on a kind of the depression. And I can remember the first school I attended, a Lutheran School, it was a church and a school on North Blair Street, my teacher was Miss Sally Thompson, she taught all grades from the first through the sixth, ^{make} we had one teacher.

P: Did you ever attend the church service?

K: Yes, I did. It was just sometime, but my membership was at Central.

P: So you . . . at the age of six this would have been in the thirties. Name some of the buildings and some of the businesses and that you can remember down on Farish Street during that time.

K: Well, . . . it was Stevenson's Kitchen, and the Crystal Palace building are about the only things that I can remember, being that young until later years I can familiarize you with some of the buildings. But all the talk was about Stevenson's Kitchen and the Crystal Palace, I guess

MS

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K: that's why I can remember those two places.

P: What kind of talk was it about Stevenson's Kitchen and the Crystal Palace?

K: It was the main hang out, the only nice places that the ~~by~~ black people had to go.

P: What about the late thirties and early forties, what do you remember about the area then?

K: ~~Oh~~ there was a hang out for teenagers, we had an ice cream parlor and movie ~~and~~ farther down on Farish Street across Amite we had another movie called the Booker T. Theater and the Alamo was on Amite Street ~~near~~ Mill St. The Crystal Palace catered to dances and recreation for the teenagers, Stevenson's also catered to different little parties and things for teenagers, and Steve had an ice cream parlor on Farish Street. The kids hung out in this drugstore there, George Harmon got it now. I don't remember the name of it then but kids would go there for sodas and recreation.

P: Who owned Stevenson's Kitchen at that time?

K: Mr. & Mrs. Willie Stevenson, after their death, Sarah Harvey took it over.

P: What about the Crystal Palace?

K: Mr. Claude Hodges.

P: Did these persons live in the Farish Street District also?

K: The Stevensons didn't, they lived on Woodrow Wilson, but Claude Hodges lived on Church Street. He was a businessman, a real estate man, and his wife, Mrs. Hodges, ~~she was just, she,~~ they had a little grocery store on Bloom Street. They owned the Crystal Palace Building and owned a lot of rental houses, ~~here~~ all over Jackson.

P: Back to your early employment, the Security Life Insurance Company, who was the owner of it?

K: Well, I started work when I was going to school, ~~employed for and~~ I worked after school as file clerk in the sick claims department. I was working for Walter H. Williams, Sr., which is now deceased.

P: ~~And~~ where was his office located?

MLK

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K: 415½ North Farish.

P: And how long did you work there?

K: I worked there from 1944 to 1945 ~~1945~~ ^{lys} ~~I~~ ^{until} went to California and came back in 1946 and worked there another year, ~~to the last part of 1947.~~
I was working ~~there~~ and ~~I was also working~~ three days a week at Security Life, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Three days a week for Percy Green's Newspaper, which was next door, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

P: Back then, in your opinion, what attitudes did Black people have towards dealing with Black businesses such as the Insurance Company, was the business in very good condition, had substantial customers?

K: Yes, it really did.

P: Did anymore Blacks have any businesses on, down on Farish Street at that time?

K: Home Dining Room, that was owned by the Robinsons', The ^{Big} Apple Inn, (Big John's) which is still there; it was once on the eastside of the street, they moved across on the west. ^{These were} ~~That was~~ another favorite hang out for the teenagers, "~~The Big Apple Inn,~~" now called ~~Big John's~~; and there were colored barber shops I don't remember who owned them, and ^{Willard} Willie Johnson ^{had owned The Dolly} ~~had that cab~~ stand there every since I can remember. Mr. Hodges, at one time owned the cab stand.

P: Can you remember any other person that was distinct in the neighborhood?

K: Clarice Collins, the Banks, Dr. Christian had a hospital on Farish Street, Peoples' is occupying some of the space in there now, a two-story white frame structure. Mrs. Reed, ^{she} owned the cafe, I worked there a couple of evening where the ~~Red Fox~~, ^{Blue Note is now} what is it, next to the ~~Crescent Laundry~~.

P: Oh, the Blue Note.

K: Blue Note, kind of a lounge there that ~~Joe Wilson's~~ boys owned. ^{The} ~~It was~~ colored only, restaurant right there. ^{what are}

P: In what way has the neighborhood changed, some changes that you saw down in the neighborhood?

K: Well, streets are better, better housing conditions, more Negro businesses.

P: Did any Blacks own property that was rented down here?

We are talking about the time that you can remember, say from what about 1937 . . .

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K: Well, the Hodges have always owned property Mr. Essie McNeal who is deceased now, he owned property. He owned the house next door ^{TO US NOW} and one down the street; Dr. Redmond, he owned plenty property on Church Street, Farish Street, in fact that building that Security Life and Percy Green's office was in, that whole building belonged to Dr. Redmond.

P: Back to the newspaper, ~~the~~, what was the name of the newspaper?

K: The Jackson Advocate.

P: How did editors of the newspaper at that time, how did the editors get the items for the newspaper and was it difficult for them to get items to go in the newspaper?

K: Its a news release company in New York, Chicago, and in different states, they would send this booklet and you would go through it and select the items, articles that you wanted to print and you would also scout around having reporters and get the current news, you know in your neighborhood. There is a news release service that would send different news items to all newspapers, and it is up to you to pick the one that you want to publish in your own paper.

P: Did the Blacks, that you might know of, have any difficulty in their business from the Whites during that time? Did the Whites sort of object to them? Like Security Life?

K: They objected to the newspaper, it was always some type of confusion about what was being printed. They would call, threaten me and everyone else that worked there, you know about articles that were printed. They didn't seem to want this colored newspaper there at first but after a couple of years of this I don't know what happened, but all the Whites, look like they were in favor of working with Percy Green.

P: When you all were having the difficulties with the Whites about the newspaper, is there any type of organization or group of people that you could go to that voiced their support for the paper?

K: Nothing but the N.A.A.C.P.

P: That was the main civil rights organization at that time also?

K: Yes.

P: Tell me some of the activities and things some of your memories of the Farish Street District. Some of the things that you did and enjoyed

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P: doing as a group, schools and churches and you know just things in general.

K: We would have a lot of fun. We would have street dances. We would block off from Farish and Amite to ~~Farish~~ ^{I mean} to Amite and Mill, rope it off so no cars couldn't come in and they would be ~~done~~ cleared the street of both sides of cars, and we'd have a band at each end of the street, Joe Dyson's Band on one end, ~~Joe Dyson owned this funeral home out here on Whitfield Mill, what's that, Woodrow Wilson, and formerly owned by Denton~~ and Carl Oatis, his band would be on the other end, and we would have those street dances. . blocked off no cars could get into and that was a lot of fun.

P: Well was it a particular group that sponsored these dances?

K: Yes, schools, different schools . . .

P: What schools were . . .

K: ~~And then the, and we were also,~~ ^{There} it's a place down below Van Winkle called McRaven's Barn. We use to rent a wagon, the one I use to ride in the man use to live right here in Monument Court, Mr. Buster. We rented wagons mules, and we would fill it with hay and go on hay rides and go down to McRaven's Barn, down there below Van Winkle, and that was a lot of fun, good clean fun.

P: Was Lanier first through twelfth grade or, first through eighth grade or what?

K: Ninth through twelfth grade.

P: What was the elementary school here in this area?

K: Smith Robertson. I attended Smith Robertson. I went to this Lutheran School through the second grade. When I passed to the third I started going to Smith Robertson School on Bloom Street. I was there through the eighth grade.

P: Where was Lanier located?

K: On Ash Street where Rowan is located now.

P: So Smith Robertson and the Lutheran School were the only schools down here in the Farish Street District. . .

K: Down in this district and the Catholic School was still where it is now.

P: How far did you go in school?

K: Two years college, at Tougaloo.

P: Have you ever lived anywhere else in Jackson besides the Farish Street

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P: District?

K: For two years I lived in Lynch Street housing project. It is now owned by Jackson State houses, up there where Jackson State is their parking lot.

P: Are some of the houses here in this area, are some of them still the same as they were when you were coming up?

K: Some are the same, just been painted and probably repaired but as far as the structure, it is the same.

P: You said that when you came to Jackson you lived on what is now North ~~Lamar~~ ^{G. Yanson} Street. Did you live anywhere else in this district?

K: On Henry Street.

P: Can you remember who was the landlord at that time?

K: John Hart Asher, Sr.

P: Anywhere else in the area?

K: On Bloom Street, John Hart Asher.

P: So did Mr. Asher have quite a bit of rental houses and property in the area?

K: Yes, had then and still do have.

P: Can you remember homeowners, black homeowners that were here that owned their own homes or were buying their own home? Do you remember?

K: Well naturally the Collins, the Redmonds, the Topps, the Hodges, the Howards, the Cheathams, I know quite a few.

P: What type of functions did the church sponsor for youth during that time?

K: Mostly picnics, during that time kids did a lot of singing for the church and we had quartets, we had a lot of competition and we use to have contests with these different quartets made up of children, you know in various churches.

P: Besides the organizations that you have already named and places that you have already named where the children could go, were there any other places?

K: It was this (Savoy) Hall which is still standing, next to the peanut house down on Farish Street, we use to go there for dances and recreation. The "Y", I'm trying to think what year the "Y" came down there. I don't remember, but during that time the "Y" wasn't down there.

MSP

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P: During what time?

K: In the thirties.

P: What changes have you seen in people's attitudes around this district?

K: Some seem to be satisfied and there is still discontentment on some parts. As a whole, attitude is not like it was when I was coming up. It seems that people didn't have these things to cope with, everybody was happy go lucky, but now it always seems to be some type of a problem. Expenses, living conditions. During those times we, Black people they just got together and enjoyed themselves, look like more than it has been since this integration.

P: What type of attitude, what type of community was the Farish Street District considered at that time, low income, middle income, high income or what? Do you know? Maybe you could classify it.

K: Well all I can remember is that it was just classified as the Black district.

P: Were there many Black districts during that time?

K: ~~No, nothing but Farish Street.~~ *yes, some part of Lynch St. Near The corner of Rose St*

P: Can you maybe recall about what year people began to migrate out into sub-divisions from down in Farish Street District?

K: It was in the late sixties when they really started buying property out in the *Lynch* Street Sub-Division No. 1 and 2, places like that. Late sixties, 1969 and on, people that I knew started buying out and building there.

P: Can you think of anything about the District that you like to remember that . . .

K: I like to remember the Crystal Palace building because that's where I had the most fun that I can remember of ever having, it was in that Crystal Palace building, the Savoy building. I remember Willie Stevenson's Kitchen and just Farish Street as a whole, especially from Church Street to *Amite* ~~Britton~~ Street.

P: Did you ever travel, can you remember what was up on the other end beyond Monument, say to Fortification?

K: Well, where the men's "Y" is now, it was a home owned by Mrs. Reeves, she also owned this cafe that I was telling you about, and Dr. Christian's hospital, big cafe there on the corner of Leonard Court and Farish Street

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K: I don't remember the name but this great big long building there and Dr. Leroy Smith he's deceased now, he owned the home there on the corner of Cohea and Farish. He was a ^{doctor} dentist, he also had an office down in ~~Doctor Redmond's building~~. He had a hospital there on Farish Street where Miss Smith's Rooming House used to be, it is tore down now, a vacant lot next to Dr. Britton's, that use to be ^{the clinic} a hospital. Smith Clinic as they called it. Back in that time we had two Black owned hospitals on Farish Street; Dr. Christain and Dr. Smith,

P: In the year 1939?

K: Yes.

P: What are some of the other Black Doctors that you can remember?

K: Dr. Hall, had an office in the Redmond building; Dentist Barnes; ~~also Mr. Richard Beagle had a studio in the building, he's deceased now. He owned property out on Pearl Street.~~

P: Did Mr. ^{Beagle} Beagle live down in this neighborhood or he was always. . .

K: He lived on ^{Rose} Pruett Street.

P: What about Dr. Hall?

K: Dr. Hall lived on ^{Pearl} Pruett Street.

P: Dr. Barnes?

K: Dr. Barnes, I think Mrs. Barnes is still living up on Farish and Davis, she is still in the house. That's another house that was there all the time. Graystone Hotel, ~~now~~ my fourth grade teacher lived there, it's just like it was, and my first school teacher, Miss Thompson, ^{where} she lived, the house ^{is} still standing there on Lamar. Miss Harris ^{another teacher} formerly lived there. It's just like it was only you know they put siding around it and paint but the building structure is the same.

P: Your fourth grade teacher you say her home, where now stands the Graystone, what was her name?

K: Betty Marino.

P: Do you have any old pictures of the area?

K: No I don't.

P: What type of organizations or groups did you belong to then?

K: N.A.A.C.P., Y.W.C.A.; ~~Pastor's Aide Society; Birthday Club; Busy-Bee Club.~~

MLK

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K: Order of the Eastern Star. When I first joined the Eastern Star I was fourteen years old. I was too young to join but the Grand Matron, Mrs. Ora Reese, she lived on the corner of Church Street, she vouched me in. I had to be vouched in because I was too young to become a member. I was vouched in at the age of fourteen, and I was a member of the King Hiram's Branch of the Order of the Eastern Star and recently in 1979, I affiliated myself with the Eastern Stars of Vester No. 23 on Lynch Street.

P: Where was the King Hiram's Located?

K: In the Savoy building on Farish Street, part of the offices were there and the Lodge Hall it was also rented out for dances and you know different functions. It was in the Savoy Hall building down on Farish Street. The peanut house is in some of the building.

P: So the Savoy place is actually a building that had not only the Savoy there but it also housed other offices and things right?

K: No, the only offices there was Lodge and Masons.

P: Was there any Black clothing store, or shoe stores down there?

K: I can't remember.

P: Can you remember outstanding people that worked in the church that were influence in the community? What I mean is each community and group had something a person that is a leader where he is designated as a leader or the people chose him as a leader on their own where they taught people would listen to, and that he would stand up for other people.

K: Clarice Collins Harvey.

P: What kind of work did she do?

K: All categories. Any category.

P: Did she have a business or anything down there?

K: Collins Funeral Home.

P: It's been down there every since 1939 or was it down there when, as far as you can remember when you were little?

K: It's been down there every since I can remember. It was there way before 1939 but it was over on this side of the street, it was 406½.

P: It was on the opposite side that it stands now?

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K: The opposite side of the street. That two-story building what now houses these different little stores. Use to be Percy Green's office upstairs. After they moved, built the building on across the street. Percy Green moved in that building. So Collins Funeral Home built the building on this side of the street, yes another colored business during the time that the funeral home was on this side of the street, Mr. Curtis Mims owned a cleaning business downstairs, that was a black business. He lived on Montgomery Street.

P: Your parents, what year, can you remember what year they came to Jackson? Maybe they told you what year they moved to Jackson.

K: My mother came in about 1924 I guess, and my step-father, he came the same year. He was living in Raymond.

P: Where was your mother living?

K: Crystal Springs, Mississippi.

P: Did they ever tell you why they moved to Jackson?

K: She said looking for work; couldn't find any jobs down there. And he said the same thing. He couldn't find work in Raymond, you know, nothing but farming, and they came to Jackson looking for jobs.

P: What type of work was available at that time for the Blacks?

K: Not much of anything but the private homes for the women and the men cutting yards and things like that, ~~you know~~. My mother during 1932, she was the only one working. She was working for Dr. Cunningham, the house is still there on the corner of Congress and Fortification for \$1.50 per week, and our rent was \$.50 and we lived off of that \$1.00. My step-father he couldn't find work, he had a push wagon and he would go down to the Pearl River swamps and cut trees and sell stove wood. During that time most people had fire places and that how he made his little extra money. But finally as the years went on he was lucky enough to get a job at Overy Body Company and that's where he stayed until about 1942 I believe, when he went to work for ~~...~~ ^{Lamar Advertising} and the only work my mother ever did was work for this Doctor and it was a white restaurant down in the black district down on Farish Street, Brown's Furniture Store is there now. It use to be a White cafe, she was a pastry cook there. Really, the only jobs that, as far as I know of, were these pri-

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K: vate homes, you know unless you had education, then you could go go Peoples' or Collins, they were hiring ~~their~~ Black, you know places that could use them. Uneducated, nothing but private homes. Just common work.

P: What about the youth or the young adults? What type of jobs were offered for young Blacks then?

K: Well, they had opened up and they could get jobs working at factories and at one time Blacks couldn't even work at a white restaurant. They had all white. So the restaurants opened up to them and places like these lumber companies; businesses like that they started hiring Blacks. Avery's and Evans Lumber Company came on the scene then and places, ~~you know~~ ^{of}, that type. But there wasn't many office jobs and things then you know because it was still segregated. Whites was holding you know most of the jobs. A lot of Blacks went in pullman service ^{of} in trains.

P: Can you remember any of the exciting turning points in the District, something that meant that stood out such as like in the sixties the civil rights, something back then that was dynamic that stood out, some type of change that the Blacks had got together down there and made?

K: I participated in a march we were all arrested at the corner of Church and High Street, hearded off in ^{a Garbage Truck} ~~down~~ to the Fairground, we ~~would~~ ^{were} held down there, but I stuck it out seven days.

P: Now this march was for what?

K: Freedom, ^{and equal rights}

P: Freedom, Okay. What year was this?

K: I don't remember but it was in the fifties.

P: That was sort of like the civil rights

K: ^{yes} One of the civil rights marches. .

P: Movement, and in the fifties, that's when the Blacks really began . . .

K: Yes, I was ^{one of the Marchers} ~~among, down the second day~~, I was arrested the second day. I didn't participate in the march the first day, but the second day I did.

P: What motivated you to participate in that march?

K: I just thought about what they were doing it for and what it was standing for, and I was for it and I ~~just~~ got in and participated.

P: Did your parents participate in it?

K: No.

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P: Well, Mrs. Kendricks I have enjoyed our interview and what you have said has been very helpful to our Project, and if I need to interview you more will you consent to it?

K: Maybe I will be able to talk of some more interesting things to tell you.

END OF INTERVIEW

WMM

3/1/82