

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. 81.61

GWENDOLYN HAMPTON

Interviewed  
by

IRENE HAMPTON

on

September 22, 1981

ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT  
FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PROJECT

I agree that this magnetic tape recording of my voice made during an interview with *Suzanne Hampton* and a transcript made there-

(interviewer)

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*Suzanne Hampton*  
Oral Author (interviewee) Signature

*Swendell Hampton*  
Oral Recorder (interviewer) Signature

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## Introduction

Mrs. Gwendolyn Hampton, was born July 5, 1953. Mrs. Hampton was born and raised in the Farish Street District. She attended school at Bethlehem Center, Smith Robertson, Rowan Junior High, and Central High.

Mrs. Hampton spent a lot of time at the Bethlehem Center as a child. She reflects in changes in many areas including discipling of neighborhood children; neighborhood feeling of helping the sick, cooking, etc.; and the attitude about the country folk who came to Jackson's Farish Street to shop on Saturdays.

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Gwendolyn Hampton  
INTERVIEWER: Irene Hampton  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: September 22, 1981  
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- I. Hampton: Today's date is September 22, 1981. I am talking to Mrs. Gwendolyn Hampton of 227 East Davis.
- Mrs. Hampton, are you a native Jacksonian?
- G. Hampton: Yes.
- I. Hampton: When were you born?
- G. Hampton: July 5, 1953.
- I. Hampton: Did you attend school here in Jackson?
- G. Hampton: Yes I did.
- I. Hampton: Have you lived anyplace else in Jackson?
- G. Hampton: Yes, 915 North Blair Street.
- I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton, where did you attend school?
- G. Hampton: I went to kindergarden at Bethlehem Center, and from there I went to Smith Robertson Elementary School. I went from Smith Robertson to Rowan Junior High and I went from Rowan Junior High to Central High.
- I. Hampton: What are some of the entertainment places that you have gone?
- G. Hampton: The places that we had to go to when I was coming up was Big John's and the Ice Cream Parlor down on Farish Street.
- I. Hampton: Was there anything in particular special about Big John's?
- G. Hampton: Oh yes! Their smokes was the speciality. Their smokes and their hot tamales and pig ears, just about everything.
- I. Hampton: How much were they?
- G. Hampton: Twenty-five cents, then they went to thirty cents.
- I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton, what church did you attend?
- G. Hampton: Greater Blair Street A. M. E. Zion Church.
- I. Hampton: A. M. E. Zion, could you explain?

G. Hampton: Yes, A. M. E. Zion stands for Africian Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. It was founded by our black forefathers. It is the only A. M. E. Zion Church that is in Jackson.

I. Hampton: Are you very active at your church?

G. Hampton: Yes, I use to sing in our choir.

I. Hampton: Are those songs different from the ones today?

G. Hampton: During the time we were coming up the songs were different because at our church we couldn't sing today's songs. The songs that we sang mostly revolved around songs that the black people use to sing years ago, even before my time.

I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton, on what occasions did you go to Farish Street?

G. Hampton: We use to go on Farish Street every Saturday morning to shop. We always had to get down there before the folks from the country got there because they would take up the whole town.

I. Hampton: What do you mean folks from the country?

G. Hampton: The folks from Canton and Rankin County and places like that, different places out from Jackson. People use to come to town to shop and they would catch a bus and come on over into town and we would have to get down there before they got down there and take over everything.

I. Hampton: Was it because they would get all the nice merchandise or you all just didn't want to be around the country folks?

G. Hampton: No, it didn't have anything to do our being . . . you just couldn't turn for them.

I. Hampton: What movie did you go to?

G. Hampton: The Alamo Theatre.

I. Hampton: Was there any other black theatres at that time?

G. Hampton: There was another theatre on Amite Street, the Lamar Theatre. We had another theatre, the Paramount, but that was white owned and blacks weren't allowed to go there at first.

I. Hampton: Do you remember when they first intergrated the Jackson Public Schools?

G. Hampton: Yes, there was a lot of difference in it. The children that were going to the white schools were more advanced than the black students. They had more material to work with and that was one of the purposes for intergrating the schools.

I. Hampton: Do you have any memorable times from your childhood that you would like to share with us?

G. Hampton: We use to play over at the Bethlehem Center. We had inside games that we would play, checkers and cards. We use to make different kinds of arts and crafts. Miss Palmer was our director over there and Mr. Lewis was our assistant director. Miss Martin was one of the teachers over there and Miss Turner was there also.

I. Hampton: Do you remember when Miss Martin came to Bethlehem Center?

G. Hampton: Miss Martin had been at Bethelhem ever since I can remember. She was there when my older brothers were going there.

I. Hampton: What were some of the activities that you participated in?

G. Hampton: We played softball, tennis, table tennis, had swings to swing on, monkey climbers and we had a swimming pool. Everything that a child could need we had it right there in the Bethlehem Center. After I got up in age and went over to Rowan we played tennis. I was on the tennis team. I was in the Girl Scout Troop and my last year over at Rowan I was the Girl Scout Leader, the President of our troop. I played in the band, sang in the choir, and played on the basketball team in the seventh grade. I took up shop when I was seventh grade because I wasn't interested in home-making. I was always on the boyish side.

I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton, what's your occupation today?

G. Hampton: A machine operator.

I. Hampton: When you say machine operator what do you mean?

G. Hampton: I work at Packard Electric.

I. Hampton: What was your childhood like?

G. Hampton: It was exciting. We couldn't hardly go anywhere.

I. Hampton: Why?

G. Hampton: The families wouldn't let you go anywhere. We went to the Bethlehem Center and sometimes they would let us go to the "Y" for the sock hops. After the Center closed we mostly would get together down in the streets and play softball. Our parents would get out there and play softball with us. We use to play hide-and-go-seek, and sit around and talk with the adults in the neighborhood. At that particular time there was no such thing as talking back to grown folks. You got a whipping when you talked back to them and when you got home you got another whipping. It wasn't any use in saying I didn't do it because you got another whipping for calling a grown person a lie. When you got a whipping, you got a whipping.

I. Hampton: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

G. Hampton: If a person in the neighborhood got sick everybody would get together and come over and do their housework for them and tend to the kids and do all the cooking. At that particular time we didn't know what it was to lock our doors. I remember my father use to sleep on the porch at night in the summer because we didn't know anything about air conditioners. We used the hand fans or put the fan in the window and used it.

We would always get together and play. The adults in the neighborhood didn't curse their children like some of them do now. They respected us and we respected them because we didn't have any other choice but to respect them. At that particular time a whipping was a whipping.

I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton, do you belong to any Civil Rights groups?

G. Hampton: No, not now I don't.

I. Hampton: Did you ever belong to any?

G. Hampton: Yes, I once belonged to the N.A.A.C.P.

I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton, do you have pictures of the area at that time, the area in which you lived?

G. Hampton: The only pictures I that I have is a picture of me and my mother, that we took outside of our house on Blair Street.

I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton are you a registered voter?

G. Hampton: Yes, I am.

I. Hampton: How long have you been registered to vote?

G. Hampton: Ever since 1973.

I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton, is there anything else that you would like to tell me regarding the Farish Street District?

G. Hampton: The only thing that I could say now is that at the time when I was coming up it was good. Now it's getting a little rough. You can't leave your doors open like you use to and you can't walk the streets like you use to. I imagine that's done everywhere. I know of it in this district because this is where I live. It is still a nice place to live.

I. Hampton: Mrs. Hampton thank you for your interview. It was nice talking to you and I probably will get back to you.