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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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I, Mrs. Hannah Tucker 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. Hannah Tucker  
Interviewee (Signature)

DOB (April 30-1920)  
Date

11/28/82

DRAFT

FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
Jackson State University  
Jackson, Mississippi 39213

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Hannah Tucker  
INTERVIEWER: Margaret Moore Abdullah  
TRANSCRIBER: W. M. McClendon  
DATE: October 8, 1981 (interview date)  
SUBJ: Farish Street Historic District  
OH 81.66

I am here at the "Eat & Beat-It Cafe," with Mrs. Hannah Tucker. We are doing an Oral History interviewee for the Institute for the Study of Black Life and Culture, Jackson State University. This project is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Today's date is October 8, 1981, and we are now beginning the interview.

- A: Would you give us your full name please?
- T: My name is Hannah Watts Tucker.
- A: Tell us where you were born and when you came to Jackson.
- T: I was born in Rankin County. My father, mother and I moved to Hinds County when I was about five years old. They moved to Bolton, Mississippi, and we lived there and I went to school there. I got married to a gentleman named Oatis Tucker. Then I left from Bolton and came to Jackson to live in 1939.
- A: Where did you move to when you moved to Jackson? What area was it?
- T: I moved to 212 East Hamilton Street.
- A: Hamilton Street, that's in the Farish Street District. . .
- T: That's right.
- A: So you were pretty familiar with the Farish Street area then for a long time. Tell us something about your life during those years.
- T: Well, I was working as a maid and cooking. I did that for several years. Then I worked on West Capitol Street for a store for

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T: about three or four years, I left there and I started fixing hair.  
I did that for a couple of years.

A: Did you have your own shop then?

T: No.

A: Where did you do hair?

T: It was on Farish Street. I left there and then I started working for  
the Haygoods. ~~They~~ <sup>had A pecan factory</sup> lived on Hamilton Street. I worked for them for  
about six or seven years. I left there and started working for ~~Evans,~~  
~~who was~~ a Dentist, ~~and Odell Smith.~~ O. F. Smith

A: Was he a Black Dentist?

T: Black.

A: Where was his office located?

T: When I first started working he was on Amite and later he moved on  
Farish.

A: Where on Farish did he move to?

T: It was still on Amite Street. Well he moved from there up to Farish,  
and I worked for him for about ~~seven years,~~ ~~nine~~ or ten years. Then I  
started my business of my own.

A: What was that business?

T: That was "Eat & Beat," <sup>"It" cafe</sup> "Eat + Beat It CAFE"

A: This cafe?

T: Right.

A: Okay. Have you been in this location all the time?

T: Well, I was up where the "Y" is now, and I stayed up there about ~~seven~~  
years. <sup>five</sup>

A: About what year was it that you opened?

T: If making no mistake, it was in or around 19<sup>52</sup>~~48~~ or 19<sup>53</sup>~~49~~, somewhere  
around in there.

A: What was Farish Street like when you first came to Jackson?

T: Well it was in a bloom.

A: Tell us something about it.

H.T.

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- T: It was in a bloom. On Friday, every Thursday I would be working hard getting ready for Friday, every Friday.
- A: Tell us something about what it was like then. If I wasn't here I wouldn't know what Farish Street was like. Tell me something about what you enjoyed about Farish Street then.
- T: Well it was just in a bloom. <sup>is</sup> Everybody was more loving with one another. Having a good time what they use to call it. I was mostly a church going person. I wasn't in that crowd.
- A: What church did you attend?
- T: Church of God in Christ . . .
- A: Now where is *WAS IT located on Oakland St.?*
- T: Located on Oakland Street.
- A: Oakland Street?
- T: Yes. Elder D. R. Curry was my Pastor.
- A: When you opened the "Eat & Beat-It Cafe," on Farish Street, North Farish Street, what was your experience like? What motivated you to go into the restaurant business?
- T: Well, I was just trying to do better for myself. Highest I ever worked for, I didn't never get no higher than \$12.00 a week. So, that's one thing I had, one thought. I reared two, no three children with my own, 'cause my mother died and I taken my two baby sisters and raised them. So I just went into business trying to do better, make more money.
- A: What was the experience like going into business, was it hard for you as a woman at that time going into business?
- T: Well yes it was.
- A: How did you get your capital to go into business? Did you save that up or were you able to borrow money from the bank at that time?
- T: Well, no, my friend helped to put me into business.
- A: Private financing then.
- T: That's right.

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- A: What were some of the experiences like when you first opened up?
- T: Well it was all new to me. I didn't know nothing about cafes and I never went in them too much, It was just all new to me.
- A: That must have taken a lot of courage.
- T: Yes it did.
- A: Were you encouraged by the Farish Street atmosphere?
- T: No, I was encouraged by my friend.
- A: By your friend?
- T: Yes, 'cause I wanted to give it up but he pushed me till I got caught on to it. After I got into it then it was alright.
- A: Was the Black Community a good patronage of your restaurant at that time?
- T: Right.
- A: Did your business build?
- T: Very good.
- A: After your business built up over a period of years, you probably saw quite a number of changes on Farish Street. How did those changes affect your business?
- T: Well, it hurt pretty much, like it's going now--business really hurt.
- A: When did you make the move from further north on Farish Street to this location?
- T: When the "Y" got ready to build their place they tore down that wooden frame.
- A: This was a resident structure that you got started in that was torn down?
- T: That's when I moved from there to down here.
- A: I heard on another interview about some professional people that use to dine at your place and have dinner or something for the Attorneys in the area. Do you remember that particular incident?
- T: Well now . . .
- A: Someone (I think it was Dr. White) was telling us about a dinner that

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- A: was held to honor one of Jackson's lawyers at your place.
- T: I don't remember. A lot you know and you just forget it. I enjoy running a cafe. Since I have been here, I really enjoy it.
- A: What were some of the problems that I might run into in this area if I wanted to go into the restaurant business?
- T: . . .you have to keep your eye on it. That's the only problem I have with it. You just have to keep your eye on it so people don't take your stuff.
- A: I know you said that your friend encouraged you to stay in the business but a lot of people have dropped out in spite of encouragement. You must have had some courage or some motivation. What gave you the strength to go on with it?
- T: Well, one thing, because I wasn't making no money being a maid and what not . <sup>He</sup> encouraged me that I could make more money than what I was doing and that if I stay in it, it would over run and then I could see my way out. When I get to where I couldn't make it. I would call on him, he would come and help me until I got up on my feet. He was very nice. So, therefore, that was encouragement. He's dead now.
- A: Would you like to reveal his name?
- T: His name was Chester Smith.
- A: Was he in the restaurant business?
- T: He once had been.
- A: He was able to tell you some of the problems then.
- T: That's right.
- A: That you would be going through.
- T: That's right. His name was Chester Smith.
- A: Do you remember when the Payne bus use to run and bring people into town?
- T: Sure. I was up on the hill at that time, but when I moved here it was all about played out.

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- A: What is the street address here?
- T: 748 North North Farish Street.
- A: 748 North Farish Street, and this is where the Payne Grocery Store was that brought the bus in.
- T: Yes, it was the second door from here, cause there was this garage right next door and that's where all the buses came in and they unloaded in this area. Other words, we had a barber shop in here, a store, grocery store, and this was a cafe here and the garage.
- A: All this was owned by Payne?
- T: Right, it is still owned by Payne.
- A: Were any of the businesses (Black) over there where your business was when you got started?
- T: *No. The GARAGE was black owned*
- A: You remember what businesses were there at that time?
- T: This cafe on up the street. I think her name was Joann, She was doing business.
- A: That's the one right across from Mr. Lockett's store?
- T: That's right.
- A: The store?
- T: Yes. She was in business, I don't know her last name. That's about the only somebody I know besides Mr. Lockett.
- A: Can you tell us about some of the changes that you have seen take place in the Farish Street area? I know you said that back then it looked like there was a lot more love and people were a lot more free about associating. What are some of the other changes that you have noticed? What businesses are no longer here that were here then?
- T: A lot of changes. The ice house was over there. It was in a bloom, We had a fish market over there, it was in a bloom. All of that is torn down now.

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- A: When you say it was in a bloom you mean it was prosperous?
- T: That's right.
- A: Great, okay.
- T: Plus, they use to have a cleaners right ~~down below here to~~ <sup>up the street</sup>, which was Jessie Williams Cleaners. He built this building here on the corner.
- A: Was he a Black guy?
- T: Yes. There was an open space in here.
- A: Is that the building where the Paris Cleaners was?
- T: Right.
- A: So, Jessie Williams was the owner of the Paris Cleaners and he built the building.
- T: That's right.
- A: Fantastic.
- T: He built that building over there and ran it until he passed. So a few years <sup>later</sup> ~~after~~ his wife ~~passed~~ <sup>sold it</sup> ~~he built it and I was right there by them;~~ So later years ~~after he built,~~ <sup>was</sup> the "Y" built.
- A: What kind of clubs did you belong to in the area? Did you belong to any clubs or just the church? What kind of activities did the church have in the area at that time?
- T: Kind of work I did in the church?
- A: Yes.
- T: Well, I raised money and was a teacher too, kindergarden children.
- A: Is that the same ~~Christ Temple~~ <sup>Church of God In Christ</sup> that is now over on Lamar Street?
- T: No.
- A: It was a different one? Is that one still operating?
- T: Yes, it is still operating.
- A: That was on Oakley?
- T: ~~This was on Oakland,~~ <sup>It moved over on</sup> near Northside Drive.
- A: Okay.
- T: Our Pastor was D. R. Curry, he's dead now.
- A: You mentioned a pecan company on Hamilton Street. Where was that located?



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T: Well that was located on. . .there's a place there, is it called the Home Dining Room now?

A: Yes.

T: Well, the building right behind there that's going on . . .

A: Where the Jackson Advocate is now? Well where Miles Grocery Store is?

T: I think they got some kind of grocery store in there now. . .

A: Miles Grocery Store?

T: It's been so long since I've been down in there now.

A: What kind of business was that, they bagged pecans or what was it?

T: Yes, they shelled them and they would bag them and all this kind of stuff. In fact, they were being hulled or something. . . run through a machine.

A: right.

T: But I didn't work at this plant, I worked at this home, you know I use to work for the Haygoods.

A: The Haygoods were the ones that owned the store?

T: That's right.

A: Then you can recall when the Jackson Advocate building and the old Home Dining Room building was in this building on the corner?

T: Yes. The beginning of the Home Dining Room was back where the drugstore is now. The Home Dining Room first beginning was in there.

A: Where Harmon's drugs is?

T: No, it wasn't none of Harmon's. You know where the Home Dining Room at now? Well, it was between the peanut house and . . .

A: Where it is now located. . .

T: Yes. See it started off in a little small space, the Home Dining Room. It was a drugstore and then it was the Home Dining Room, then the Silver Savers. Where Home Dining Room, is now it was a grocery store called the Silver Savers.

A: Okay, it gives me a whole new picture of the area.

T: Then later years the Home Dining Room moved ~~down there on this end~~ *ACROSS The street on the* corner.

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- A: The northeast corner of *HAMITTON + FARISH*
- T: Of Farish, right across the street.
- A: Right.
- T: And it stayed in there for years until they went out of business.
- A: Who owned the Home Dining Room, do you recall?
- T: Well I've forgotten the name, both of them are dead. Anyway, they moved across there in this place where the Home Dining Room is and stayed there for a number of years. The next place was the ice cream place. The next place was Moses Shoe Shop.
- A: Coming back this way?
- T: Moses Shoe Shop was in there when I was a little girl. He had a great big place in there and a lot of shoes.
- A: Did he make shoes or did he just repair them?
- T: He sewed them.
- A: He made repairs on them.
- T: Then later years he got up on his feet and he opened up a nice place in there. He stayed there for *many* ~~four~~ years or longer. Moses Shoe Shop.
- A: Do you remember the Redmonds and the property that they owned?
- T: Yes, and Gus Redmond he use to have a place across the street, a big two-story building.
- A: Right, that one is still there, right where Collins Funeral Home is now.
- T: Is there still a two-story building down there?
- A: Yes.
- T: Well a two-story building. It use to be a beauty shop, downstairs I don't know all what else was in it. I think people lived upstairs. That's where I use to work in that beauty shop. Across the street use to be a big barber shop.
- A: Who owned the beauty shop that you worked in?
- T: Well her name was Miss Sadie. I don't remember her last name. All I know is her name was Sadie. Where this here \_\_\_\_\_ store is use to

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T: a barber shop in there. Long years ago there was a tailor. They use to call him tailor. He use to cut clothes, fix clothes. I think he's still on the West Capitol Street <sup>King The tailor</sup> now. He was over in there in a little small place.

A: I met him around on Capitol Street, I didn't know he was from Farish Street though.

T: Yes, that's right, That's where he started out was on Farish Street.

The Big Apple Inn, when he first started it was Hot Tamales. He was selling Hot Tamales. He would make them in his house. He would go out on the street and sell them. Then, sometimes people come to his house and get them. Finally he opened up a place on Farish on this side of the street.

A: That's on the east side of the street.

T: Right along in there where this barber shop, somewhere along in there.

A: Across from where Britton's Clinic, the old medical building is?

T: It was down here in front of where this Redmond building is. It was down that way.

A: Okay.

T: He opened up a place there for awhile until they built this place where he's at now. Big John moved from there over to in there and he named it the Big Apple Inn.

A: You remember about what year it was when they built that building?

T: No, I don't remember that year.

His name was, we just called him Big John. He was a Mexican and he opened up this place. . .there's someone in there now (his wife's son). ~~Mr. Tucker was over in that building over in there where Mr. Sanders was. He was long in there where big John is now.~~ Somewhere I think there where Mr. White is. I think that's where they were.

A: What kind of business did he have?

T: Well Sanders had a dress shop.

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A: Is that I. S. Sanders?

T: Yes, he's up there on the hill now.

A: Thelma Sanders. Yes, she was on the corner of Hamilton and Farish Street.

T: Well she moved from there and moved down there.

A: Oh I see, she got started farther up.

T: That's right.

A: In the Redmond Building or the building where Big John is?

T: I think it was in there where Big John at. Later years they moved back down in the end of Farish. You see long years where this place at that I'm telling you, <sup>Mrs.</sup>~~Miss~~ Sanders place, it was a drugstore, long when this Silver Saver was a grocery store. See that was a drugstore on this end.

A: That's the one right on the corner there of Farish and Hamilton, near the Alamo Theatre?

T: That's right. The theatre wasn't there then at that time. See they tore that down later and built that theatre, I was young then.

A: So that was way back.

T: That was a grocery store and I was very young. A drugstore on that corner and it was a cafe next to it.

A: You know who owned the grocery store or the cafe?

T: That Silver Savers, that cafe I don't know. He was Black but I don't recall his name. Later years they torn that down and built this theatre in there.

There use to be a cleaners where Peaches, or this other store is, use to be a cleaners in there. I think it was . . . what was that man's name? Was it Cox? There use to be a cleaners along in there too, at that time when this drugstore \_\_\_\_\_

A: Then the peanut place then is very recent?

T: No, the peanut house is there too but he just extended.

A: Okay, he'd gotten larger.

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T: That's right. He just extended. See long in where the peanut house is see the Home Dining Room ending. . . See in the beginning like I said where the Home Dining Room beginning first was, It was just a small place and it was Home Dining Room.

A: Right.

T: He extended and also the grocery store extended.

A: The furniture stores further on down, were those all in there then?

T: Furniture store? Yes it use to be a furniture store long years ago.

I don't remember what the name of it was. Also, there use to be a record shop along the end where this space <sup>is</sup> at and a little shot gun house was right on the end.

A: Now you said that this was when you were a little girl. About how old were you then?

T: Well I was in my teens, cause I got married when I was seventeen.

A: So that was back then in the twenties?

T: That was in the . . .

A: Twenties or thirties. . .

T: No, that was in the thirties cause in the twenties I don't know about it.

A: What about the businesses further on down where the Federal Building is now, do you remember those?

T: Where the Federal Building is now?

A: Down between Amite and Capitol Street on Farish.

T: Let's see. Well I tell you, last year I was lost myself.

A: So there's been some drastic changes down there in that neighborhood?

T: Oh yes. I was really lost. What was the name of. . . It was this grocery, that's next to Capitol Street, isn't it?  
Well all on this side was dry goods stores.

A: That's on the eastside of the street.

T: That's right. I just don't remember what was on the other side of the street.

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A: How long did you live in the Farish Street area? Do you still live in the area now?

T: No, I live out in ~~Cherry~~ <sup>Shady</sup> Oaks.

A: How long did you live in the area before you moved out?

T: Before I moved out it was . . .

A: What year did you move out?

T: I'm trying to think, It was ~~1958~~ <sup>59</sup>. I think I moved in ~~1958~~ <sup>57</sup>.

A: Do you remember any of the Civil Rights activities that took place on Farish Street? Were you a participant in any of those?

T: Yes, I remember when they use to march up and down the street but I've never taken no part in it. None of that. I've never taken no part in any of those.

A: Are most of your customers Farish Street people? Or do you get customers from all over the City?

T: All over the city. I have mostly all ovrking people come in and eat. They likes my cooking, So they come in and I have a right smart of them come in, especially working people. I cook five days a week.

A: Do you have any specialities?

T: No, just regular homie cooking.

A: Just regular home cooking. You've been doing this since 1949. <sup>1952 or '53</sup>

T: Around ~~1949~~ <sup>52</sup> or something like that..

I'm still trying to think of what use to be over on the other side of the street. It use to be some tooth dentist and all down there. That must be where them tooth dentist were. Yes it must be where them tooth dentist were because they tore all that down. Anyway, I think that is what it use to be. There was a place up in there where they took pictures and it use to be two or three tooth dentis up in there. Use to be right on the corner of Capitol 'cause I worked on West Capitol Street. There was a place right on the corner called R. C.

A: Do you remember any of the fairs or the shows that came in, carnivals and things that came into the Farish Street area? Did you attend any of those?

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- T: Just the show called the Big Show on the Greens, It was down on Hamilton Street.
- A: Down on Capitol?
- T: No, it was down on Hamilton.
- A: On Hamilton near Mill Street?
- T: That's right.
- A: Did you ever attend any of those?
- T: Well I went once or twice. I ain't never been too much of a person who go to things like that. I was mostly just church going. In other words, I was real upgoing in church. Course I don't go much now, just kind of busy.
- A: I can imagine, your working five days a week. How do you feel about some of the changes on Farish Street?
- T: Well it's kinda rough. One thing, I hate to see our women out there like they are. I hate to see that. I think a whole lot of that has pulled the business down. People got so they hates, don't want you to tell them nothing about Farish Street. Farish Street use to be a popular street. It just kinda gotten out of reach.
- A: Do you plan to continue doing business here?
- T: Well, I gonna soon be getting away. I ain't gonna be too much longer.
- A: Did you ever own any property in the area?
- T: No. I lived on Hamilton when I come here from Bolton, That's where I lived until I moved out to ~~Cherry~~ <sup>Shady</sup> Oaks where I bought.
- A: Mrs. Tucker, we appreciate your talking with us and letting us hear some of your reminiscing and views on Farish Street. I am sure we will find this helpful in the future.
- T: Do you know where there use to be a two-story building right on this corner?
- A: No I don't. What was in that building?
- T: Well I never knowed anything to be in it, just people lived upstairs.
- A: An apartment building?

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- T: It was a cafe in the bottom part.
- A: On this corner, the southwest corner of Monument?
- T: Yes, right there on the corner.
- A: That's interesting. I never heard that before.
- T: Well, later years they tore it down and widened that street and then it was a big old building there. It was a big Buddis <sup>Furniture</sup> store. So they've torn that down lately. Also they tore down that old cotton seed mill. Then they tore down the ice house. Up closer was a two-story building on this corner.
- A: Okay, the ice house and the mill, was this before the Crescent Laundry was built?
- T: Well the Crescent Laundry was in there . . .
- A: Okay.
- T: High Street, see Monument Street they tore down that building on this corner and they tore down and built that. They call it High Street
- A: Extension. . . there was a two-story apartment building on the corner of Monument.
- T: On Monument and High, I say now High Street.
- A: Was that High Street then before they . . .
- T: Monument Street.
- A: Monument all the way through?
- T: It was Monument all the way through, which they taken part of Monument now and they call it High Street. They call that High or Monument one. It use to be Monument. The other end go straight on down, that's Monument.
- A: Yes, Monument is still over there.
- T: Yes.
- A: Was this . . .
- T: High Street, you know they cut that later years.



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- A: Okay, ~~Church~~<sup>FARISH</sup> Street then went straight on across and Monument went straight on across and there was nothing connecting ~~Church~~<sup>High</sup> Street and Monument at that time?
- T: It use to be houses all in there. They tore all that down and they put that street all the way out. There use to be those little ~~transfer~~<sup>Shotgun</sup> houses all in there.
- A: And they called it High Street, okay.
- T: Where Luckett's ~~at~~<sup>begin</sup>, where New Deal at, all that on that, from that corner use to be little houses where people use to live.
- A: What about the corner of Monument and Mill Street over here? Were there houses in there?
- T: Monument and Mill? On What?
- A: There's a service station on the corner over there now. That's on the corner of Monument and Mill.
- T: Yes, I don't remember what was there.
- A: What about the area that was over here where Jitney Jungles warehouse was? What was that? How long has that been there?
- T: I don't remember how long that's been there. When I knowed it was there it was very recent.
- A: Was it there when you were growing up?
- T: It was some kind of building there, but I didn't never know what it was.
- A: Was it always that large?
- T: No, I don't think it was that large either. I think that has just been recent. It was a cafe on the corner of Mill and Oakley. That use to be a cafe and later years I think it use to be a big cafe in there but they tore it down and rebuilt all that in there.
- A: And where this library is, they built that library in there too.
- T: Were those houses in there or was that just vacant land where they built those structures?

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T: I think it was once houses in there. I know it use to be houses on Church. It was a Blacksmith place in there on Church Street to.

A: A Black guy?

T: He was a Black guy. It was houses all the way down.

A: Do you remember the name of it?

T: No I don't know. I don't even remember the man's name either. I seen him, It's been about four years ago though three or four years ago.

A: Down on the other end of Mill was it houses down in there near Amite and Mill Street? There is a lot of vacant land along the railroad there now and on the other side . . .

T: Yes, it use to be houses on Mill. I know it was on this side of Mill. It was houses on Amite and Mill. Across that creek it was a little ole building in there. I don't know if that building is still there or not. Some kind of little . . .

A: Oh yes! It's a church now.

T: Oh is it? Well is it right over a creek? Well that was a building there and then houses on the eastside.

A: Do you remember the houses that were up here before they built the Sun-N-Sand. What was that area like?

T: Before they built the Sun-N-Sand it was houses in there, 'cause those houses in there, white people lived in them. The white people lived on the end of Hamilton, back in there. From Henry Street on back down *toward* *the creek* *was where black folks lived.*

A: Okay, we thank you and you do give your permission for this to be used in the Library at Jackson State University. *yes.*

END OF INTERVIEW