

THE FUNCTION OF THE LYNCH STREET C.M.E. CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW

with

REV. PHILIP H. BROWN

for

ORAL HISTORY 300

by

Linda Overman

October 18, 1976

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JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History Program at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

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 made available for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publication, or for other related purposes.

I, Rev. P.H. Brown, 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 know, recognized, or contemplated, to Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

P. H. Brown
Interviewee (Signature)

Oct. 12, 1976
Date

The purpose of this interview is to ascertain information concerning the function of the Lynch Street C.M.E. Church in the community. This interview is with Rev. Philip H. Brown, a life-long member of the C.M.E. Church, a former minister of the Lynch Street congregation, and the current presiding elder of the Meridian district.

A native of Noxubee county, Rev. Brown has lived in Jackson for 30 of his 73 years. He is married and the father of four children. He is in excellent health and still preaches each Sunday. He became a member of the Lynch Street C.M.E. Church in 1946 and, as a contractor, built the parsonage in 1949.

This interview is being conducted on October 12, 1976, at 10 a.m. in Rev. Brown's home at 712 Rose St. in Jackson. The interviewer is Linda Overman, a history major at Jackson State University, conducting the interview for Oral History 300.

O: Reverend Brown, when were you minister of the Lynch Street C.M.E. Church?

B: From 1954 to 1963. (Incorrect, should be 1952 - 1963)

O: Was there a C.M.E. Church in Jackson prior to the location on Lynch Street?

B: Yes, the oldest C.M.E. Church in Jackson was the Lane's Chapel C.M.E. Church which was located on West Street and it is now located in West Verden addition on *Memphis* Street. The Lynch Street (church) came out of the Lane's Chapel Church.

O: Were you a member of the C.M.E. Church before you became minister there?

B: Yes, I been a member of C.M.E. Church all my life. My father was a minister.

O: Was he ever minister of this particular Church?

B: No, he spent his work in Mississippi conference.

O: As the minister of the Lynch Street C.M.E. ^{church}, what were your duties?

B: Well, the function of the minister of the church is quite a task- supervise all of the auxiliaries and meet with given council, you hold board meetings all this type of things, plan to *serve* the worship services. At the Lynch Street church we had service day and night and every Sunday.

B: The minister is responsible for the message of the lesson and to have someone speak for him. And we had something about every night-choir meetings, some of the auxiliary meetings or meetings. And we had revivals, leadership training schools where we have the children meet for a week to train and we had conventions that met at the church where all of the churches in the district come together and study to improve their services and where they exchange ideas for their betterment and , of course, we got financial

O: What type of training was provided for the young people in the training schools?

B: The two main auxiliaries , the Sunday school that most everybods concerned about and the C.Y.F. that meets every Sunday in the afternoon which we have able teachers to work with the children and then we have boy scouts sponsored by the church.

O: What do you personally feel was the church's function in the community?

B: I feel that the Lynch Street Church had a pretty good function in the community because most of the people around visited there and they seem to have been inspired by the services rendered. During the time I was there, the college students accepted that church and every Sunday we had nearly half the church full of college students the whole time I was there. *for eleven years.*

O: I see that it fit in to the community quite well.

B: Yes, and of course, we helped in all the community projects, such as, community chest . During the Christmas holidays, all of the churches in the city go together to give baskets to the needy and, of course, our church played a big part in that. All of the public monies that are raised , Red Cross, things of that type we always took part in.

O: Was all of your family very active in the Church?

B: Yes, they were quite active. You see, my girls , I guess that was one reason we had such a pull, they were going to school with others at Jackson State College. They would all come to our home and study. We had quite a few books there because we were teachers, my wife and myself. They would come to our home to study and get out their lessons quite often and in the mead-time they'd come to services. They would go with us to state meetings at their own expense .

O: Did you as a minister or any of the congregation ever take a stand on any type of issues, community or political issues?

B: Well, yes. I didn't ever get out and march but I didn't mind ing did speak out for what I felt thought was right and just and I've always voted , ever since I've been (laughs) big enough I've always went to vote. Because I feel like thats the only way the people can have a voice or have some of the things that they think they should have is to take part . So I encouraged my people to take part in things, not

B: violence but peaceful and for whats right.

O: Does the cemetery across the street belong to the C.M.E. Church?

B: No, that's something that would be fine to look into. I'm told that nobody owns the cemetery. It's not on the city record. It's blank from the space to the east up to the next space, that whole space is off the map. So I don't know who it belongs to and I don't think others know. But it used to be called the Cemetery (doorbell rings)

O: You mentioned before that there were a number of college students from Jackson State who came to the church. Was most of the membership of the church from the immediate area around the church?

B: No, the members were scattered all over the city. I guess most churches are that way, especially black churches. We had members out in Verden addition and members all over town. *and some out of town,*

O: When you were minister, did you feel that the church had a stabilizing effect on families? Did it draw whole families together to the church?

B: Yes and I'll tell you what else. The people really had confidence in the minister and many times you'd be called in to counsel with the family and the family's problems. We have saved many families from being divorced because of their confidence in the minister and they knew what they said would remain there. I'd never repeat anything that was said confidentially. So we really

B: feel that the church did a good job helping members.

O: I think that in most churches the minister or priest does have a more than spiritual influence on families, do you agree?

B: Yes.

O: As minister, did you always make yourself available for counseling to the congregation?

B: Oh, yes, I'm still available.

O: On the average, how many members do you think were^e were in the C.M.E. Church?

B: Well, approximately around 400 hundred.

O: You have already mentioned some special programs that were directed toward different ages. Were there youth groups and

B: Yes, youth groups, young adults and senior citizens.

O: Did you always have choir?

B: Oh yes, we had different choirs. We had five choirs from children on up. The little fellows, I believe, were called the Morningglories, and we had the youth choir and the gospel choir, the male chorus, and the *Senior* choir, that's the choir that sings every third Sunday, *it's supposed to. That's the best choir.*

O: Do you feel that the church provided what the children and the youth needed?

B: To a large extent, it did a pretty good job trying to meet their needs.

O: Do you know who owns that property now, where the church stands?

B: The church still owns it. They haven't disposed of it.

O: When was the new church built?

B: It's been about four years, I think. So that would be about 72.

O: Was the old building abandoned at that time?

B: Well, they left out of the old building to move into the new one. That's why it's in the condition it's in now because nobody was in it. People just come by and just ripped the windows out, tore down the doors.

O: At the time they (the congregation) left, it could have probably have been used for something else.

B: Oh yes, they had offers to sell it at the time they left but, (laughs) at the time they wanted more for it and they fooled around and let it run down .

Phone rang, stopped tape.

O: When you became minister in 1952 of the church, was the general area the same as it is today, partly residential and partly businesses?

B: It was just about like it is, it hasn't changed along that line. No, it was the same thing, it was the same businesses and

B: (cont.) residences built just like they are.

O: Did you or any of the members ever feel that with the church on that street that there was any type of influence from all of the bars in the general area?

B: Yes, you'd have confusion because sometimes they'd get to fighting out there and run out in the street holding and sometimes shooting. And it would disturb us.

O: Probably particularly during your evening services?

B: And but otherwise those things happened.

O: Did the members of the church ever try to do anything about zoning or try to get different businesses on the street?

B: No, I don't think so. I don't think anybody thought of anything along that line. Cause some of them didn't want to leave when they had to go (laughing)

Phone rang, stopped tape.

O: Reverend Brown, you mentioned earlier, that the church was the Lane's Chapel Church on West Street.

B: Correct.

O: Why was the new location chosen?

B: The congregation, felt that at that time, felt that they had ^{was} outgrown the church on West street and they felt that if they bought out here in west Jackson there would be a better chance for the church to expand. A Baptist congregation owned the property

B: (cont.) at that time and they got rid of it. Of course, Bishop Cottrell bought that church and named it Lynch Street C.M.E. Church. A portion of the congregation from the Lane's Chapel Church came out here to the Lynch Street Church. Some of the Lane's Chapel ^{people} remained there. Their present church now is the Verden addition on Memphis Street.

SUMMARY

Rev. Philip H. Brown has been a member of the C.M.E. Church all of his life. He was the pastor of Lynch Street C.M.E. church for eleven years, 1952-63. In this interview, he discussed the duties of a minister: conducting services, giving a message through the lesson, counseling families, and supervising organizations. He discussed Sunday and C.Y.F? (Christian Youth Fellowship) and their importance in meeting the needs of the youth of the church.

Many people in the neighborhood attended services as visitors. Jackson State students attended services and participated in other activities there. During the years Rev. Brown was there his daughters attended Jackson State. Many of their friends visited in his home and studied there with his daughters.

He talked about the importance of voting and taking part in the political process to have a voice in things. He always encouraged his congregation to take a peaceful role in attaining what was right for the people.

He elaborated on the minister's role as a counselor and on the confidence people had in their ministers. Various organizations and the five choirs are mentioned. At the end of the tape, he discussed the early history of the church.