

JACKSON Y. W. C. A
and
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of ARCHIVES and HISTORY
and
JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
THE FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

PROPERTY OWNER IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

O. H. 80.04B

ELSIE M. SLAUGHTER

Interviewed
by

VIRGIE ELLA BARNES

on

July 25, 1980

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

I, _____ 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.

Elise M. Blaugher
Interviewee (Signature)

July 25, 1980
Date

INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Elsie Slaughter was born August 11, 1891 in Raymond, Mississippi. She is a homeowner in the Farish Street Historic District. She attended school in Central, Mississippi, at Lake School under her mother.

Mrs. Slaughter talks about her parents' background and occupations. She talks about her educational experiences and buying property in the Farish Street Historic District. She also discusses how whites obtained a great deal of property by just paying the delinquent property taxes, and how blacks were able to buy property.

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Elsie M. Slaughter
INTERVIEWER: Virgie Ella Barnes
DATE OF INTERVIEW: July 25, 1980
O.H. 80.04

Barnes: This interview is with Mrs. Elsie M. Slaughter, a widow and homeowner in the Farish Street Historical District, at 216 East Cohea Street.

Mrs. Slaughter, would you give me some information on your personal background?

Slaughter: My grandmother, Mary White, was a slave. My mother, was Ida Gillispie Marshall, and my father was Walter P. Marshall. When my grandmother was set free, she bought the home that we all were raised in. My mother and father were born in Raymond, Mississippi, and lived their until their death.

My mother was a school teacher and that's where I got my education. I went to school with her. I never had another teacher. She taught at Lake School in Central, Mississippi for two years. I went to school up there with her. In the the winter and summer she went to a private school that was in north Natchez. In the summertime she went to a school that was opened up for Colored people.

Barnes: Tell me a little something about your father.

Slaughter: He was a decorator by trade. He was born and raised in Raymond. I can't remember the year he and my mother married.

Barnes: When were you born?

Slaughter: August 11, 1891. I was the second child.

Barnes: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Slaughter: I had two sisters and one brother.

Barnes: When and why did you come to Jackson?

Slaughter: After I got married there wasn't anything for my husband to do in Raymond, so we moved to Jackson. At first we rented a house, but I didn't like that, so we decided to buy one.

Barnes: When did you start buying property?

Slaughter: It was in 1920.

Barnes: In 1920, what was buying property like in the city of Jackson? How much did it cost?

Slaughter: Property was cheap. You could buy a real nice house for \$1500. I paid \$900 for one piece of property and \$700 for another one.

Barnes: Do you know who first bought property in this particular area where you live now?

Slaughter: The ones that I know were George Johnson, Reverend Thomas, and Jack Byrd. All of them were up in here when I came, but the one that I know about was George Johnson. He was one of the first Negroes that ever purchased property in Jackson. The record says he was one of the first ones to begin on Cohea Street.

After he was set free, he stayed in that house until he died. After he died, his daughter came from up north and sold the property. They had sold it and I bought it from another man. Do you know the Ballads, that use to own the two story house on Farish Street?

Barnes: No, I didn't know them.

Slaughter: I know you know about them. That's who I bought this property from.

Barnes: Can you tell me anything else about George Johnson?

Slaughter: He was a slave and after he was set free he came to Jackson and bought property on Cohea Street. He stayed in the home until he passed and it hasn't been too long. I could search the record and find out when he died, but I would have to go back. His friend Jack Byrd stayed down the streets.

Barnes: Did he do any kind of work other than build the house?

Slaughter: No, I don't know what kind of work he did.

Barnes: How do you feel about living where you are now in the Historic District of the City of Jackson?

Slaughter: I'm glad to be living in the Farish Street Historic District,

Barnes: Could you tell me about the 1920s compared with the time we are living in now to that when you came to live in Jackson?

- Slaughter: They say Colored people didn't register in those days, but they did because my husband and I registered at the county court house. You had to pay \$2 to register, in those days. You had to pay your county tax and an extra \$2 to register to vote. People say Negroes never voted, but my husband and I did.
- Barnes: What about people living in this area in the 1920s?
- Slaughter: This was called a kind of old settlement. Most all of the people who lived up in here were old settlers. They decided they'd keep it like that and not let any white people in. They kept it like that until Mrs. Wells came and let old man Roberts move in.
- Barnes: Do you know how long this was owned and occupied by blacks? Will you give me Mrs. Wells' first name?
- Slaughter: Her name was Alma Wells. She was born and raised in Raymond. She married and came to Jackson and bought where the cafe is. She bought some of the Johnson's property a little before I did.
- Barnes: During the 1900s was most of the property in this area owned and occupied by blacks? How did white people get all of our land in this area?
- Slaughter: The first I knew about it was when Mrs. Wells got behind in her taxes. Her property was advertised for sale because of taxes and Roberts bought in. After he bought in here in the flat area two Jews got in down there. They are still there.
- Blacks still own property up in here except in the flat. Reverend Conic sold two houses for \$800.
- Barnes: Do you know about what year he sold those two houses for \$800?
- Slaughter: I know the man that bought them. He was a veteran and had just got a pension from the Veterans Administration. That's how he got money to buy the houses.. I don't know when it was he bought them. I It was World I or II.
- Barnes: Do you think you like this area of Jackson better than any other area in the city?
- Slaughter: I like it better than any that I have ever lived in. I lived on Church Street for awhile and I moved on Monument Street for awhile before I bought up here. I like up here better than I do Farish Street. It was a nice quiet neighborhood. The boys say, it was too quiet for him.

Slaughter: One lady moved in here with a boy and he says he have to leave Cohea Street to have some fun.

Barnes: This is off the record a little but, do you have any children?

Slaughter: No, I don't have any children.

Barnes: Mrs. Slaughter, would you tell me a little bit about your personal background?

Slaughter: In those days you couldn't go to school any longer than grammar school. I finished grammar school under my mother.

Barnes: Tell me a little more about your mother and father, where they came from.

Slaughter: They were born in Raymond.

Barnes: Tell me a little bit about why you decided to come to Jackson, after you had grown up in Raymond and went to school there, why did you decide to come to Jackson?

Slaughter: When they were building Hinds Junior College in Raymond, I met this man that was working there, his name was Tommy Slaughter. We decided to get married. After we married, we moved to Jackson.

Barnes: In 1920 you purchased these two houses on Cohea Street.

Slaughter: I didn't like paying rent, so we decided to try to buy. In those days you could get property very cheap.

The fellow that owned these houses had bought him a flat in Chicago and was about to lose his flat so he had to sell these houses to hold his flat and he wanted cash. We borrowed, we didn't have enough money to pay cash. We borrowed from the government. The government was loaning money in those days to buy houses, so we borrowed from them.

Barnes: When you bought here, was it mostly owned and occupied by blacks or how was it in 1920?

Slaughter: When we moved up here, the property was owned by blacks. The whites got the property because the people didn't pay their taxes.

Barnes: Can you remember the lady's name?

Slaughter: Alma Wells,

Barnes: How much property did she own?

Slaughter: She owned the property where the cafe was and the lot that was behind there. They have built two houses on it now.

Barnes: Did you say you came here in 1920? Did you buy two houses at one time?

Slaughter: No. I bought that one first and this one later.

Barnes: How much did you pay for the first one?

Slaughter: I paid \$900.00 for one and \$700.00 for the other one.

Barnes: Where was your husband's home.

Slaughter: Ridgeland.

Barnes: What was his educational background?

Slaughter: He went to Tougaloo.

Barnes: Can you tell me some of the black home-owners in this area?

Slaughter: The Conic, Jack Byrd and others, but I don't remember any names.

Barnes: Tell me what year your grandmother came here?

Slaughter: I don't remember the year. It is on courthouse records. She said that she never wanted the property to be sold, but that it be passed on from generation to generation. It was sold.

Barnes: Who decided to sell it?

Slaughter: My sister.

Barnes: Can you go back to what you said. (interruption)

Slaughter: When the Negroes was set free, the master would always give them some money and that is where they got this money to buy their property.

Barnes: You don't know who bought . . . ?