

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
ADVANCED PROJECTS IN ORAL HISTORY CLASS SPRING 1977  
JACKSON, MS

SENIOR CITIZENS- CLASS PROJECTS

Oral History 1977-13

Mrs. Edna Jordan Morris

Interviewed  
by  
Olger C. Twyner, III  
on  
March 20, 1977



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, Mrs. Edna J. Morris 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. Edna J. Morris  
Interviewee (Signature)

March 20, 1977  
Date



## BIOGRAPHY

Mrs. Edna Jordan Morris, a retired Black school teacher was born on May 23, 1908 in Pachuta, Mississippi. She moved to Laurel, Mississippi at an early age and still resides there. Mrs. Morris was educated in the public schools of Laurel, but she received her high school diploma from Jackson college in 1931. She worked at several schools in Jones and Clarke counties before she began teaching at the Nora Davis Elementary School in 1948. During her tenure at Nora Davis, Mrs. Morris taught mostly the third and fourth grades until she retired in 1973. Mrs. Morris the the mother of two daughters.

## SUMMARY

The interview with Mrs. Edna Jordan Morris was conducted in the interviewee's home immediately after she had finished eating. Passing cars and CB radios could sometimes be heard in the background, but other than that, the interview went just fine. Mrs. Morris mentionned some important undocumented information. For example, she talked about marching into school and other practices that used to be a vital part of Black education. Her discussion of the Jackson College High School paints a good picture of how things were from the student's point of view. Her early remembrances about Laurel also yield quite a bit of information. Mrs. Morris is most proud of her organizational affilliations and her children. Much unexpected information was brought forth, and the interview should become a vaulable research tool.



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Side 1

- 000- Clarke Co., Mississippi; Mrs. Beola Dykes, sister; Children's games- rhymes, church, horses, "Mary Mack"; Pets, Children's clothing- 1919's.
- 005- Sunday school activities; East 10th St. Church of God; Eulalia Boston, Sunday school teacher; Mary Jordan, mother; child rearing practices; encounter with and attitudes toward chites; YMCA, Laurel, Mississippi.
- 010- Stories and legends; Oak Park High School; Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Johnson, prominent Black educators; religious influence.
- 015- First Church of God, Laurel, Ms; church activities; musical activities; Poll Tax.
- 020- Voter registration; NAACP; Crisis magazine; Abraham Lincoln; John F. Kennedy; slavery stories; slave owner; Ed Jordan, photographer and father.
- 025- Laurel Public Schools- Thigpen's Hall, Kingston Elementary, the Library, Oak Park High; Geneva Brown Blalock, teacher; E. W. Lee, teacher; Nora Davis, pioneer educator.
- 030- END OF SIDE 1

Side 2

- 000- Number of children in school; Games- "Jacks", "Jumping Rope"; Jackson State University; Indiana University; Tougaloo College; Southern University; restrictions on dating; High school activities- plays, chorus; Jackson College High School experiences.
- 005- Jackson College High School experiences; Mr. and Mrs. B. Baldwin Dansby and daughter; religious activities at JCHS; Dress and classes at JCHS- chemistry, French, literature; Activities and sports at JSU- Tougaloo College game; Sam Malone, football player; Campbell College; career goals.
- 010- Organizations- Colored Women's Federation, NAACP, JSU Alumni, National Negro Business and Professional Women, Women of the Church of God, Girl Scouts Council; Depression; Franklin D. Roosevelt; New Deal programs- WPA, CCC camps, bread lines.
- 015- Impression of bootleggers; farming in Clarke Co.; Laurel,



Mississippi- early years; Saw mills- Kingston and Gilchrest; Mississippi Power Company; Marian Morris, daughter; L'Alvis Morris, daughter; Shauna Arrington, granddaughter; Laurel JSU Alumni Association.

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JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Edna J. Morris

INTERVIEWER: Olger C. Twyner, III

DATE OF INTERVIEW: March 20, 1977

TIME: 7:30 P. M.

TWYNER: This is an interview with Mrs. Edna Jordan Morris for the JSU History Project, and the interviewer is Olger Twyner, III. This tape is being made at Mrs. Morris home, 1106 Joe Wheeler Avenue, on March 20, 1977 at 7:30 P. M. Mrs. Morris, ...

MORRIS: Yes

T: Do you mind if our conversation is used for research and scholarly purpose?

M: No, I don't mind.

T: Okay. Alright now, the first question Mrs. Morris, you said you were born in Clarke County.

M: That's right.

T: ~~Do you, ah,~~ what is your earliest memory of Clarke County?

M: The memory that I have of Clarke County is when we would go to visit my grandparents there.

T: What <sup>(did)</sup> do you do at your grandparents <sup>(D)</sup> house?

M: Well, we really went there to spend the vacation, and then we would visit our cousins there, other relatives there.

T: Alright, you have one sister.

M: Yes.



- T: Mrs. Beola Dykes (?)
- M: Yes, Mrs. Beola Dykes.
- T: How did you and your sister get along?
- M: We get along swell. I should say that I had a temper, and I would always want to strike her, but my mother would always have to get me for hitting her. Other than that, we got along real well.
- T: Ah, while you were children can you describe the type of games you used to play?
- M: Oh, we used to cook, play church. Once we were playing Church, and we baptised the chickens, and we drowned the little biddies. Other games we played were, ah, pretending to be my cousin's horses, and we would get out, while he was hoeing, we would get out of the field and get in the corn, and really, we bit off the corn.
- T: (laughter)
- M: And of course, it really made us drunk.
- T: And what about any songs or rhymes? Do you recall anything like that?
- M: We always liked to play "Mary Mack, Dressed In Black."
- T: Do you remember how it goes?
- M: Yes, we would clap hands. We both would stand face, and we would clap our hand /and say/, (clapping her hands) "Mary Mack, dressed in black, silver buttons all down her back, etcetera."
- T: Did you all have any pets?
- M: Yes, my grandfather had a calf that we liked to play



with, and my cousin would play butting. And once, as he would butt this calf, and when the calf would get in the yard, he would chase the little ones to butt them, and we had to really get up the ladder or in the house quick because that was really one pet that made us get around.

T: Did the calf have a name?

M: Yes, I'm sure it did. ~~It was, ah, Bullie, and we~~ called him Bullie. And my cousin Henry would always play with that calf, and Grandfather told him, "Don't do that son; it will make that calf run after everyone." And really, it did.

T: Is that why y'all called him Bullie?

M: I guess so.

T: Did you have a nickname?

M: No, I never had a nickname.

T: Can you describe the type of clothes <sup>that</sup> you used to wear?

M: Well, they were, we wore a lot of midi blouse suits. My mother would make our clothes, and they were really the same as now only they were a lot of pleats, and a lot of gathers. And most of the time we, we had the time when they wore ruffles, we wore them with ruffles. We were really up to date with whatever they were wearing cause she made our clothes, and she would make like, make them like the ones they were using at the time.

T: ~~Did you, ah...~~ (pause)... about that time automobiles were getting popular. Do you recall seeing your first automobile?



M: No, I really don't.

T: Okay, you said that at an early age you all moved to Laurel.

M: Yes.

T: Do you ever remember going to Sunday school?

M: Oh yes, we had to go to Sunday school about two miles /from us/ because we lived on the South end of town, and we had to come to Sunday school on the North end. I <sup>[to]e</sup> imagine it is about two miles from Hickory Street up<sup>^</sup> this way.

T: Where did you attend Sunday school?

M: At the East 10th Street Church of God.

T: Do you remember anything particular about the Church or

M: Sunday school?

M: Well, one of the things I can remember about going to Church was /that/ my sister and I were so much alike that people we passed between home and Church would ask us if we were twins, and she would say, "Yes!", because we favored so much, but we really weren't twins. ~~When we got to Church,~~ we had a Church that is similar to the one we have now only it was just a one room building. ~~So,~~ we had prayer meeting and Sunday School in different sections of that <sup>main</sup> auditorium. I don't remember who my first Sunday school teacher was, but I do remember Sister Boston teaching me and my mother, Mrs. Mary Jordan, teaching me.

T: In your family who would you say had the most influence on decisions made: your mother or father or <sup>do</sup> you think



they shared equally.

M: I really think they shared with the decision making.

T: This is going off a little bit ahead, but can you describe the way you were brought up, and do you think you brought your children up the same way, or did you differ from it?

M: I think that my children were almost brought up the same as I was because we had to go to Church, Sunday school, and Bible class. And when they grew up, they had to go to Church, Sunday School, and Bible class; that was a must. But the same thing was happening with my children too.

T: As a child, do you have any memorable experiences about encounters with white people?

M: Well, I've had some. Because I was a Junior at that time, I was going from the North side of town to the South side of town to school, and some white boys ran out and began to fight me down by the YMCA. So I went to the filling station to tell this operator of the area station about it, and when he got outside the boys had gone. They would push you off the sidewalk and all that, but that time they just really jumped on me, and I just couldn't do nothing with ~~just~~ six children. It was a gang.

T: Well, did your parents teach you anything about whites?

M: Yes, but we didn't think of them as being a supreme group. ~~We would just, he would take us,~~ my daddy would take us to the YMCA where he worked and we would meet the people that he worked with, and they enjoyed us and we enjoyed



being with them. So far as being afraid, I never was  
afraid of any of them, you know.

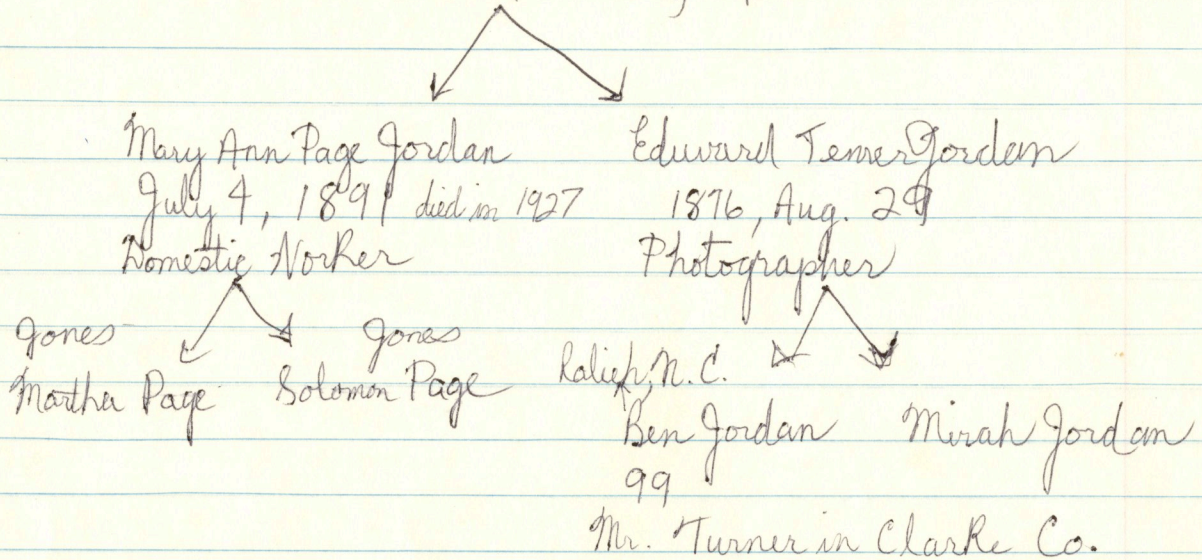


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Genealogical Information  
 Edna Jordan Morris  
 female Pachuta, Miss  
 Schoolteacher Black May 23, 1908



mm. Thigpen's hall was the name of the "little school" has 1 sister  
 went to Southside Side Kingston 1-6. & Southside  
 in 7-9 sometimes 10<sup>th</sup>. 1927 worked went to Oak Park in 9, 10, 11  
 finished at Jackson State in 1931 worked as a substitute  
 teacher, kept house & got a job 1<sup>st</sup> job at <sup>A.G.</sup> 8000. then bushee, then  
 at Lurn<sup>Smith</sup>, elementary. at Pachuta, Benson, all in  
 Jones county & Nora Davis 1948 until 1973. 3<sup>rd</sup> &  
 4<sup>th</sup> grade

Church she mentioned  
 Grandfather