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Down the Bay Oral History Project Newsletter

Down the Bay Oral History Project

2023

Down the Bay Oral History Project Newsletter - Fall 2023

Center for Archaeological Studies

McCall Library

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FALL 2023

Down the Bay

Oral History Project Update

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Project History

100 Interviews Collected about Down the Bay!

100 people have generously shared their memories of Down the Bay for the Oral History Project. These stories will be preserved for future generations in the University of South Alabama archives. Thank you for sharing your stories!

Down the Bay Oral History By the Numbers:



100 Interviews



113 Participants



136 hours of audio



3320 pages of transcripts

We are recording fewer new interviews so we can focus on making the interviews we already have publicly accessible. Transcriptions and audio recordings will be available digitally through JagWorks, as well as physically at the McCall Library.

If you participated and haven't gotten a copy of your transcript, reach out to (251) 341-3900 or oralhistory@southalabama.edu. We may not have your contact information.

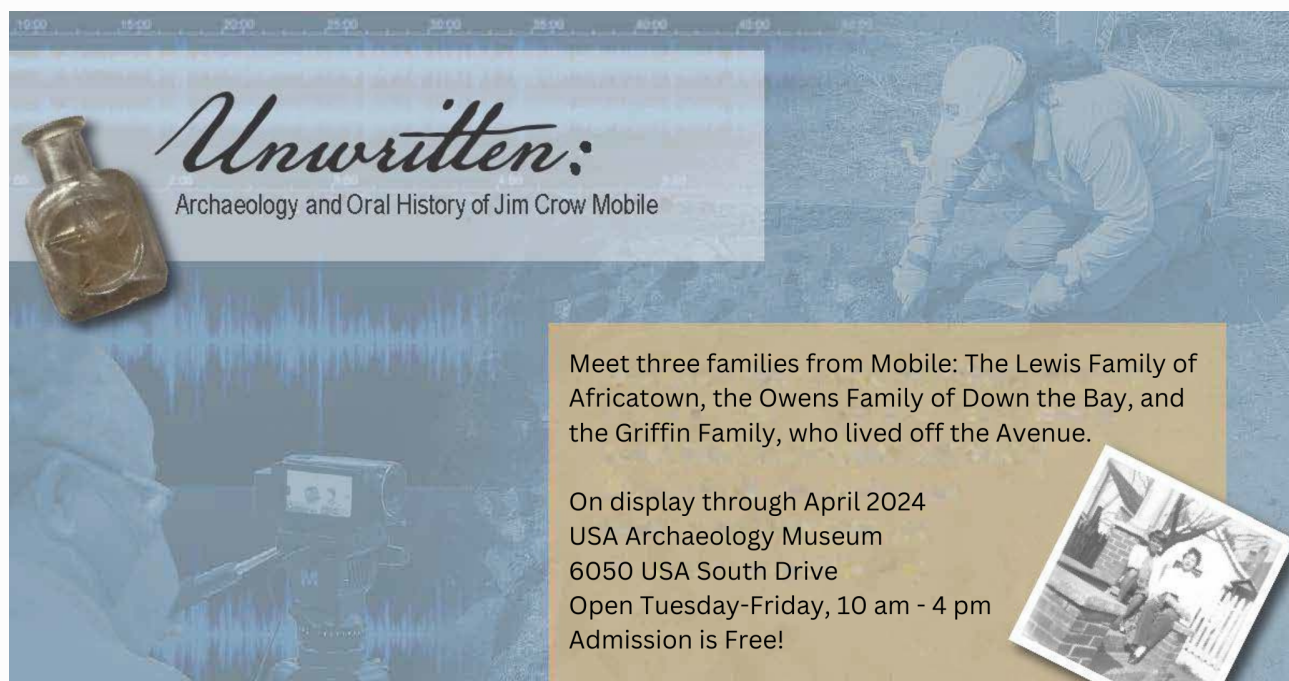


Scan for Jagworks

Save the Date!

November 4: Down the Bay History Day at the James Seals Jr. Recreation Center (10 am - 2 pm). Join us for another celebration of Down the Bay History. Learn the latest updates on the project, have lunch with us, and connect with your friends from Down the Bay

Ongoing: Unwritten: Archaeology and Oral History of Jim Crow Mobile is a new exhibit at the Archaeology Museum at the University of South Alabama that features oral history interviews from the Down the Bay Project and artifacts from the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeology Project.



December 7: Food of Down the Bay Showcase at the University of South Alabama (9:30-10:30 am). This semester, Dr. Erin Nelson's Anthropology of Food class will listen to memories of food from Down the Bay Oral History interviews. The students will showcase their work in the McCall Library display cases in the third floor hallway of the Marx Library (5901 USA North Drive).

On December 7, the students will present their work in a showcase. If you would like to attend, reach out to oralhistory@southalabama.edu or call (251) 341-3900 for more details. The display will be publicly available for several months after the showcase, so stop by and check it out!

Down the Bay History Day on November 4

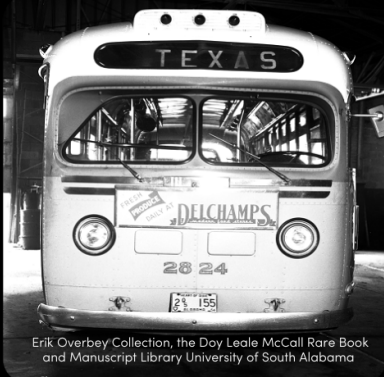
We're looking forward to our next celebration of Down the Bay on November 4th at the James Seals Jr. Recreation Center (540 Texas Street). We'll be there from 10 am - 2 pm and lunch will be provided!



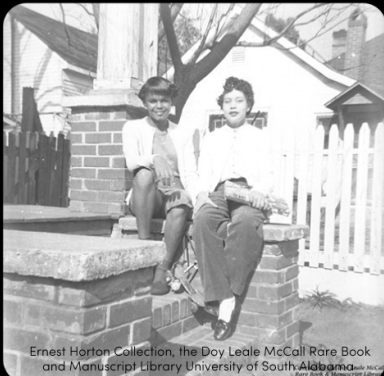
Mobile Housing Board Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of South Alabama



Julius E Marx Collection, the Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of South Alabama



Erik Overbey Collection, the Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of South Alabama



Ernest Horton Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of South Alabama



Mobile Housing Board Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of South Alabama



Examining photos at Down the Bay Photo Sharing Day on October 29, 2022

We want to hear more about themes we've encountered during the project. We'll share what we know, including quotes, historic documents, photos, and artifacts, and you can share your thoughts.

For more information, reach out to us at (251) 341-3900 or oralhistory@southalabama.edu

Memories of Down the Bay

Valena McCants:

"And then, we went as far down as I told you, to the railroad track. And that's where Malbis Bakery is. It used to be Malbis Bakery, but it's something else now. And it was a point; now, we didn't go below that point. Baltimore Street... Because that was an area that you called Oakdale, O-A-K-D-A-L-E. And it was white folks who lived over there. So, we didn't go over that way at all. But we did go as far as Malbis Bakery. At that time, we had to go—when I say "we," that was my sister and I—had to go to Malbis Bakery every day to get a loaf of bread. Six cents' loaf of bread at Malbis Bakery... And he had bought us a—they didn't call it a tricycle, they called it a velocipede. And it was tall. But it was a joy, you know, using that. That was our recreation, going down there."

Malbis Bakery Interior in 1944
Located at the corner of Broad
and Tennessee Streets

Courtesy of Erik Overbey Collection,
Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and
Manuscript Library, University of South
Alabama



Mobile Beacon Building

Courtesy of Mobile Housing Board Collection,
Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript
Library, University of South Alabama

Roy Butler:

"Certain things was suppressed, you know, coming through the Press Register. But through the Beacon? It was just what the name of the paper is: the Beacon. The light. You were sure to know what happened. And because of the conditions and the pressures of the segregated situation at that time, things were needed to be known and seen. And that's why it wasn't no problem, you know, to sell that Beacon. Wasn't no problem whatsoever... Yeah, they printed it Down the Bay and then they moved to the north side."

Memories of Hurricanes

As hurricane season begins, we remember past hurricanes. We've heard many stories about hurricanes in Mobile, such as Camille in 1969 and Frederic in 1975. While we might think of hurricanes as terrible, destructive events, many of our narrators shared positive and humorous memories of hurricanes.

Violetta Simpson:

"I remember Hurricane Camille... My parents sent us to go see about Momma Suzie, because Momma Suzie even then was probably 80-some years old; 88, whatever. So, we went to see about Momma Suzie... And we were trying to walk back. And the water was up so high, until—I don't know why our parents sent us, but they did. But anyway, a guy was coming down the street in a boat. It was just a small boat, you know, with the motor on the back? And he picked us up, and we rode down Texas Street in a boat."



Paddling a boat after the 1916 Hurricane
(Many years before Violetta Simpson did)

Courtesy of Erik Overbey Collection, Doy Leale
McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
University of South Alabama



Waiting in the ice line after Hurricane Frederic

Courtesy of Alan Whitman, Doy Leale McCall Rare Book
and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama

Cedric Anthony:

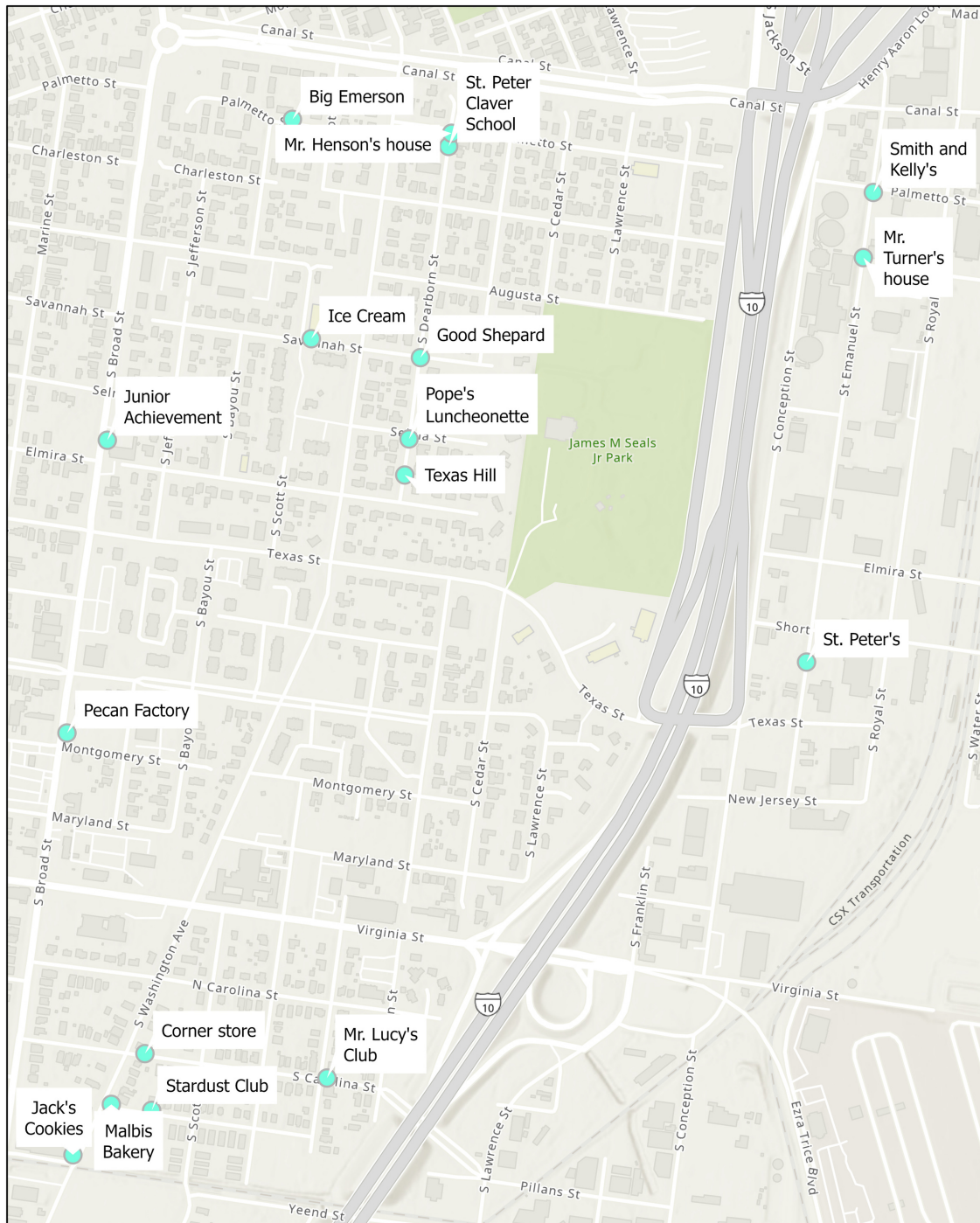
"I'll never forget: Hurricane Fredric... I remember standing in an ice line... In this line, you had people from all walks of life: raggedy cars, the raggedy-dressed people, people with nothing. Then the Mercedes; they're in the ice line, too. And so, now you got this whole different world; these people will never talk to each other. But they're talking to each other. And they're helping each other right now. ...it takes destruction for people to find their kindness. It takes things to get so bad that people actually look at their fellow man as a fellow human."



Hear more memories of storms in our [online exhibit](#) "Weathering the Storm: The Archaeology of Mobile Bay Hurricanes"

Bus Tour of Down the Bay

Mr. Edward Henson and Mr. Harvey Turner took us on a bus tour of Down the Bay over the summer. Mr. Eric Finley drove us around the neighborhood in the Dora Franklin Finley African American Heritage Trail bus while they pointed out some of the locations they remember from their childhoods there.



This map shows some of the locations they pointed out. What else would you add to the map? Where did some of your favorite Down the Bay memories take place?

How did the project begin?

Over the last few years, the University of South Alabama Center for Archaeological Studies excavated 15 sites along the I-10 corridor before the bridge widening project. Many of the sites are Down the Bay.

In 2017, Dr. Kern Jackson, of South's African-American Studies Department, and Dr. Phil Carr, of the Center for Archaeological Studies, talked to Mr. Floyd Eric Draine. His family home was in the right of way of the bridge project on South Conception Street, and archaeologists excavated the site where his house was located as part of the project. Mr. Draine shared his memories of living in the neighborhood with Dr. Jackson and later visited the field crew on site (below).

In 2021, the McCall Library received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to build their oral history program and to hire oral historian Dr. Ryan Morini. The Down the Bay Oral History project was one of several projects he worked on, and the added capacity allowed the project to grow.



Above: Mr. Bobby Dennison talks to the field crew for the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeology Project.

Right: Mr. Draine and Mr. Dennison visit "The Shotgun House Site," where Mr. Draine's family lived for decades.



Dr. Jackson, Dr. Morini, Jada Jones, Travis Davis, Alisha Palmer, and several others collected over 100 interviews for the project (so far). Thank you to everyone who has participated and made this project a success!

What is the Down the Bay Oral History Project?

The McCall Library at the University of South Alabama is creating a public archive of memories of Down the Bay through oral history interviews with community members. These interviews will be publicly available to preserve the history of Down the Bay, the neighborhood south of Government Street in Mobile.

Visit the McCall Library on the third Floor of the University of South Alabama Marx Library (5901 USA North Drive). Soon, you'll be able to explore the interviews online via JagWorks: https://jagworks.southalabama.edu/dtb_oral_hist/



If you have any questions, would like physical copies of the newsletter, or would like to distribute it to others, please get in touch with the McCall Library at (251) 341-3900 or oralhistory@southalabama.edu

