

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Anna Williams

COLLECTION: 4700.1587

IDENTIFICATION: Quilt artist and longtime resident of South Baton Rouge

INTERVIEWER: Barbara Faulkner

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project – Social Organizations

INTERVIEW DATE: June 20, 2002

FOCUS DATES: 1930s - 2002

ABSTRACT:

Tape 3168, Side A

Williams was born at Kleinpeter farm on August 1, 1927; has lived on East Polk Street in Baton Rouge for thirty years; few friends left in neighborhood between death and houses being torn down; has eight children plus six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren; cleaned houses for a living; has quilted since childhood; description of quilting frame; group of people quilted every night, rotating between twelve houses; used feed sacks to make bottoms of quilts; different types of quilts; Williams shows Faulkner some quilts; Williams takes her sewing with her on bus, to waiting rooms to keep herself busy; also makes pillow cases, aprons, doll clothes, placemats; stopped cleaning houses two years ago due to illness; explains a house shape stitched onto a pillow case; exhibits quilts in many places, including Washington and Kentucky; has declined offers to teach quilting; her one daughter is not interested in quilting; other places she lived in the neighborhood; lots of businesses when she moved to neighborhood fifty years ago; decline of neighborhood grocery store; involvement in children's schooling; recalls African Americans sitting at back of the bus; she still sits in the back of bus: "I guess I got used to it so, it didn't bother me"; raised in the country by Manchac Bayou; worked on the farm as child; paid seventy-five cents per hundred pounds of cotton picked; description of cotton picking; cutting sugar cane; picking strawberries; couple hundred similar farming families in the area; attended Farmer's School on Old Jefferson Highway; description of schooling; moved to Baton Rouge when she was about twenty-five; left farm because mother and other family wanted to move; Baton Rouge families for whom she worked as a domestic; work duties; belongs to Israelite Baptist Church on Texas Street; describes church service and activities at New Rising Sun Baptist Church, church she grew up attending; differences between childhood church and Israelite;

Tape 3168, Side B

Describes speak meetings in her childhood church; explanations of determinations, people's hopes to reach heaven when they die; description of Sunday service; food eaten at Sunday

picnics; current church has air conditioning and they eat meals inside; her children are not very involved with church; three of her sons still live in the neighborhood; current daily activities; sometimes quilting inspiration comes to her in the night; she makes her own clothes; people around the world send her scraps to quilt with; preference for cotton over silk; description of a yo-yo quilt; amount of time it takes to make different types of quilts; quilting takes her mind off things, “a lot of things you be worried about, when you sew you forget it”; danger of strangers knocking at the door these days; selling her quilts and being recognized for them nationwide; quilting supplies include thread and scissors; arthritis in hands; exhibits quilts in Nancy Crow’s museum in Ohio; travels to Houston to show quilts; large annual arts and crafts show in Houston; interesting quilts she’s seen there such as a quilt made of brassieres and a skeleton quilt; Williams can’t travel now because of health problems; conclusion.

TAPES: 1 (T3168)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 25 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 66 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence; Excerpts (6 pgs)

RESTRICTIONS: None