

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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Abstract: **Mable Huff York**

Mabel York was born in Harris County on September 10, 1943. However, she lived most of her childhood with a grandmother in Needville. She details the importance of education in her family and her own career in education. She describes her family's slave origins and migration to Texas and the purchase of her family's land in Fort Bend County. The Home Demonstration Club is described as an important part of farm life in Needville. York depicts the family farm in Needville in 'The Colony' and the history of black education in the Needville area. She gives the black church history of the area, details the black cemeteries and explains the discrimination and segregation blacks faced when she was a child. The interview includes a detailed description of farm life in early Needville, including gardening, sewing, Saturday night amusements, early electricity, and the first telephone system. York concludes with an explanation of her work writing a history of blacks in Fort Bend County, 1870-1965.

18 Pages

⇓ *Scroll down for Key Words from the Interview.* ⇓

Interview Summary

People (in order mentioned in interview)

Bettie Lewis Robinson (grandmother)

Willie Robinson (step-grandfather)

Clarence Huff (father)

Azalee Foston Jackson (mother)

Wardell Thompson (cousin)

R. C. Robinson (uncle)

Kathy Leissner (wife of Charles Whitman)

Charles Whitman (Univ. of Texas shooter, 1966)

Raymond Leissner (Kathy's father; employer of Bettie Robinson)

Dr. Joe Yelderman (employer of Bettie Robinson)

Gus Kunkle (banker; employer of Bettie Robinson)

Oliver Kunkle (banker; employer of Bettie Robinson)

Jeanette Foston Thompson Probasco (aunt)

Arthur Lee Foston (uncle)

Charity Foston Barnes (aunt)

Alexander "Alec" Foston (uncle)

A. C. Foston (uncle)

Hagen Reinagin (employer of A. C. Foston at Needville Hatchery and Feed)

James Lewis (Bettie Lewis Robinson's father, a former slave)

James Lewis (slave master of James Lewis, Bettie Robinson's father)

Georgiana Lewis (wife of James Lewis, Bettie Lewis Robinson's father)

Andrew Smith (family traveled to Texas with James and Georgiana Lewis)

Jordans (family traveled to Texas with James and Georgiana Lewis)

Lees (family traveled to Texas with James and Georgiana Lewis)

Whiteheads (family traveled to Texas with James and Georgiana Lewis)

Henry Lewis (great-uncle)

Walter Lewis (great-uncle)

Georgiana Thomas (black female County Demonstration Agent)

Mr. Hardison (black County Demonstration Agent)

Ladd Stavinoha (neighbor)

Alexander Foston (grandfather)

Reverend Cassius Herman Brown, Sr. (first black teacher in Needville and neighbor)

Leissners (neighbor family)

Hurtas (neighbor family)

Patuseks (neighbor family)

Ed Woods (neighbor)

Heards (neighbor family)

Watsons (forefathers of Ed Woods and present owners of Woods land)

Oscar Woods (cousin)

Melinda Watson (received part of Woods land)

James Cancer (neighbor)

Petruseks (Needville family)

Armstrong (landowner that sold land to Greater New Prospect Baptist Church)

Reverend Phillips (pastor at Greater New Prospect Baptist Church)

Barker brothers (sold land to blacks in N. A. Allen Addition)
 George Heard (last resident of earlier black neighborhood in Needville area)
 Tobe Rivers (resident of Routt Point; first black landowner in the area)
 Miss Monette (daughter of Rev. Brown)
 Henry Lewis (cousin and first bus driver)
 Cat Cassalow (Needville resident, BBQ cook)
 Rita Johnson (ran barber shop)
 Thurman Tarver (ran barber shop)
 Mr. Henderson (Kendleton resident; added on to grandmother's house)
 Mr. Shepherd (cycled to generate electricity for downtown Needville)
 The Ottos (owned building with first telephone company in Needville)
 Fort Bend County Commissioners (working with to create history of blacks in Fort Bend County, 1870-1965)
 Peter Martin (freed slave of Wylie Martin who owned property in Richmond)
 Judith Jones (married Peter Martin)
 Pete Ewell (classmate of mother; attendee of St. Mark's AME Church)

Places / Businesses

Harris County
 Needville
 Houston
 North Forest ISD
 Kimball High School
 University of Texas
 Prairie View A&M
 Palacios

Rockwell International
 Hughes Tool
 U. S. Army
 Franklin Beauty School
 Baytown
 Needville Hatchery and Feed now Simon's Corner
 Powell Point High School
 Kendleton
 Booker T. Washington High School, Houston
 A. W. Jackson High School
 Halifax County, North Carolina
 Armstrong Bottom
 'The Colony'
 Home Demonstration Club
 Hurta Road
 Hubenak Road
 Bassett School
 Routts Point Elementary School
 Marlowe Point School
 William Routt School
 N. A. Allen School
 Pete Ewell School
 Forest Brook High School, Houston
 B. C. Elmore High School, Houston
 Smiley High School, Houston
 W. G. Smiley Career Technology Campus, Houston
 Texas Southern University
 Greater New Prospect Baptist Church
 St. Mark's African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church

New Prospect Baptist Church
San Bernard River
N. A. Allen Addition
Routt's Point
New Prospect Baptist Church Cemetery
Peaceful Rest Cemetery
Routt Point Cemetery
Morningstar Baptist Church
Needville-Fairchild Road
Boling Highway
Needville ISD
Western Power
Ladd's Store (now Super S)
Simonton

The George Library
Needville ISD
Kendleton ISD
Fort Bend ISD
Lamar CISD
Richmond
George Ranch
Kendleton Museum
Bates Allen Park, Kendleton

Events

Charles Whitman shooting at the
University of Texas
Korean War
Fort Bend County Fair
1932 storm