

SUMMER 2023

# Down the Bay

## Oral History Project Update

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## Food and Photos Day

On April 1st, we held our Down the Bay: Food and Photos Day. Thanks to everyone who made it a success! We shared historical photos from the McCall Archives, memories of food from the oral history project, and archaeological artifacts.



## 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. Dr. Kern Jackson, Dr. Ryan Morini, Sheila Flanagan, and others are conducting oral history interviews with community members to preserve the history of Down the Bay.

# Project Updates

We have recorded 73 interviews about Down the Bay. In addition to interviewing people who grew up Down the Bay, we've also talked with those whose parents or grandparents lived or owned businesses there and people involved with local churches.

63 of these interviews are fully transcribed. They are being reviewed by the interviewees before they are made publicly accessible. If you have done an interview with us but have not received a transcript, please reach out to us. We might not have your mailing information. We will continue interviews through the end of the summer and we hope to have those transcripts completed and sent out this fall.

## Mark your Calendar!

**June 24:** Information Session at Bernheim Hall at the Ben May Library from 10-11 am. Our team will share updates and answer questions about the Down the Bay Oral History Project and the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeology Project.

**July 12:** I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeology Project Learning Lunch Lecture by Rachel Hines at the History Museum of Mobile at 12 pm.

**November 4:** Down the Bay Community Day at the James Seals Jr. Recreation Center. Join us for another celebration of Down the Bay History. Learn more about the new stories we're collecting this summer.

**Ongoing:** On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Dr. Kern Jackson will conduct interviews by appointment at the James Seals Jr. Community Center from 4:30-6:30 pm. Call him at 251-460-6363 to schedule an interview.

# Summer Interviews

Our team will continue recording new interviews for the archive through August 2023. After, we will remain open to new interviews, but the project focus will shift to research, writing, and making interviews accessible in an online archive. This summer, we'll try new kinds of interviews, including:

**Archaeology-themed:** We'll share artifacts and images of the excavations that were conducted Down the Bay for the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeology Project. We're interested in capturing the memories and reflections stirred up by these items.



Above: St. Rose of Lima pendant found near Royal and Madison Streets. Right: Whiskey Jug found near Virginia and S. Franklin Street



**Drive-along:** We will partner with Eric Finley of the Dora Franklin Finley African American Heritage Trail to drive around Down the Bay with small groups of 2-4 people at a time. During the drive, we will record memories about different locations.

**Folk life:** Do you know how to gather sassafras to make filé? Do you know how to make a pop gun for chinaberries? Do you have knowledge of gathering and preparing herbal remedies? We'd like to capture interviews about these types of activities and film demonstrations.

If you are interested in giving an interview, contact the McCall Library at (251) 341-3900 or [oralhistory@southalabama.edu](mailto:oralhistory@southalabama.edu).

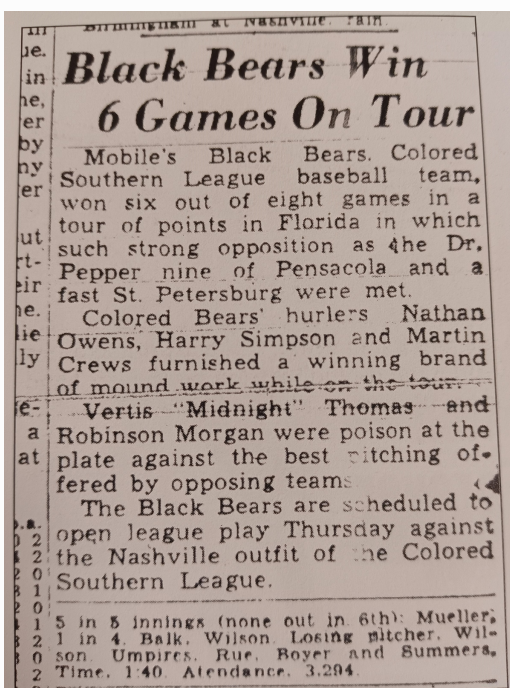
# Future Project Plans

At the end of the project, we plan to create a free publication about the Down the Bay Oral History Project. This booklet will share quotes from the interviews, photographs and documents from the McCall archives, and the maps, artifacts, and information produced by the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeology Project team.

This booklet will celebrate and honor the contributions of all the narrators and others who have made this oral history project possible. It will also show connections between the different interviews and our archival and archaeological work. Everyone who participated in the project will receive a copy.

# Memories of Baseball

Many people have told us Mobile was a baseball city and interviews include fond memories of playing baseball Down the Bay. We've heard memories of professionals, like Satchel Paige and Hank Aaron and their families as well as stories of local baseball teams and makeshift diamonds.



"Well during that time, you didn't have a lot of traffic. [Laughter] Because you didn't have a lot of cars. But we played in the street; in the evening, we played in the street... I think Down the Bay it became the great pastime for most people; and for most boys and for most men, and that was their pastime."

*-Creola Gibby Ruffin in a 2022 Interview. Her father played for the Mobile Black Bears*

Left: Mobile Press Register article about the Mobile Black Bears



# Photos of Down the Bay

At Down the Bay: Food and Photos Day, we shared photographs from the McCall Archives. Many of the photos are part of the Mobile Housing Board collection, which consists of files from urban renewal. It includes photographs of every property that the city appraised, records of appraisals and demolitions, maps, correspondence, and much more. This collection is publicly available and use is encouraged.



Left: Children playing outside a house on Warren Street in 1968.

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

Right: Leon's Dry Goods

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



# Scenes from the Zine

We gathered memories of food from our Down the Bay interviews to create a zine for our Down the Bay: Food and Photos Day on April 1. Cass Bakotic, a graduate student in Art at the University of South Alabama, illustrated the zine. If you would like a copy, reach out to us at (251) 341-3900 or [oralhistory@southalabama.edu](mailto:oralhistory@southalabama.edu).

## *Wali Arif Mustafa*

Sometimes we'd stop by Jack's Cookie Place that was on Tennessee and Michigan Avenue. Asked for a nickel of broke-up cookies —[Laughter]—and go to the Rec. Yeah. That was something, man.



## *David Smoots*

...Jack's Cookie Company, all them places was in this area. And the kids would save their money, and stop in them on the way home. And you know, [19] in the evening, you get home, you could have you a box. You could be a salesperson! [Laughter] I wasn't no salesperson. I ate all mine. These big Jack cookies about this big around? Back in the day, they were a penny. You get you a bag—.



## *Henry Hobby*

During the pecan season, which was around October I guess, you know, pecans fall.



There was a lot of empty lots with pecan trees throughout Mobile. And a group of us would get together and go and pick up the pecans...

If you would like additional copies of the newsletter, or would like to distribute it to others, please get in touch with us at the contact info above.

USA Center for Archaeological Studies



# Oral History

The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
At the University of South Alabama