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An Interview with

MRS. LILLIE BELLE PARKER

February 18, 1977

Interviewed by

Iday J. Wilkerson

Mississippi
Department of Archives and History
and the
Washington County Library System
Oral History Project:
Greenville and Vicinity

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Interviewee: Lillie Belle Parker

Interviewer: Iday J. Wilkerson

Title: An interview with Lillie Belle Parker, February 18, 1977
/ interviewed by Iday J. Wilkerson

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Scope Note: The Washington County Library System, with assistance from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, conducted oral history interviews with local citizens. The project interviews took place between 1976 and 1978. The interviewees included long-term residents of the Greenville-Washington County area in their late 50's and older.

This is an interview for the Oral History Program by Mrs. J. P. Wilkerson of Winterville. Mrs. Wilkerson is interviewing Lillie Belle Parker of Winterville on February 19, 1977 at the home of Mrs. Wilkerson.

Lillie Belle was born near Magee, Mississippi on the old Rankin's, R-a-n-k-i-n-s, Place, which was owned by her grandfather. Lillie Belle was born on July 16, 1911 and she is going to tell us about leaving the place near Magee and coming to the delta.

WILKERSON: Lillie Belle, let me ask you what your grandfather's name was?

PARKER: Phillip Rankin.

WILKERSON: And, what was your father's name?

PARKER: Arthur Allbritton.

WILKERSON: Is that A-l-l-b-r-i-t-t-o-n?

PARKER: o-n.

WILKERSON: And when was your father born?

PARKER: He was born in 1883.

WILKERSON: Do you know when your mother was born?

PARKER: No, ma'am. I don't know when she was born.

WILKERSON: And what was her name?

PARKER: Her name was Hattie Allbritton.

WILKERSON: Well, before she married was it Rankin?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. Her name was Hattie Rankin

before she married.

WILKERSON: How old is she now?

PARKER: She says she's eighty but I don't know the date she was born in the year. She was born on December 21, 1888, because my father says she's five years younger than him.

WILKERSON: When was it that your mother, father and you and your little brother moved from Magee to the Mississippi delta?

PARKER: About 1914.

WILKERSON: It was 1914 and you were three years old when you came up here?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: Tell us about coming up here. How did you happen to move from Magee up here?

PARKER: Well, it was a man going around getting labor for the Delta Pine Land.

WILKERSON: Is that what you sometimes call the Syndicate?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. And, he told my daddy that they was giving them a house, residence, furniture in the house and giving them a mule to work the place and that's why he was up here.

WILKERSON: And you were going to have a place given to you and make a garden to help with your food too?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. Anything you wanted to plant on it. Grow cotton and corn -- you had to plant the cotton but the garden and the corn and all like that, that was yours.

WILKERSON: Were they going to give you a cow?

PARKER: They were going to give you a cow too, hog and all of that.

WILKERSON: So you moved to the Delta and Pine Land Company near Scott, Mississippi?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am, west of the lake.

WILKERSON: And, how long did you stay there?

PARKER: Well, we stayed there until 1914 in December.

WILKERSON: Until after you had made that first crop?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And then where did you go?

PARKER: We moved to Arkansas City.

WILKERSON: What did you do over there?

PARKER: I was too little to do anything but my daddy worked at Greyland Mills, it was a sawmill.

WILKERSON: What did he do for them?

PARKER: Well, he was a fireman with the Mill.

WILKERSON: A fireman?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: Didn't you have a little sister who was born soon after you got over there?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. She was born the twenty-fourth of January 1915.

WILKERSON: Did you go to school in Arkansas City and how long did you live over there?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. I went to school over there and was over there until I finished - - Well, you know, over there at that time they didn't go to the tenth grade. They didn't go no further than the ninth grade and I got my diploma from the ninth grade.

WILKERSON: Was this in Arkansas City?

PARKER: In Arkansas City. Professor Johnson was my superintendent and Mrs. F. J. Cox was my teacher.

WILKERSON: How long did she teach you?

PARKER: She teached me two years.

WILKERSON: Who was your Home Economics teacher who taught you to sew as nice as you sew now?

PARKER: Mrs. Ensmenger. She was my Home Economics teacher.

WILKERSON: Mrs. Ensmenger.

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: After you finished High School did you stay in Arkansas City a while?

PARKER: No, ma'am. We didn't stay in Arkansas City. My mother and father then was separated, and we came over here to pick cotton, in 1930.

WILKERSON: Had your mother married again?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. She had been married again. And, we came over here to pick cotton. We stayed over here to pick cotton with his Auntie. We spent the fall with his Auntie.

WILKERSON: Now, you mean this is your stepfather's Auntie?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And what was your stepfather's name?

PARKER: My stepfather's name was George Murray.

WILKERSON: M-u-r-r-a-y? And you stayed with his Auntie and picked cotton that fall? And, did your whole family come over here?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. All of us came.

WILKERSON: Was your little brother still living then?

PARKER: No, ma'am. He died when we were in Arkansas before my daddy and mother separated.

WILKERSON: And he's buried over there?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: But your sister, Essie, came with your mother, father and you and then you picked cotton that fall? Did you stay here?

PARKER: No, ma'am. We went back to Arkansas after we got through picking cotton, we went back that year and we moved back over here in thirty, the last day in thirty.

WILKERSON: In 1930?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And you don't remember what they were paying per hundred then to pick the cotton?

PARKER: No, I don't know what they was paying for picking cotton.

WILKERSON: When you moved back over here, where

did you move?

PARKER: We moved back to the Delta and Pine Land, across the lake over there near the levee. The place is called Eutaw.

WILKERSON: How long was it before you married after you moved back over there to Eutaw?

PARKER: I married in thirty-one, the sixth of October.

WILKERSON: Was your sister married at that time?

PARKER: Yes. She was married at that time because she married before I did. She had married and was staying up there in the pecan grove when I married.

WILKERSON: In the grove that was on Eutaw near where you lived?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And, she had married that summer, did you say?

PARKER: Yes. She married that summer, she married before I did.

WILKERSON: She married the summer before you married in October, and who did she marry?

PARKER: Eddie B. Weeks.

WILKERSON: Was he living on Delta and Pine Land Company at that time?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: Did she stay with him very long, were

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they married very long?

PARKER: They didn't stay together too long because he got into some kind of little trouble and he left and she left and went to Blytheville, Arkansas.

WILKERSON: Blytheville, Arkansas and he left and went where?

PARKER: I don't know where he went but he wasn't down there because you see the law was looking for him. But, finally they did catch up, run up on him a good while afterwards.

WILKERSON: Well, we'll talk about that in a few minutes but tell me right now what you did after you married.

PARKER: I left and went to a levee camp.

WILKERSON: Levee camp?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And, where was that?

PARKER: That was down there at Tallulah, Louisiana.

WILKERSON: Was your husband working on the levee and what was he doing?

PARKER: He was a bulldozer driver and they were building the levee higher. I was the cook. I was cooking for seven men with him, with my husband.

WILKERSON: It would be seven men all working on the levee.

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: Where did you live and where did you cook

while your husband was working on the levee?

PARKER: I lived in a tent. They had a tent for you to live in and then they had a tent for your kitchen if you have boarders, so, well, that's just it.

WILKERSON: Well, when they were building the levees as they would make one part higher, would they move the tents on down to where they were working and building the next part higher?

PARKER: It would probably be a mile or two miles before they would move the tent closer to the job.

WILKERSON: And, when did you all stop working with the levee?

PARKER: In 1935.

WILKERSON: Did you work anywhere except in the Tallulah, Louisiana area with the Levee Board?

PARKER: No, ma'am.

WILKERSON: In 1935 where did you move?

PARKER: I moved out there on Mr. V. M. Allen's.

WILKERSON: Mr. V. M. Allen's place, and that's near Winterville over near the levee and Mr. Eustace Winn's place. Is that right?

PARKER: That's right.

WILKERSON: And, you and your husband, did you have any children by then?

PARKER: I had one, a little boy.

WILKERSON: When was he born?

PARKER: He was born January 25, 1932.

WILKERSON: And did you move on this place to farm?

PARKER: Well, my mother had taken sick and that was the reason I come home and we just stayed there, and we made our first crop.

WILKERSON: And your mother's husband was working there on the place?

WILKERSON: That's right.

WILKERSON: Well, where was your husband, Ed?

PARKER: He was there too because he had never started out of here but I know he puttered there all the time.

WILKERSON: And how long did you stay there working and farming with Mr. Allen?

PARKER: We stayed there until 1963. We moved from out there in 1963. Tuesday, after the second Sunday in 1963.

WILKERSON: And what month was that?

PARKER: That was in August, no that was in July.

WILKERSON: Did you have any more children by then?

PARKER: I had a girl.

WILKERSON: Oh, a girl.

PARKER: I had a little girl out there on Mr. Allen's place. Her name was Claudia Mae Parker and she was born August 16, 1939.

WILKERSON: And you moved with your daughter because your little son had died. Is that right? When you moved from

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Mr. Allen's place your little son had died?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: Well, do you know when he died?

PARKER: He died February 4, 1946.

WILKERSON: And where is he buried?

PARKER: Up to the Buckner cemetery.

WILKERSON: Over near where you lived at Mr. Allen's?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And where did you move when you left

Mr. Allen's place?

PARKER: I moved to Mr. Jeff Wilkerson's place.

WILKERSON: Where you are living right now?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And, in the meantime Mr. Wilkerson, after Mr. Allen had died, had bought that place you were living on?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And you worked for him over there and then you moved over to his home place.

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And then, when did your husband die?

PARKER: My husband died August 18, 1964.

WILKERSON: This was about a year after you had moved here.

PARKER: Exactly one year because we moved out here in sixty-three in July and he died in August 1964, just one

year and one week.

WILKERSON: Was he working when he died or had he retired?

PARKER: He was working but he had trouble with his back. The doctor said he had trouble with his kidneys - poisoning in his kidneys.

WILKERSON: He hadn't been sick very long when he died?

PARKER: No, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And you were working at the house for Mr. and Mrs. Wilkerson?

PARKER: Yes.

WILKERSON: Well, what about your sister, Essie? You said she and her husband were separated and he got into trouble and ran away from the law and she moved to Blytheville, Arkansas?

PARKER: She didn't move. She was just up there with a friend, and she stayed up there and after he got into this trouble she came home.

WILKERSON: After her husband got in trouble she came home?

PARKER: Yes.

WILKERSON: Well, was her husband in Blytheville with her?

PARKER: No, ma'am. He was up there at Eutaw.

WILKERSON: You mean, after he got into the second trouble?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: Well, tell me about that.

PARKER: The second trouble he got into -- When he got into the second trouble, he left and went to his daddy's, and his mother's.

WILKERSON: What was his daddy's name?

PARKER: His name was Eddie B. Weeks.

WILKERSON: And, where did his mother and daddy live?

PARKER: Burdett.

WILKERSON: Burdett, B-u-r-d-e-t-t-, Mississippi.

That's near Leland, isn't it?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: And he went down there to live with them and what happened?

PARKER: Well, he was just down there, thought they wouldn't find him. Well, he was a youngster who liked to go out every saturday night and his daddy was going with some man's wife down there and I guess he thought since Eddie B. was there he just thought he could get that woman by himself, so he asked Eddie B. about it, told him about his plan ---

WILKERSON: What was his plan?

PARKER: Wanted to kill him.

WILKERSON: Wanted to kill the lady's husband?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am, and get him out of the way. So, they went out one day to see her and looking about the ditch bank, so they planned it to go out one night and they

went out and I can't think of the man's name, however, they went out and they was talking about how much money they could find and when they dug deep enough to kill and for him to fall in and cover him up, Eddie B. said, "Well, don't you think that's deep enough?" so, Eddie B. shot him down in the hole and his daddy wanted him to stay there and help him cover him up but he wouldn't, he said "I done done enough and too much now." and then he left his father there to cover him up. He went on back to the Saturday night ball.

WILKERSON: This was Eddie B.?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. And, I guess that man stayed there and covered him up and come on back home. Well, long afterwards, two or three weeks I guess after that -- I don't know how it come up again. Anyway, there was a man come around who was a voodoo and he was telling that he could help all people if they were in trouble, Mr. Weeks turned around and said, "You are the one I want to see because I'm in trouble, I just can't rest nowhere I go." So he said, "Well, you'll have to tell me what your trouble and he went on and told him. This man told him, "Well, I got to have some of the dirt where he buried at."

WILKERSON: He had told the man that he had killed another man?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am. "him and his son", that's the way he told it, and he told him just how it was that his son killed him but he was the cause of it, so they went and got

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some of the dirt --

WILKERSON: Down at the grave?

PARKER: Down at the grave and it was on a ditch bank and the next day or so he came back out there and he just had to have some of the clothing that the man had on him.

WILKERSON: This was the Voodoo man?

PARKER: The Voodoo man wanted some of the clothes of the man they killed. He had to have it. Well, they went and got a piece of, some of his clothes, and a day or so after then there was a great big bus of them, the law and all was in it. Eddie B. was at home that day and they had a little side room. It was a three room house with a side room built onto it. His daddy told him, "Eddie B.", no, he called him son - "Son, who is all these cars coming?" He told him, Eddie B. told his daddy "I bet you done talked too much and that's the law" and sure enough, it was. Eddie B. got in that side room and when they drove up there he started to shooting.

WILKERSON: Eddie B. did?

PARKER: And they came on in and asked for Eddie B. Eddie B. started to shooting. Well, some way or another they was one that went around the back and got in the window, or broke in the window or something, I don't know exactly, but anyway they got him and brought him out and carried him, brought him down there to the jail.

WILKERSON: Did they bring him and his father?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am, they carried both of them.

WILKERSON: And this was to the jail in Greenville?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am, to the jail in Greenville and they kept them -- I don't know how long they kept them down there.

WILKERSON: They had the trial?

PARKER: They had the trial and found Eddie B. -- they found Eddie B. guilty that he had killed this man. They sentenced Eddie B. to be hung and sent up his daddy for life imprisonment. They both is dead now, because his daddy died and they hung him.

WILKERSON: Where did his daddy die?

PARKER: His daddy died in prison.

WILKERSON: Do you know how long he was in prison before he died?

PARKER: No. I don't know how long. I really don't know where they buried him at because Essie had been married and went up north --

WILKERSON: So your sister was married and gone off.

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: Do you know when this was that they had the trial?

Parker: It was sometime back in 1932. Anyway, --

WILKERSON: What did they do to Eddie B.?

PARKER: They hung him.

WILKERSON: They hung him? Where did they hang him?

PARKER: There at the Greenville Court House.

WILKERSON: And was Essie in Michigan at that time?

PARKER: No, ma'am, she wasn't in Michigan, she was up there at Blytheville with her friend. She left here one day before they hung him and she went to see him and she asked him what did he want and he told her he didn't want anything, that his daddy got him into it. He said she was to go back home.

WILKERSON: And she came back from Blytheville when she found out that he had been sentenced to hang?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: -- and went to him the day before he was hanged -- Well, did you or she go to see him hang?

PARKER: I didn't. I left, I just couldn't go, but after his grandmother, Mrs. Weeks, that was her brother, Eddie B.'s daddy's sister.

WILKERSON: That would have been his Auntie?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am.

WILKERSON: They asked him what he wanted for dinner?

PARKER: He told them "a cup of coffee and that was all he wanted". They brought him that cup of coffee, and then they told them did they want his body?

WILKERSON: His what?

PARKER: His body and his Auntie told them, "No, she didn't want him" she said, "You all killed him, you all bury him." So they buried him in the Potter's field. Where his graves' at, I don't know.

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WILKERSON: Did Essie go to see him hang?

PARKER: No, no.

WILKERSON: Where did they hang him?

PARKER: They hung him down there where the Court House is at, up there where a big old clock used to be up there, and they was boards up there, two by fours or something -- you could see it a long time. They done tore it down now.

WILKERSON: And you say that he was the last one hanged here in Washington County?

PARKER: To my knowledge. I don't know of another one.

WILKERSON: Is your sister still living in Detroit?

PARKER: Yes, ma'am, she's still living.

WILKERSON: Well, is there anything else that you want to talk about now?

PARKER: Well, I can't think of nothing else right now, but if I think of something else I'll talk with you.

WILKERSON: Thank you so much.

PARKER: You are welcome.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Vivian Broom)

FINAL by V.B.

1/7-1978

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