

The Farish District, Its Architecture and Cultural Heritage

by

James Cabaniss Bridgforth

(Under the Direction of Scott Nesbit)

This paper explores the complexity of the Farish Street District, its issues today and importance to the cultural history of the black community in Mississippi. This communities' achievements in Farish District had far reaching affects, influencing religion, music, food and social justice nationwide and is there for much more than just a historic district of dilapidated, vernacular, buildings. The thesis is organized into six chapters. After a brief introduction, I focus on the history of Mississippi, Farish District, and its culture. In Chapter III. I review the 1980 National Register Nomination Form. The paper then explores the complex history of successful and failed redevelopment and preservation efforts in the Farish Street District, from 1980-2016. A chapter is devoted to current conditions which is highlighted with current photographs taken during my research. This is followed by the conclusion which is bolstered by an analysis of my findings.

INDEX WORDS: Farish Street Historic District, African American Community Jackson, Mississippi, National Register, Vernacular Architecture,

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All photos are by author unless otherwise specified.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Farish Street District in Jackson, Mississippi was once the thriving center of the African-American community in Mississippi. Today however, Farish Street is a depressed area surrounded by slightly less depressed areas. The district, borders downtown Jackson, which is itself still struggling to have a post suburban-sprawl comeback. In the words of City Councilman Melvin Priester: “Jackson has become a donut city.”¹ As more affluent people have moved away from the center of town to the suburbs the center has literally become empty. Nowhere is this more true than the Farish Street District, which is geographically the center, and historically the cultural center of Jackson, Mississippi. It has long been a consensus that saving or breathing life back into the Farish Street District could create a domino effect in Jackson, the idea being if you can fix Farish, the rest will follow. Saving Farish Street and Farish District has been tried many times. Attempts have been made to preserve, restore and revitalize the Farish Street District since 1980. It is a case study of failed urban planning and failed historic preservation, good intentions tripped up by the complexity of racially charged politics in a modern Deep South city.

Even though much has been lost since the district was put on the National Register in 1980, there are still many abandoned buildings worth saving. Underneath this bleak portrait of a

¹ The Farish Street Project, University of Mississippi, Southern Foodways, 15.
<http://www.olemiss.edu/projects/sfa/farish-street-project/assets/pdf/farish-street-project.pdf>

place, there is still life left. Scattered around the District there are a handful of businesses and occupied houses with well kept yards. The churches, which have always been the foundation of the community, are still there and are still holding services. The famous Alamo Theater occasionally is used as a venue, and the Smith Robertson Museum is a must-see for those interested in studying African American heritage in Mississippi. An uninformed visitor or developer may ask what made or perhaps still makes the Farish Street District so special? Why did this neighborhood and business district receive so much attention? Architecturally, the vernacular houses and commercial buildings that are still extant, are not extraordinary examples of their styles, nor are they the oldest examples of vernacular house styles and commercial architecture in the area. Why and how, with so much lost, can this area still be considered eligible as a National Register District? The answer to this question lies in the fact that The Farish Street Historic District is one of the most culturally rich spots in America. If wealth was measured in cultural heritage, the Farish Street Historic District would be considered one of the wealthiest in the country.

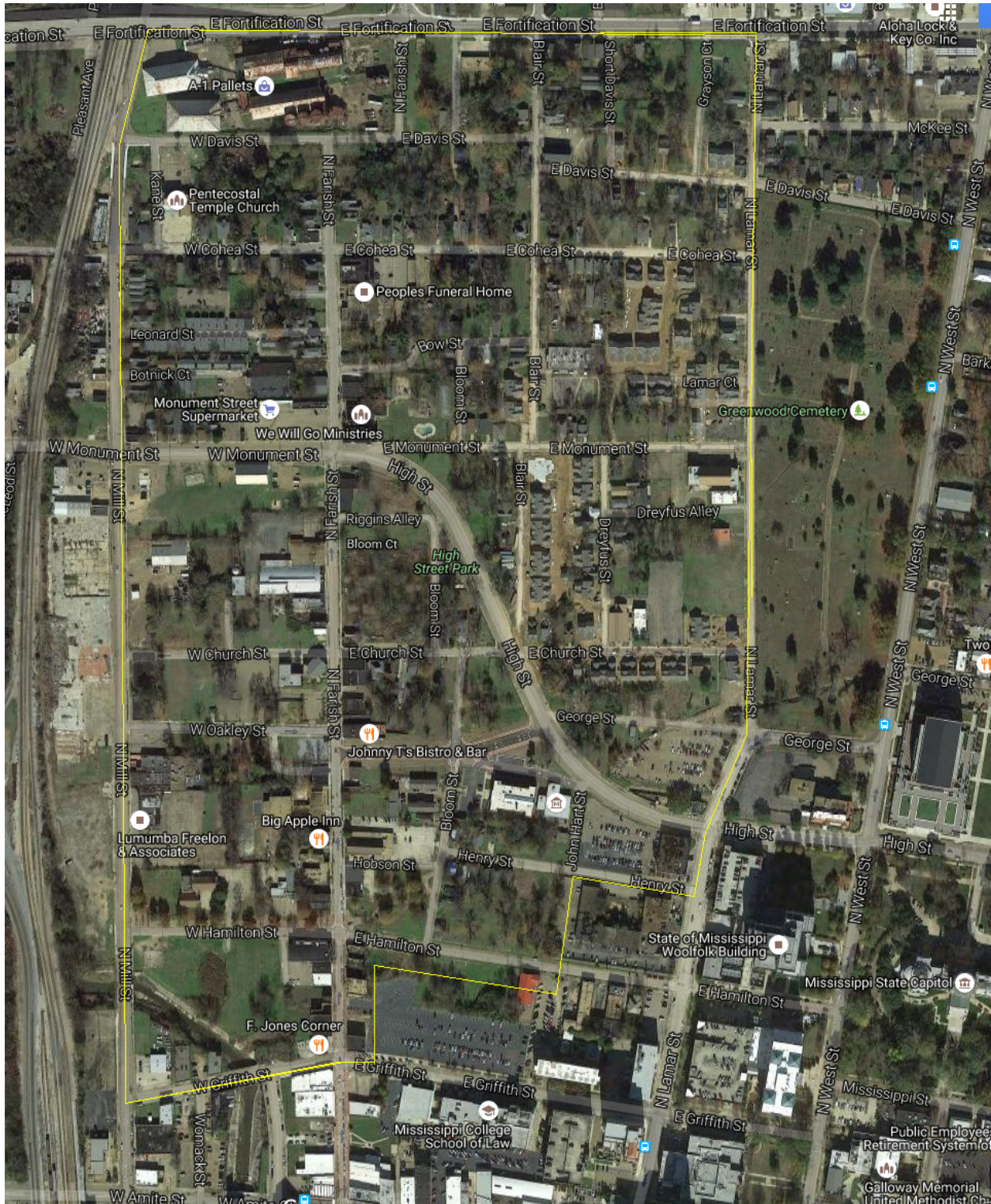
When the culinary travel writer, Anthony Bourdain, came to Farish Street to try the hot tamales and pig ear sandwiches at the famous Big Apple Inn, he asked, “What happened? Where did it all go? “The owner of the Big Apple Inn, Geno Lee, replied: “what killed Farish Street was integration.”² Integration was a factor in Farish Street’s businesses decline, but the story of the area, the Farish District of which Farish Street is part, is long and complicated. No single factor can be attributed to the district’s long decline. Today much of the Farish Street District is crumbling. Some buildings have fallen in on themselves, some have been burned by vagrants and

² Anthony Bourdain, *Parts Unknown, Season 3, Mississippi, CNN*, 05, 18, 2014

others demolished or burned by the city. If it were not for the 1903 Beaux-Arts dome of the State Capitol to the east and the old Standard Life Building, (an Art Deco skyscraper) to its south, the district might indeed look like an abandoned town. When viewed from the air or a satellite perspective the first thing that jumps out is the massive amount of green space. Despite appearances the Farish District is not abandoned.

This paper explores the complexity of the Farish Street District, its issues today and importance to the cultural history of the black community in Mississippi. This communities' achievement in Farish District had far reaching affects, influencing religion, music, food and social justice nationwide and is there for much more than just a historic district of dilapidated, vernacular, buildings. The thesis is organized into six chapters. After a brief introduction, I focus on the history of Mississippi, Farish District, and its culture. In Chapter III. I review the 1980 National Register Nomination Form. The paper then explores the complex history of successful and failed redevelopment and preservation efforts in the Farish Street District, from 1980-2016. A chapter is devoted to current conditions which is highlighted with current photographs taken during my research. This is followed by the conclusion which is bolstered by an analysis of my findings.

“but out of the bitterness we wrought an ancient past here in this separate place and made our village here.” From the poem *African Village* by Margaret Walker. From her book of poems *Farish Street*



This satellite image from Google maps on which I have drawn a yellow line to indicate where the District's borders are, gives the viewer a good indication of the massive amount of green space even with recent infill housing.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF MISSISSIPPI AND FARISH STREET TO 1980

Early Mississippi and Jackson, History

Mississippi entered the Union in 1817 as the twentieth state. By 1817 the state's economy was already firmly based in cotton and slavery. The state's population quickly expanded away from the Mississippi River following the opening up of Choctaw territory to white settlement as the result of the Treaty of Doak's Stand in October of 1820.³ The site of the State Capital was originally in the state's oldest Mississippi River settlement, Natchez, and had been moved back and forth from Natchez to the nearby town of Washington.⁴ Later the seat of government was moved again to Columbia in Marion County in the south central part of the state.⁵ After the Federal Government was able to secure access to Choctaw lands, the amount of land available for white farmers and their African slaves to clear and settle, tripled.⁶ After 1820, the area which comprised Mississippi was no longer limited to the southern Mississippi River counties and the Gulf Coast, and a more central location for the capitol was desired. The new location was

³ Carroll Brinson, *Jackson/A special Kind of Place*, (Jackson: City of Jackson, 1977), 31.

⁴ Carroll Brinson, *Jackson/A special Kind of Place*,

⁵ Carroll Brinson, *Jackson/A special Kind of Place*,

⁶ Rowland Dunbar, *History of Mississippi, The Heart of The South, Volume I*, S.J Clarke Chicago 1925, Reprint Company Spartanburg South Carolina 1978, 516.

chosen near an old French and Choctaw trading post known as Lefleur's Bluff.⁷ This site was chosen because of its centrality in the state, its elevation above flood plains, its proximity to existing public roads, and because it is on the Pearl River.⁸ The Pearl River drains portions of central and southern Mississippi into the Gulf of Mexico where it functions as the southeastern Mississippi-Louisiana border. In the early nineteenth century it was considered a navigable river for keel -boats which were long, wide, wooden, flat bottomed, manpowered, boats .⁹ The new site on Lefleur's Bluff was chosen in November of 1821 and was named for soon to be United States President and former General and national hero, Andrew Jackson.¹⁰ The task to choose a site for the new capitol fell to generals Thomas Hines and William Latimore who also recommended that Thomas Jefferson's suggestion of a checkerboard pattern be applied as an urban plan.¹¹ The plan was implemented by Peter Aaron Van Dorn who designed Jackson as the Capitol in 1822 and laid out the city in the checkerboard pattern as desired by Hines and Latimore. Van Dorn's design was almost certainly influenced by Oglethorpe's design of

⁷ Rowland Dunbar, *History of Mississippi*, 516.

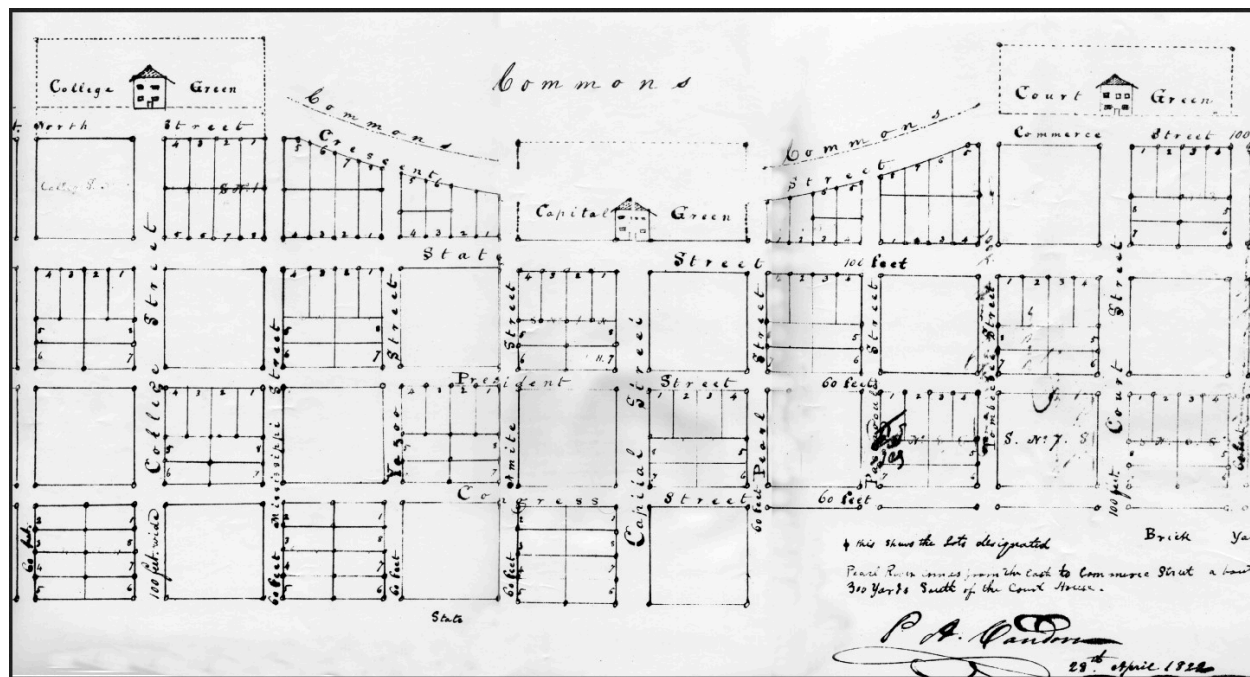
⁸ Carroll Brinson, *Jackson/A special Kind of Place*, 37.

⁹ Rowland Dunbar, *History of Mississippi, The Heart of The South, Volume I*, S.J Clarke Chicago, 1978, 516-525.

¹⁰ Rowland Dunbar, *History of Mississippi*,516.

¹¹ Carroll Brinson, *Jackson/A special Kind of Place*, 37.

Savannah, Georgia.¹²



1822 original Vandorn design of Jackson Mississippi. <http://msgw.org/hinds/mapshistoric.html>

By the the late 1850s, Jackson was a railroad hub for the Vicksburg-Meridian and New Orleans-Corinth/Memphis lines. Other than being a rail-road hub and the state capital, Jackson was a fairly small town in the antebellum period. Before the Civil War, the state's economy and population centers were oriented towards the Mississippi River and its tributaries in the west, the Tombigbee River in the east and the Mississippi Sound on the Gulf of Mexico. Jackson did not become a large town until after the Civil War. In 1860, Jackson was home to 22 free people of African descent; the town's population at the time was just a little over three thousand, free and slave. During the time of extreme violence following the Confederacy's surrender, the area

¹² Carroll Brinson, *Jackson/A special Kind of Place*, 53.

available for newly freed slaves to settle in Jackson was what is known today as the Farish District.

Many of the formerly enslaved peoples who had lived in Jackson stayed. During the period of Reconstruction, recently freed slaves who had formerly been restricted to the many plantations scattered throughout the surrounding area moved to Jackson for both economic opportunity and perhaps for safety reasons as well. According to the Freedmen's Bureau, Mississippi averaged two to three murders every day in 1866.¹³ During the violent period of Reconstruction, Jackson would have been more secure than most Mississippi communities, as it was under the control of the United States Army and the Republican Government of Governor Adelbert Ames. Ames who served as Governor from 1868-1870 wrote in 1869: "The War still exists in a very important phase here."¹⁴ Riots and massacres occurred in towns all over Mississippi. In 1874 an unofficial militia, known as the White League, took control of Vicksburg in Warren County, and in 1875 the same occurred in Yazoo County.¹⁵ The Warren County Sheriff, a freedman named Peter Crosby, fled to Jackson for safety under the protection of then United States Senator, Adelbert Ames.¹⁶ Although Jackson may have been safer than other towns during Reconstruction, like Vicksburg, Yazoo City and Meridian, where violence and intimidation went virtually unchecked, Jackson was certainly not devoid of reasons to be fearful on the part of African-American residents. This is evident in the fact that poll observers found

¹³ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi: A History*, (Jefferson, North Carolina and London McFarland Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 7.

¹⁴ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 22.

¹⁵ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 39.

¹⁶ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 38.

Jackson, like the rest of the state's polling locations, "eerily quiet" in the election of 1875, which resulted in white Democrats re-asserting control of state government.¹⁷

The Farish District is clearly defined by its original borders: Fortification Street to its north; Mill Street and the rail-road tracks to its west; downtown Jackson to its south; and *Greenwood Cemetery* to its east. Greenwood is Jackson's oldest cemetery. The grand marble tombstones and monuments inside Greenwood's gates are Jackson's strongest link to its Victorian past. It is believed that there is a large section of unmarked enslaved people's graves which due to its proximity to the Farish Street District very well may include former enslaved residents from the antebellum estates which predate the Farish neighborhood.

During the antebellum period, the Farish Street area was comprised of several large estates that bordered what was then the northern outskirts of Jackson. One of these estates was a 400 acre plantation called Cohea.¹⁸ According to several sources, enslaved peoples from Cohea were the earliest residents of what would become the Farish Street District.¹⁹ One of the principal streets in the District still bears the name Cohea. Another estate on which the Farish District would be developed was owned by the Helm family. The Helms donated land to Jackson's first black church congregation, which would be called Mt. Helm Baptist Church.

Some documents, including the National Register Nomination Form, indicate that antebellum free people of color could have lived in what is now the Farish District. It is believed that freed slaves from Cohea first settled in what was to become Farish after their master's death

¹⁷ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 41.

¹⁸ Diana G. Miles, *From Frontier Capital to Modern City: A History of Jackson, Mississippi's Built Environment, 1865-1950*, Jaeger Company, Gainesville Ga, 21.

¹⁹ Diana G. Miles, *Built Environment, 1865-1950*, 21.

in 1859.²⁰ What is known for sure is that many newly freed enslaved peoples from central Mississippi settled in the Farish Street area during the later half of the nineteenth century.

From the end of the Reconstruction era to the end of Jim Crow in the mid 1960s, Farish Street was the business district for the black community in Jackson, Mississippi, as well as a residential area for the black community that included a middle class and a small group of very wealthy African American families. Most of the residents in the Farish Street area, however, would have mirrored black communities throughout Mississippi. That is, they were poor and lived in cramped shotgun houses.

The Farish District grew tremendously between the turn of the century and the Great Depression. The growth of Farish mirrored the growth of Jackson which morphed from a small town of 4,234 in 1870 to a small city of 21,262 in 1910.²¹ Much of this turn of the century growth was a result of the boll weevil's appearance in 1907; decimating cotton crops and forcing many sharecroppers black and white to move to urban areas such as Jackson in search of work.²² Work was to be found in Jackson's cotton seed oil mills and its vast lumber yards and railroad stacks.²³ By 1910, Jackson boasted 13 lumber companies which took advantage of 5 different railroad lines intersecting in the city.²⁴ Jackson boomed again during and directly after the Second World War.

²⁰ Diana G. Miles, *Built Environment, 1865-1950*, 21.

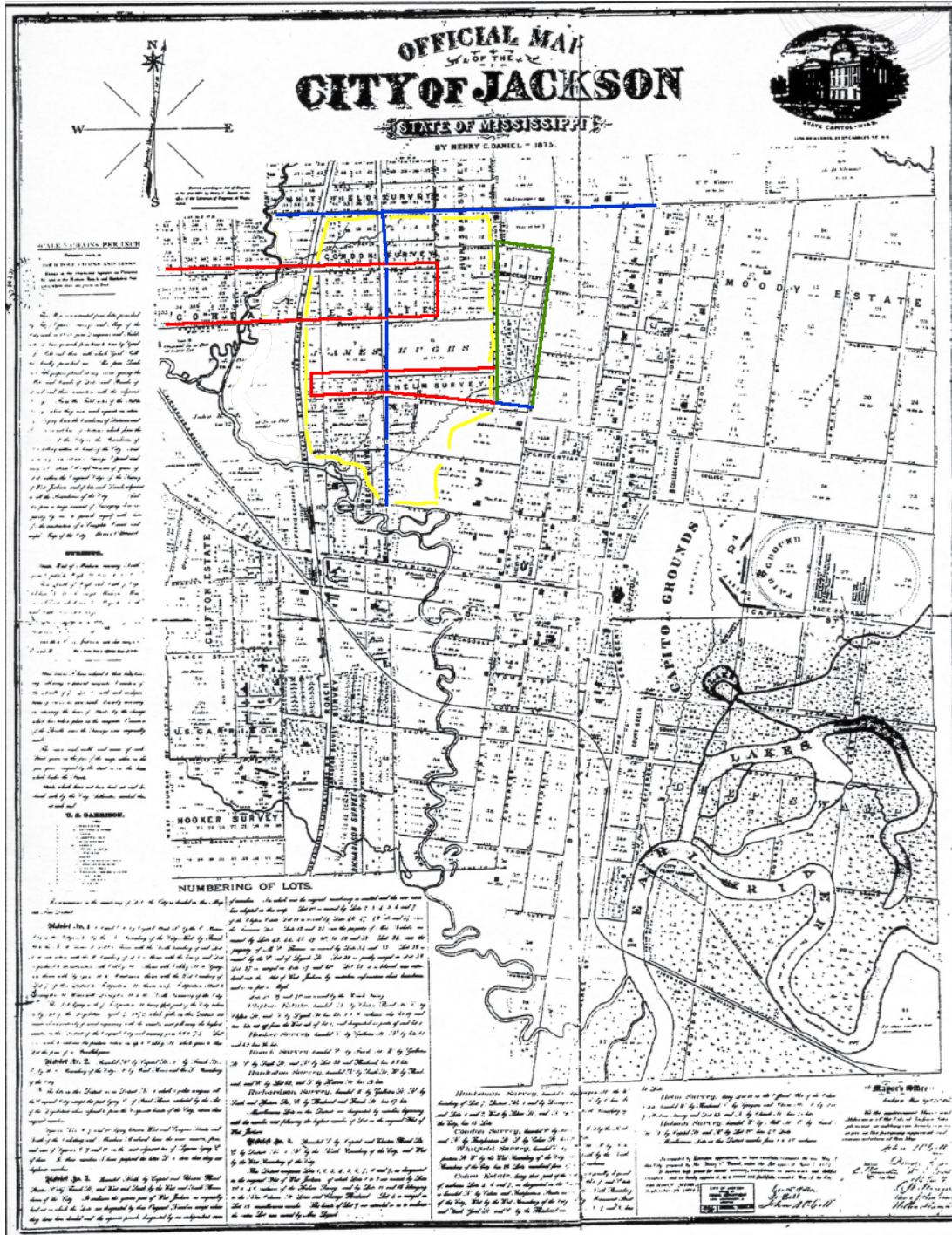
²¹ Diana G. Miles, *From Frontier Capital to Modern City*, 42.

Richard Aubrey Mclemore, *A History of Mississippi, Volume II*, 352.

²² Diana G. Miles, *From Frontier Capital to Modern City*, 42.

²³ Diana G. Miles, *From Frontier Capital to Modern City*, 42.

²⁴ Diana G. Miles, *From Frontier Capital to Modern City*, 42.



The map above gives us an idea of how the Farish District had developed by 1875. The large red rectangle highlights the borders of the old Cohea Estate, the top boundary line of which became Cohea Street. The smaller area outlined in red was the old Helm Estate; its northern boundary line became Church Street. The horizontal blue line drawn on the map is Fortification Street. Farish Street is the blue perpendicular line. Town Creek, which clearly defines the district's southern boundary, was eventually straightened and covered. The area outlined in green is Greenwood Cemetery.

Churches

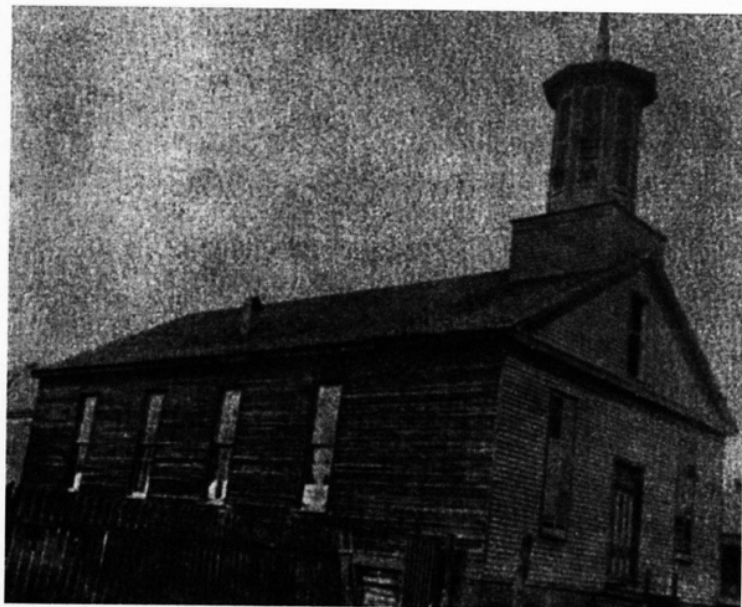
The Farish Streets District's churches are, and have always been, the area's most important institutions. The oldest church in the district, Mount Helm Baptist Church, was first constructed on land donated by one of the early estate owners, the Helm family.²⁵ The congregation named their new church, Mt. Helm, in appreciation of the Helm family's donation.²⁶ Mt. Helm Baptist Church was constructed in 1868 and is the oldest African-American congregation in Jackson.²⁷ The church's first congregants were formerly enslaved congregants at Jackson's First Baptist Church which was founded in 1835. Mount Helm also claims 1835 as its founding date. A total of six later churches in the Jackson area branched out of Mount Helm Baptist including two in the Farish District.²⁸ The area's seven traditional church congregations have kept the district from disappearing altogether. Churches within the district include, Mt. Helm Baptist, Farish Street Baptist, Church of Christ (Holiness) USA, Central United Methodist, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, Pentecostal Temple, and Blaire Street AME Zion Church. Catholics and Episcopalians worshipped in locations outside the District.

²⁵ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street The Sugar Hill of Jackson Mississippi*, History Press, Charleston 2013, 21.

²⁶ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street*, 21.

²⁷ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street*, 21.

²⁸ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street*, 21.

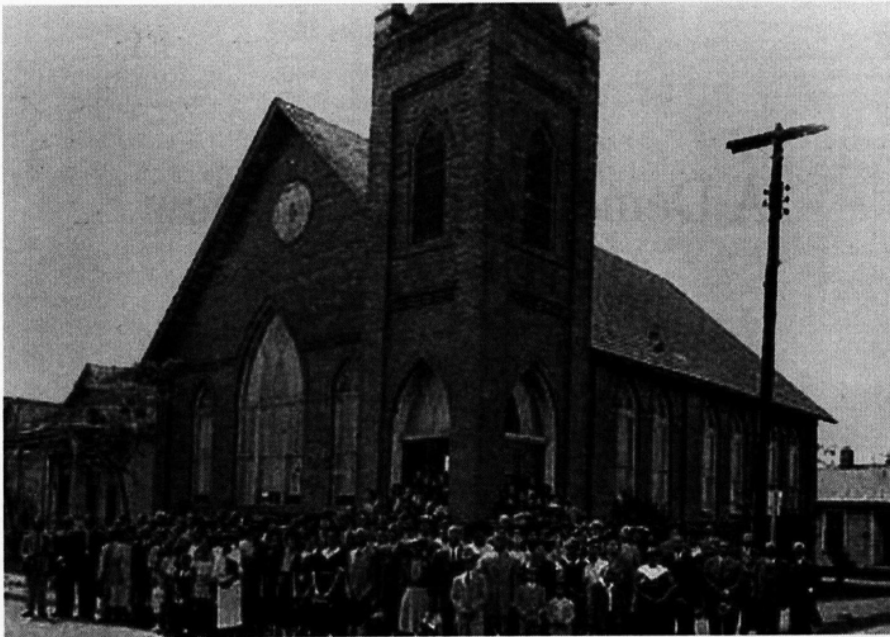


Mount Helm Baptist Church at the corner of Church and Grayson (now Lamar). Photo by Ben Bradley.

The photo above is an image of the original Mount Helm Baptist Church. Founded in 1868, it is considered the mother church of the African-American Christian community in Jackson, Mississippi. This structure appears to be a simple one room, frame construction with clapboard siding. Photo from Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street*



The photograph above is an image of the current Mount Helm Baptist Church which was constructed in 1963.



Farish Street Baptist Church.

This older version of the Farish Street Baptist Church appears have been a very substantial masonry structure done in the gothic style. Photo from Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street*



The image above is of the current Farish Street Baptist Church. It is a fine example of midcentury modern architecture.

The Farish Street Baptist Church at 619 North Farish was founded in 1893 by former Mount Helm Baptist Church congregants who left over a disagreement surrounding Mount Helm's financial state.²⁹ It became a more progressive alternative to the conservative, Mount Helm Baptist Church. During the 1960s Farish Street Baptist was an important meeting place for Civil Rights groups and leaders.



Like most of the Farish District church building, Central United Methodist was built in the 1960s and is of the midcentury modern style

²⁹ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street The Sugar Hill of Jackson Mississippi*, History Press, Charleston 2013, 21.



Central United Methodist Church was founded in 1889. Located on Farish Street and connected to one of the nation's largest denominations, Central United has played an important role in the City of Jackson's history. In the 1920s the church's book club hosted an annual race relations day.³⁰ This was a formal event which was attended by both black and white citizens of Jackson.³¹ Starting in the early 1950s, Central United Methodist hosted annual meetings of the Mississippi Negro Democrats Association.³² During the Freedom Summer of 1964, classes were held in this church as well as the the Farish Street Baptist and the Mount Zion A.M.E.

The current church at 1106 North Blair Street was built in 1960. Greater Blair Street,

³⁰ Mabel Pittman, Alferdteen Harrison, *The Farish Street Historic District: Memories, Perceptions, and Developmental Alternatives (A Selection of Essays and Statements)* Mississippi Council for the Humanities 1984, 4.

³¹ Mabel, Pittman, Alferdteen Harrison, *Cultural Biography of Farish Street*, 1984, 4.

³² Mabel, Pittman, Alferdteen Harrison, *Cultural Biography of Farish Street*, 1983, 4.

A.M.E. Zion supported the 1962 and 1963 boycott of Jackson merchants. When Medgar Evers was assassinated in 1963 A.M.E.'s Rev. Richmond, along with other religious leaders in the Farish District, held a march on downtown Jackson.³³



The Pentecostal Temple, circa, 1935 is the only church building old enough to be considered contributing to the National Register Historic District. The Temple was also used as a home base for freedom riders and local civil rights activists. On June 14, 1965 a group of protesters left the Pentecostal Temple and marched to the State Capitol to protest the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's absence within the State Legislative body.³⁴

³³ *Jackson, Civil Rights Movement Driving Tours*, Jackson Convention and Visitor Bureau, 16.

³⁴ *Jackson, Civil Rights Movement Driving Tour*, 16.

Culture and History

During the first half of the twentieth century a small group of African-American businessmen and women began to form a middle and upper class within the Farish District. These doctors, lawyers and entrepreneurs moved to Jackson from all over the state. In 1908 half of the black households in Jackson were also homeowners.³⁵ By 1910, Farish Street which was the district's business district, was thriving. The majority of the commercial and office buildings in the district were also black owned and constructed by black craftsman.³⁶ Jobs in Jackson for African Americans included everything from domestic work, railroad jobs, and factory work to the hospitality and entertainment industry, but most notably in the Farish District, blacks had jobs in banking, medicine, law, and private business. The Farish District had two accomplished contractors, Robert Roads Jr. and George Thomas, who together were responsible for building many of the district's finer Craftsman bungalows and colonial revival houses.³⁷ Besides having a shopping and entertainment establishments, Farish Street offered law firms, banks, funeral homes and insurance companies, pharmacies and medical clinics .³⁸ The busy street also

³⁵ Alferdteen Harrison, *The Farish Street Historic District: Memories, Perceptions, and Developmental Alternatives (A Selection of Essays and Statements)* Mississippi Council for the Humanities 1984,1,

³⁶ Alferdteen Harrison, *The Farish Street Historic District: Memories, Perceptions, and Developmental Alternatives (A Selection of Essays and Statements)* Mississippi Council for the Humanities 1984, 6.

³⁷ Adel Cramer, Farish Street Historic District Amended Area, National Register Historic District Nomination Form, 1980,

<http://www.apps.mdah.ms.gov/Public/district.aspx?view=facts&id=25>

³⁸ Alferdteen Harrison, MCH forums 1982-1983, 6.

included essential services such as butcher shops, bakeries and laundromats. Prior to 1917 Farish Street boasted two black owned banks.³⁹ It should be noted that during this time African Americans in many places in Mississippi, elsewhere in South, and in the rest of the country, were being persecuted, often violently, for even thinking of improving their plight or challenging oppression. The fact that Farish Street, in the center of the state capital of Mississippi, provided a relatively safe space, however small, for black families to prosper, is remarkable.

A hospital was established on Farish Street in 1900 and was run by the Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association.⁴⁰ The first woman to be licensed doctor in the state of Mississippi, Dr. Lucille Miller, practiced at this hospital.⁴¹ Later on in the century, Jackson had two hospitals that served the African-American community, Charity Hospital, run by the larger Catholic, Saint Dominic's Hospital, and the R.H. Green Annex run by the Baptist Hospital.⁴² These segregated facilities did not employ black doctors, so in the late 1930s several black physicians set up a clinic on Farish Street.⁴³

For a brief moment the Farish District even had a college: Jackson College, now Jackson State University, originally shared a campus with Millsaps College and in 1902 moved to Farish

³⁹ Jaeger Company, *From Frontier Capitol to Modern City, A History of Jackson's Built Environment 1865-1950*, 48.

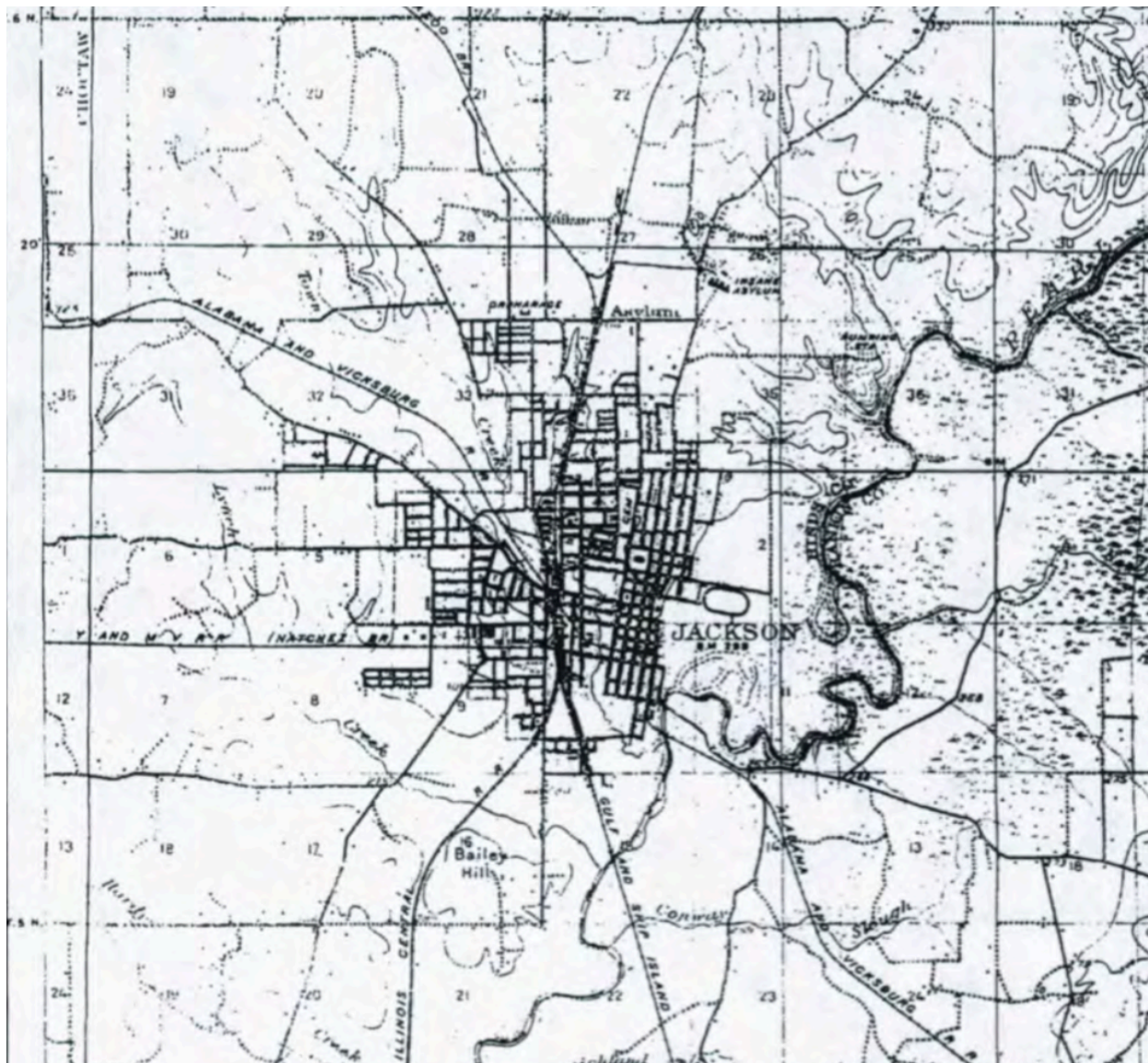
⁴⁰ Alferdteen Harrison, MCH forums 1982-1983, 6.

⁴¹ Pittman Mabel H. MCH forum, Cultural Biography of Farish Street, 1983, 4.

⁴² Pittman Mabel H. MCH forum, Cultural Biography of Farish Street, 1983, 4.

⁴³ Pittman Mabel H. MCH forum, Cultural Biography of Farish Street, 1983, 4.

Street, on the corner of Griffith and Farish. This arrangement did not last long, however, and the college moved again to its present location on Lynch Street, west of downtown.



1908 USGS map of Jackson. Jaeger Company, *From Frontier Capitol to Modern City, A History of Jackson's Built Environment 1865-1950*

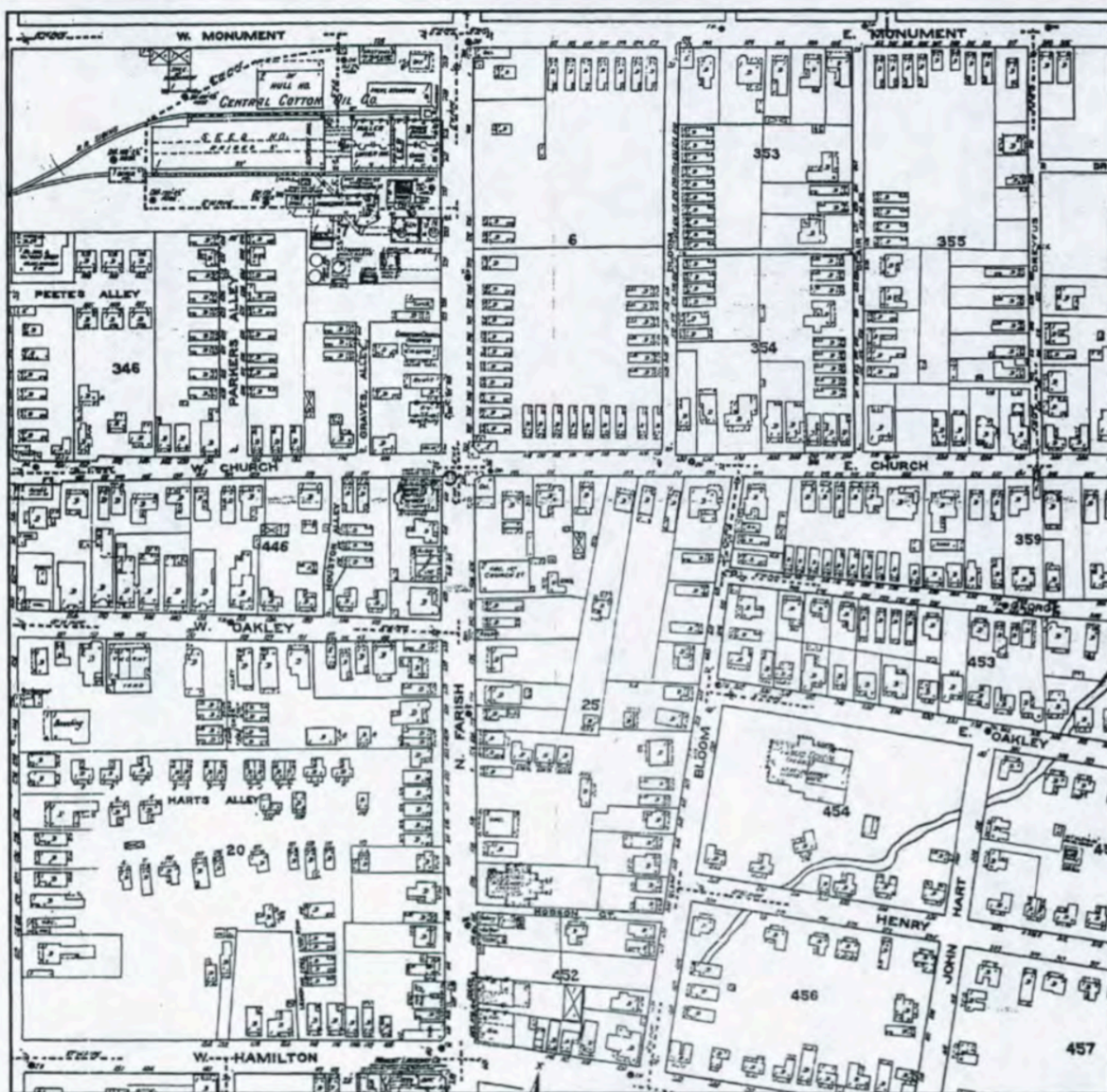
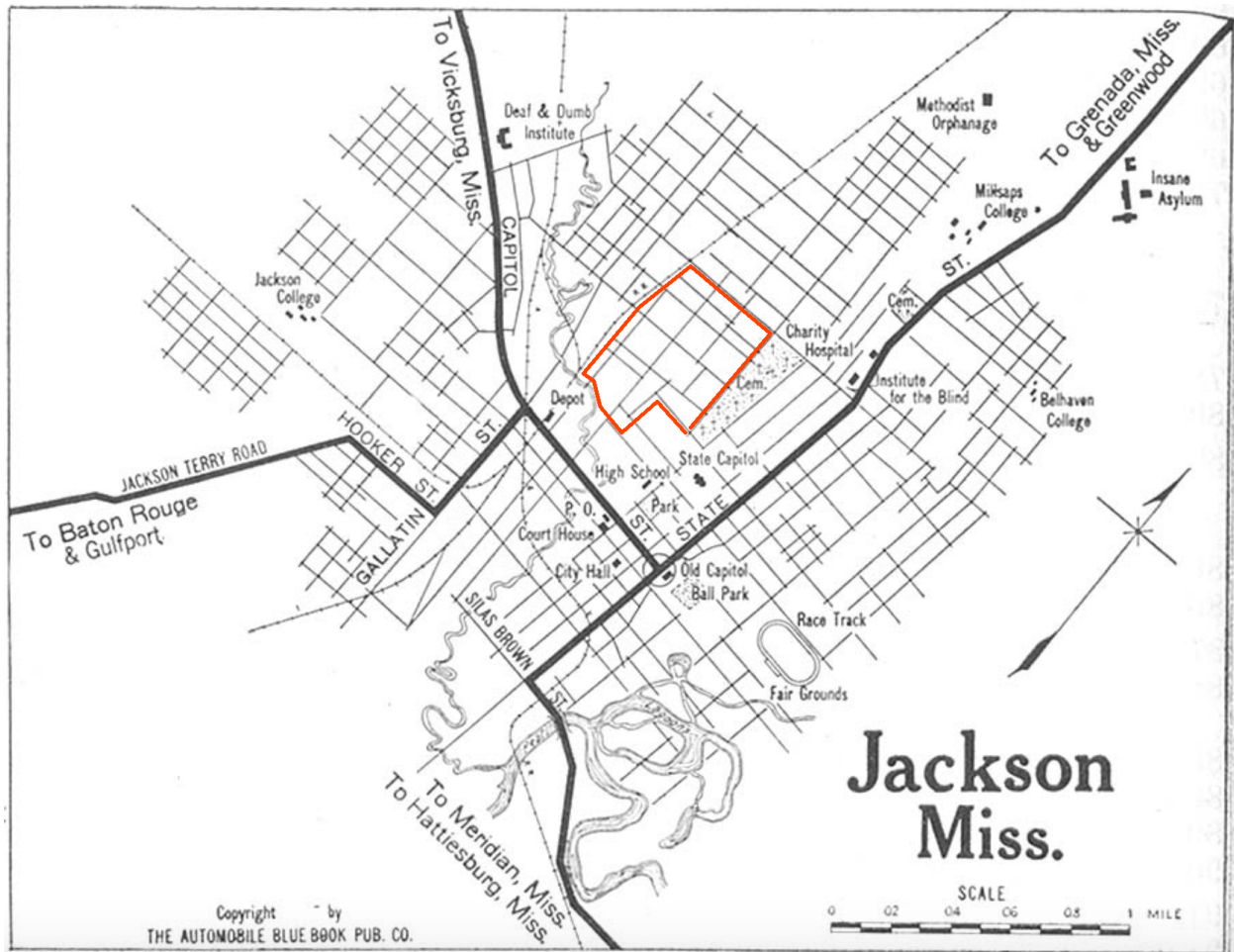
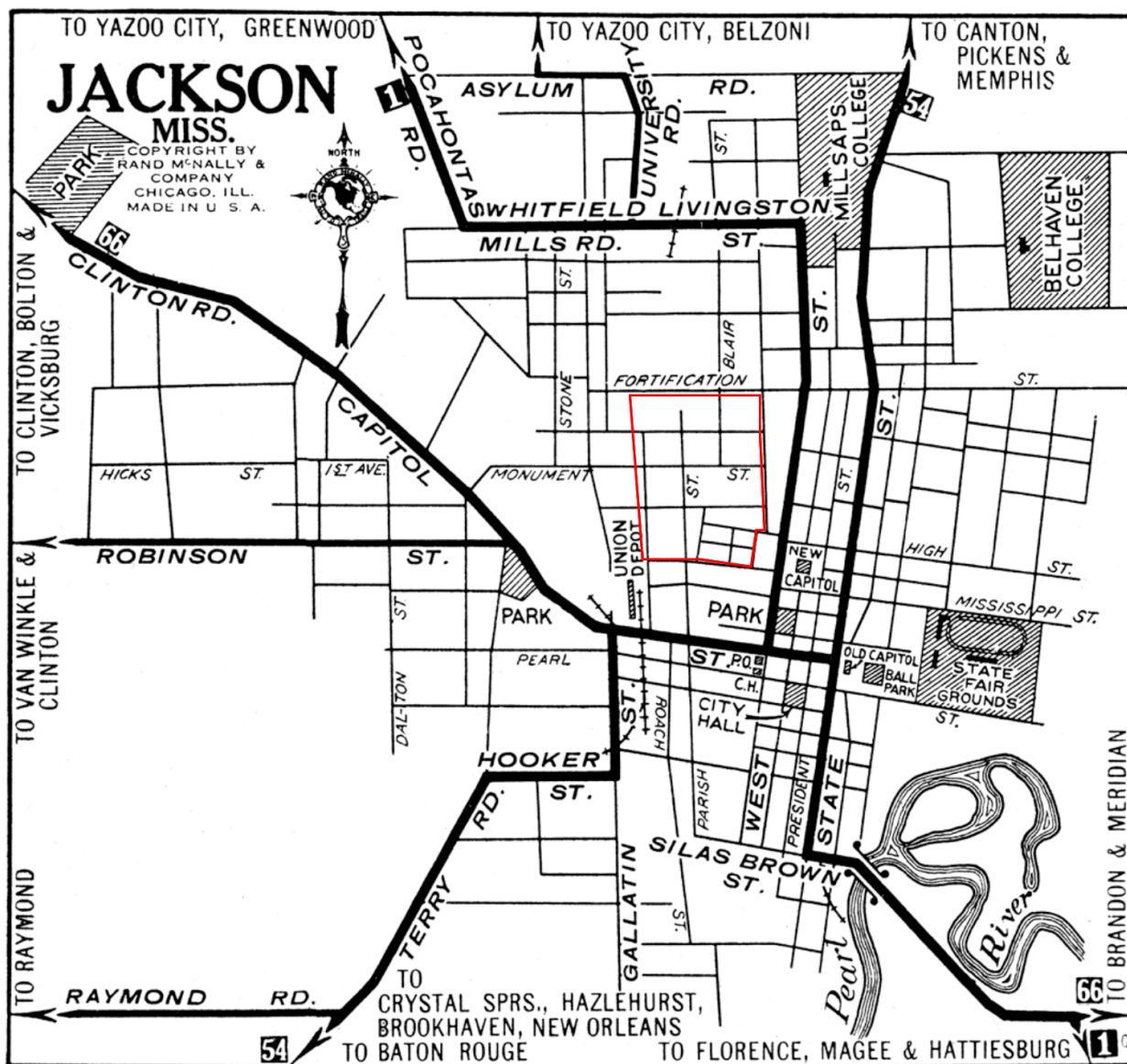


Figure: Farish Street residential development, 1918 Sanborn Map

This Sanborn Map gives us a view of density of the Farish District in the early twentieth century. It is a small snap shot of the district. the great number of shotgun houses jumps put to the viewer. Jaeger Company, *From Frontier Capitol to Modern City, A History of Jackson's Built Environment 1865-1950*



1919 map of Jackson, Farish District outlined in red. American Roads
<http://www.americanroads.us/citymaps.html>



1925 map of Jackson, Farish District outlined in red.
<https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/mississippi.html>

The wealthiest of African-American families in Jackson chose to live on Church Street, which lies within the Farish Street District. Why did these individuals, who had the means to get out of Mississippi, choose to stay in Jackson, while so many other black families were flocking to northern cities? The answer might lie in the fact that they were landowners; whether it was in-town real estate or farm land in the country, many of them felt a degree of security in the fact that they were property owners and, more importantly this created a sense of pride in place. One

successful woman who grew up in a wealthy Farish District family, Grace Britton Sweet, was quoted in the book, *Church Street*, where she emphasized to her children what her father told his children about the answer to breaking the cycle of oppression: “It is through an education, land ownership, voting and money.”⁴⁴

One of the wealthiest and well-known residents of the Farish community was Dr. Sidney Dellon Redmond. According to local historians Grace Sweet and Benjamin Bradley, Dr. Redmond was “arguably” the nation’s first black millionaire.⁴⁵ Born in 1871 to former slaves in the Ebenezer area of Holmes County, Mississippi,⁴⁶ Dr. Redmond attended undergraduate at Rust College, in Holly Springs, Mississippi where he graduated in 1893.⁴⁷ He studied at the Illinois Medical College, 1897.⁴⁸ Later Redmond attended Howard University.⁴⁹ He traded medicine for the law in 1910. Dr. Redmond was also very active in politics and became a national leader of the Black and Tan Republicans, (the old African-American branch of the Republican party). Besides being a doctor, lawyer and politician, Redmond owned property and a variety of different business including over 300 rental properties, a drug store at 120 North Farish Street and stock in three of Jackson’s banks.⁵⁰ Dr. Redmond married Ida Revels, daughter of the Reconstruction era United States Senator from Mississippi, Hiram Revels.⁵¹ He sent all

⁴⁴ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley, 49.

⁴⁵ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley, 30.

⁴⁶ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street The Sugar Hill of Jackson Mississippi*, History Press, Charleston 2013, 30.

⁴⁷ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley, 30.

⁴⁸ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley, 30.

⁴⁹ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley 30.

⁵⁰ Carroll Brinson, *Jackson/A special Kind of Place*, 338.

⁵¹ Grace Sweet & Benjamin, 30.

his children to college, including his oldest son, who went to Harvard Law School in the 1920s.⁵² The Redmond family resided on Church Street with a handful of other wealthy black Jacksonians.

One of Dr. Redmond's protégés was Percy Greene. Percy Greene served as editor from 1939 to 1977 of the *Jackson Advocate*, Mississippi's biggest black-owned newspaper. Greene marched to the beat of his own drum.⁵³ He worked tirelessly to register blacks to vote, frequently putting his life in danger. Greene, however, did not share the same progressive view that others of his era had. He adhered to an earlier generation's moderate philosophy on black rights and followed the doctrine of Booker T. Washington, which supported equality through gradual progress.⁵⁴ Needless to say, he did not always fall in line with the civil rights leaders and went so far as to criticize Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King Jr, and others.⁵⁵ Earlier in his life, Greene had been prevented from taking the bar exam, due to an altercation with a white man at the State Capitol and had therefore pursued journalism instead of the law. In general, Greene's publications are considered the product of the Jim Crow tradition of accommodation, which was born out of the reality of white violence.⁵⁶ Greene attended Jackson College, and traveled north

⁵² Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley

⁵³ Caryl A. Cooper, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, David R. Davies *The Press and Race*, University Press, Jackson, 2001.

⁵⁴ Caryl A. Cooper, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, David R. Davies *The Press and Race*, University Press, Jackson, 2001.

⁵⁵ Caryl A. Cooper, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, David R. Davies *The Press and Race*, University Press, Jackson, 2001, 60.

⁵⁶ Caryl A. Cooper, *Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate*, David R. Davies *The Press and Race*, University Press, Jackson, 2001, 60.

to Ohio, Illinois and Iowa.⁵⁷ Like many of Farish Street's early leaders, Greene served his country in the infantry during World War One, fighting in France, which also gave him the opportunity to live in England.⁵⁸

Another wealthy Farish Street family was the Perkins. Lewis Perkins also served his country in the Army during the First World War and was said to be a talented baseball player. Mr. Perkins took up the profession of plumbing and worked for Doctor Redmond. The Perkins family owned a 365-acre farm in Shubuta, Clarke County from which they received some additional income through share-cropping. Lewis Perkin's nephew, Doctor Albert Britton Jr., was a veteran of both World War Two and the Korean War. Dr. Britton Jr. received his undergraduate from Tougaloo College where he also played football. He eventually graduated from Howard University College of Medicine in 1947. These citizens accomplished remarkable feats and reached great success in the face of great adversity. The memory of their accomplishments must be preserved despite Farish District's physical material deterioration.

One former Farish Street resident, Benjamin Bradley, recalled his boyhood in the district.⁵⁹ Bradley went to the Farish Street's Smith Robertson School, his first job was at the Alamo Theater where he was a "popcorn boy." According to Benjamin Bradley, a Jewish man

⁵⁷ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street The Sugar Hill of Jackson Mississippi*, History Press, Charleston 2013,

⁵⁸ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street The Sugar Hill of Jackson Mississippi*, History Press, Charleston 2013,

⁵⁹ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley *Church Street The Sugar Hill of Jackson Mississippi*, History Press, Charleston 2013, 117.

named Arthur Lamon owned The Alamo at that time.⁶⁰ Bradley later worked in a Syrian-owned grocery store on Farish Street.⁶¹ Bradley's history confirms the picture painted for us by the poet Margret Walker, who presented a picture in her book *Farish Street* of a diverse neighborhood. This depiction contradicts our stereotypes of life in small cities in the Jim-Crow South and indicates that Jackson had a much more urban culture than one would assume. In her poem she mentions "a Syrian butcher, a Greek grocer, a Chinese laundryman, a brown Indian man".⁶²

Bradley also recalled that during the early twentieth century there were no public parks open for black people in Jackson Mississippi. Children played in the alleys and streets. One of the wealthy women on Church Street, Miss Dorothy Hall, cleared a field behind her house so all the boys could play ball. The lack of parks created another void for Farish Street to fill men entertained themselves bowling and playing pool as well as board games in the pool halls and juke joints up and down Farish Street.⁶³

At its peak, people traveled from all around central Mississippi to shop, do business, and have a good time. On Saturdays especially, people from the country would come to town to sell produce, and enjoy BBQ while they listened to live street music.⁶⁴ According to Dr. Kermit W. Holly, a professor of music at Jackson State University who grew up in the neighborhood, the

⁶⁰ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley, 117.

⁶¹ Grace Sweet & Benjamin Bradley pg, 117.

⁶² Margaret Walker, *This is My Century New and Collected Poems* The University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1986

⁶³ Aurelia Norris Young, *Memories, Emotions & Images from the Farish Street Historic, Smith Robertson Festival*, April 10, 1983, 5.

⁶⁴ Pittman Mabel H. MCH forum, *Cultural Biography of Farish Street*, 1983, 4.

sound of the blues could be heard wailing on the streets every Friday and Saturday evening.⁶⁵

Vendors sold catfish, which they fried in large black kettles over open fires. Hot tamales, a popular Mississippi staple, were also sold on the street.⁶⁶ Prohibition did not end in Mississippi until 1966 so moonshine and other alcohol would have been discreetly sold and consumed.

Blues

Starting in 1868 with Mt. Helm, the church has been the bedrock of the Farish Street community, but ironically this same community became known as a blues hot spot and, like the church, the blues is still hanging on. These two old nemeses, the church and the blues, share deep roots in history, most importantly gospel, but historically church-goers looked down on the “Devil's Music.” In the mid-twentieth century, outside of Memphis, Tennessee, Jackson was the hot spot for blues musicians to pass through on their way to fame. Farish Street attracted blues singers from the southern half of the Delta and the adjoining hill country. Guitar pickers, singers, piano players, harmonica blowers and so on came to Farish Street, from neighboring towns like Yazoo City, Vicksburg, Canton, Bentonia, Brandon, and Brookhaven, while Memphis was fed musicians from by places like Clarksdale and Como.

In general, musicians in that era did as they do today, traveled around. Farish Street was one of the traveling musician's biggest stops. Big bands would often use Jackson as a halfway point between New Orleans and Memphis, and Farish street was the only area offering adequate accommodation for black people.⁶⁷ Jackson has been given the nickname, the crossroads of the

⁶⁵ Holly Kermit W. Reflections of a Historical Street. pg.12

⁶⁶ Pittman Mabel H. MCH forum, Cultural Biography of Farish Street, 1983, 4.

⁶⁷ Pittman Mabel H. MCH forum, Cultural Biography of Farish Street, 1983, 4.

south. This nickname, perhaps originating in the 1850s when the Meridian to Vicksburg Railroad and the Memphis to New Orleans line intersected in Jackson. Much later on, United States highways 51 and 80 were constructed and intersected in Jackson. This central location made Jackson an ideal stopping place for traveling musicians.

Duke Ellington, Fats Waller and Ray Charles and their bands frequently made the stop in Jackson.⁶⁸ Other legends that appeared in the bars and cafes along Farish Street included Robert Johnson, Sonny Boy Williams, Elmore James, Louis Armstrong, and BB King.⁶⁹ The most popular venue on Farish Street for the big name jazz musicians was the Crystal Palace which frequently hosted greats like Count Basie and Duke Ellington.⁷⁰

According to a paper written in the 1980s by Joe Goree, a professor of music at Jackson State University, the national music scene would frequently pass through Jackson and pick up talented musicians during their stops. Local musicians would get an opportunity to play with the stars, and if they did well, would find themselves headed to Chicago or New Orleans with the band.⁷¹ This practice became known as “setting in.”⁷²

Local musicians who made it big began their career on Farish Street. The names of many of the earlier artists have been forgotten or are only known to the most studied blues and jazz

⁶⁸Pittman Mabel H. MCH forum, Cultural Biography of Farish Street, 1983 pg. 4

⁶⁹ Goree Joe, *Music and Musicians in the Farish Street District During the early 1900s*, MCH forum 1983, 14.

⁷⁰ Goree Joe, *Music and Musicians in the Farish Street District During the early 1900s*, 14.

⁷¹ Goree Joe, *Music and Musicians in the Farish Street District During the early 1900s*, 14.

⁷² Goree Joe, *Music and Musicians in the Farish Street District During the early 1900s*, 14.

historians. Drummer Joe White played for the Georgia Minstrels.⁷³ The Reverend Rubin Lacy, who recorded Mississippi Jail House Groan in 1928, grew up in the Farish Street District.⁷⁴ Other local blues artists who frequently played on Farish Street include John Henry “Bubba” Brown, Tommy Johnson, Cary Lee Simmons, Sam Jones, George Harris, Mark Blunt and Walter Hood. Little Brother Montgomery, a famous pre Second World War piano player from Kentwood, Louisiana, recorded the Farish Street Blues in 1936. One of the most famous blues songs that mentions Farish Street is called Doodleville Blues. In the song, Cary Lee Simmons compares girls from Farish Street to his neighborhood of Doodleville, also in the Jackson area. The song is an entertaining-crosstown-rivalry-banter.

The story of Farish Street is primarily, but not strictly, an African-American one. In the 1950s, Mrs. Lillian McMurry, a twenty-eight-year-old white woman of humble Mississippi Baptist upbringing who understood the music industry, decided to start recording local musicians. She opened up her recording studio on Farish where her husband sold furniture.⁷⁵ Although Farish Street and Mississippi was mostly known for the blues, Lillian McMurry's business, Trumpet Records, was open to anyone with talent; black or white; country, rock'n roll, blues, and gospel were all welcome for recording. Some big blues names in the industry recorded with Trumpet Records, including Tiny Kennedy, Elmore James, and Sonny Boy Williams.⁷⁶

⁷³ Goree Joe, *Music and Musicians in the Farish Street District During the early 1900s*, 14.

⁷⁴ Goree Joe, *Music and Musicians in the Farish Street District During the early 1900s*, 14.

⁷⁵ Ryan W. Marc, *Trumpet Records, Diamonds On Farish Street*. University Press of Mississippi, Jackson 2004, 6.

⁷⁶ Ryan W. Marc, *Trumpet Records*, 24, 28.

Jackson, Mississippi was the crossroads of southern culture on the move literally and figuratively. The author of *Trumpet Records*, Mark Ryan described the post Second World War atmosphere in Jackson: “Transitions from rural to urban, agrarian to industrial, poor to rich, powerless to powerful and back again, gave a constantly roiling character to the times”.⁷⁷

Civil Rights and Urban Decline

Trumpet Records and the story of Lillian McMurry and the musicians she worked with is but a shining star of positivity in a world of negativity and racism. Notably; according to Lillian McMurry’s daughter, she never told her white female peers in the local Jackson women’s clubs about her career as a music recording artist.⁷⁸ She most likely feared being shunned for working with black men. Oppression with out consequences could not last forever and things came to a boiling point in Jackson. Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers, the NAACP Field Secretary of Mississippi, met frequently with church leaders and others community organizers in the Farish Street area. On May 31 of 1963 around six hundred high school students came together at the Farish Street Baptist Church⁷⁹. Medgar Evers and John Salter spoke to the young crowd.⁸⁰ The pastor of Farish Street Baptist, Reverend S. Leon Whitney, prepared the teenagers for nonviolent protest by making sure none of them were carrying anything that could be perceived as a weapon.⁸¹ The young activists were then handed little American flags and sent marching south

⁷⁷ Ryan W. Marc, *Trumpet Records*, 7.

⁷⁸ Trumpet Records, <https://vimeo.com/20479626>

⁷⁹ Williams, *Medgar Evers*, 259.

⁸⁰ Williams, *Medgar Evers*, 259.

⁸¹ Williams, *Medgar Evers*, 259.

towards Capitol Street.⁸² Before they reached Capitol Street, the protesting students were attacked by police and imprisoned in the stockyards at the State Fair Grounds.⁸³ This event reinforced civil rights leaders fear's that they could not win in Jackson without casualties. Later that summer on June ,12 1963 Evers was slain by an assassin out side his home in Jackson. After her husband's death Myrlie Evers recalled the scene on Farish Street, saying that the street was filled with mourning young people. The churches in the Farish District continued to be the rallying points for non violent protests.⁸⁴

I interviewed Dorothy Moore, a famous blues singer best known for her song "Misty Blue." Ms. Moore is currently on the board of the Alamo Theater where she started her music career as a twelve-year-old child. Dorothy Moore was born and raised in the Fairish District. She keeps the dream of a revitalized Farish Street alive and is one of the few residents who can bridge the gap between the past and present on Farish Street. During our interview I asked Ms. Dorothy Moore what the Farish Street area was like during the civil rights era. She said that she was too young to be involved but she does remember freedom-riders staying at her grandmother's house where she also lived. Her grandmother would make tea cakes and feed the guests at their home on Monument Street. Community meetings were sometimes held in her grandmother's living room. I asked Mrs. Moore "was that not dangerous?" and she replied that

⁸² Williams, *Medgar Evers*, 259.

⁸³ Williams, *Medgar Evers*, 259.

⁸⁴ Williams, *Medgar Evers*, 260.

“yes, it was very dangerous.” Ms. Moore remembers being told that they had to stop riding the bus because it was segregated and the black community had decided to boycott the city bus system, but there were several black owned taxi stands on Farish Street that they could use as an alternate mode of transportation.

By the early 1960s many of the Farish Street District’s wealthier families had moved away and the area became less affluent. Although the area began to experience some problems associated with all low-income neighborhoods, the District remained a thriving center of commerce and life until business finally integrated in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Although many historians attribute the decline of retail business on Farish Street to the end of segregation in the late 1960s and 1970s. In Dorothy Moore’s opinion, the decline in business was more due to the development of shopping malls in the suburbs. One could argue that desegregation and suburbanization are directly linked. In other words, shopping mall development in the suburbs, was a phenomenon caused white flight.

Although Farish Street and its residential neighborhoods spiraled into a decline in the 1970s, enough businesses and residents had hung on so that in 1982 Dr. Alferdteen Harrison, a renowned professor of history at Jackson State University, quoted Jackson’s famous author Eudora Welty’s theory of a sense of place in a paper she presented in a discussion on the Farish Street District:⁸⁵

Place absorbs our earliest notice and attention, it bestows on us our original awareness; and our critical power springs up from the study of it, and growth of experience inside it.

⁸⁵ Alferdteen Harrison, MCH forums 1982-1983,1.

It perseveres in bringing us back to earth when we fly too high. It never really stops informing us.⁸⁶

Dr. Alferdteen Harrison went on to say that many cities had lost their historically black neighborhoods to urban renewal but that Jackson, Mississippi still has its old African-American community intact.⁸⁷ Dr. Harrison wrote that statement in 1982. Sadly, today much of the fabric of the community she was referring to in 1982 has been lost.⁸⁸ This phenomenon is a result of black citizens leaving the area for newer, safer neighborhoods with better schools in the suburbs while at the same time there was a sharp increase in drug use, nation-wide, the consequences of which for the Farish District spelled disaster.

⁸⁶ Alferdteen Harrison, MCH forums 1982-1983, 1.

⁸⁷ Alferdteen Harrison, MCH forums 1982-1983, 1.

⁸⁸ Alferdteen Harrison, MCH forums 1982-1983, 1.

CHAPTER III.

1980 NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FORM

The National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination form for the Farish Street District, dated received February 13, 1980, gives a wonderful snap shot of the district at a point when it was crime ridden and economically depressed but physically very much intact. Its boundaries were described as roughly bounded by Amite, Mill, Fortification and Lamar Streets. It is classified as an occupied district with both public and private property including: commercial, entertainment, government, industrial, private residence, religious, transportation and other uses. In section 7, the description section of the nomination, the author Adele Cramer describes the district as being composed of 695-700 buildings within 125 acres of narrow streets, laid out in a grid pattern.⁸⁹ This number is tricky because the original National Register Nomination received February 13, 1980 excluded several blocks mostly in the southeast portion of the district. These blocks were added in an amendment to the National Register later in June of 1980.⁹⁰ It is unclear why the blocks were initially left out. The reason for including the additional blocks was that many of the houses in the amended area were constructed by local black contractors Robert Rhodes Jr. and George Thomas.⁹¹ The amended area clearly was a part

⁸⁹ Adel Cramer, National Register Nomination Form, 1980, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, mdah.ms.gov

⁹⁰ Adel Cramer, Farish Street Amended, National Register Nomination Form, mdah.ms.gov

⁹¹ Adel Cramer, Farish Street Amended, National Register Nomination Form, mdah.ms.gov

of the original Farish neighborhood. The inclusion of the amended area brought in an additional 125 buildings, bringing the total number of building in the Farish District in 1980, to 823.⁹² With the original district and the amended area together, the number of contributing buildings that were extant at the time of the 1979 survey come out to 724. This also means that the Farish District is larger than 125 acres. I estimate that the amended area added 20 acers to the Historic District.

The surveyor described Farish Street and Mill Street, the district's main north-south conduits, as being primarily commercial.⁹³ The rest of the streets were described as being predominately residential with a few exceptions of several small grocery stores scattered throughout the neighborhood; these have long since closed.⁹⁴ Also listed is a soybean mill, which also has been described as a cottonseed mill, an ice cream factory, and food storage warehouse, all of which are no longer functioning.⁹⁵ The commercial buildings are described as low, usually one and rarely more than two story, mostly brick buildings.⁹⁶ Cramer also describes the residential buildings as a variety of vernacular building types made of frame construction, the

⁹² Adel Cramer, Farish Street Amended, National Register Nomination Form, mdah.ms.gov

⁹³ Adel Cramer, National Register Nomination Form, 1980, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, mdah.ms.gov

⁹⁴ Adel Cramer, National Register Nomination Form, mdah.ms.gov

⁹⁵ Adel Cramer, National Register Nomination Form, mdah.ms.gov

⁹⁶ Adel Cramer, National Register Nomination Form, mdah.ms.gov

majority of which were constructed in the early twentieth century. Cramer describes two mid nineteenth century buildings which could possibly have been pre-Civil War. These buildings were believed to have been plantation buildings of some sort, whether they were originally slave quarters or some other form of out-building is unclear. The addresses for these possible antebellum structures were provided in the National Register Nomination as 154 Monument and 208 Cohea. The nomination form lists several late nineteenth century creole cottages as well as a handful late 19th century L plan, Queen Ann houses, some of the later of which are extant. Noted for having one of the largest collections of shotgun houses, the n form describes rows of turn of the century shotgun cottages as common, as well as many different variations of bungalow style houses.⁹⁷ The survey describes the over all condition of the district as fair.

In 1957 a four-lane road was constructed through the heart of the Farish District.⁹⁸ As the surveyor, Adele Cramer, pointed out in the nomination form, the addition of this four-lane road interrupted the continuity of the grid pattern and divided the neighborhood.⁹⁹ Today, although it is not heavily trafficked, this four -lane road still breaks up the continuity of the neighborhood. The road was constructed to connect High Street in downtown Jackson with Monument Street in west Jackson. It provided automobiles with a faster way across town, avoiding congested neighborhoods. One of the most important streets that was severed by this action was Church Street. Other non-compatible additions that the 1980 National Register form point to are: poorly

⁹⁷ Adel Cramer, National Register Nomination Form, 2.

⁹⁸ Adel Cramer, Adel, National Register Nomination Form, 2.

⁹⁹ Adel Cramer, Adel, National Register Nomination Form, 2.

constructed apartment buildings from the 1940s and 1950s; as well as clapboard siding being replaced by asbestos shingles; and original columns and posts being replaced by metal pipe.¹⁰⁰

The significance section/section 8 of the National Register nomination, describes the Farish District as being significant in the area of architecture, education and Black History. The survey form listed the years between 1860 and 1940 as the period of significance. The district was noted for being the largest economically independent black neighborhood in the state of Mississippi.¹⁰¹ At the time the area was surveyed, Cramer considered the district an extant collection of vernacular buildings styles spanning the era between the the Civil War and the Second World War. The majority of buildings, however, were constructed between 1890 and 1930.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Adel Cramer, Adel, National Register Nomination Form, 2.

¹⁰¹ Cramer, Adel, National Register Nomination Form, 3.

¹⁰² Cramer, Adel, National Register Nomination Form, 3.



It's hard to tell because of shade and vegetation but the photo above is of an early center hall, double parlor house located at 208 E. Cohea Street. This house may have been a pre Civil War structure associated with Cohea Plantation. Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.



The house above is another example of the district's early houses; this one is a creole cottage. Creole style cottages could also be described as a double pen style house; they are always raised

above the ground and do not have center hallways but instead have two front rooms each with its own front door opening onto a porch.

Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.



147, 145 w. Davis Street are two more examples of one of the Farish District's early Creole style cottages.

Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.



925 Lamar. This house retains Greek Revival style porch posts, shallow hip roof, and 6 over 6 window sash, all features characteristic of vernacular dwellings dating from around 1850.

Although the nomination form does not list 925 Lamar as an antebellum structure, the caption below the photo of this house indicates that it could be an antebellum structure, however its material very well might have been recycled from an older building. Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.

CHURCH STREET



The Redmond home in decline.

This photo of the Redmond house does not do it justice. It was described as a rambling colonial revival structure. The house which is no longer extant today but was even a year ago (2015). located at 229 E. Church Street. The house was described as an eclectic one and half story, three by six bay, irregular plan house with hip-roofed main block, gable ell on the front elevation and gabled dormers on three sides. Photo from Grace Sweet & Bradley Benjamin, *Church Street*, 36.



The creole cottage above, 154 Monument Street, was one of the district's older structures. The lintels on the posts of this cottage hint at Greek Revival, giving the structure the possibility of being antebellum. Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.



948 Blair, Queen Anne style, ca. 1890. This house-type, with L-plan and projecting bay, is fast disappearing in Jackson. Its decorated gable and porch with bracketed posts and turned valence are outstanding.

The late nineteenth century Queen Ann cottage was once found though out the neighborhood. Today there are just a couple left in Farish District. This house is no longer extant. Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.



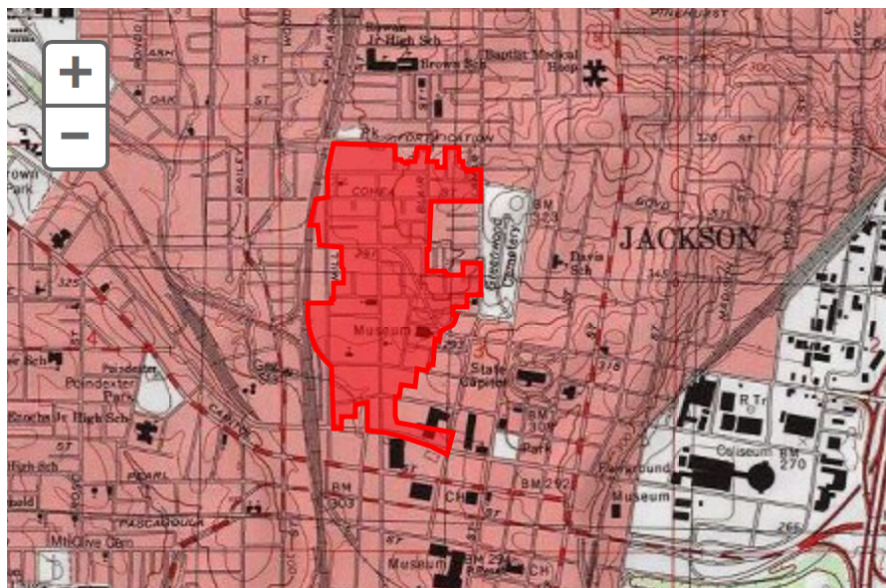
This 1912 vernacular version of a colonial revival house was known as the Greystone Hotel in the 1930s and 1940s. It was one of only three hotels which catered to African Americans.¹⁰³ The nation's most legendary musicians spent the night here.¹⁰⁴ It is the only known colonial revival building constructed by local African American contractor George Thomas.¹⁰⁵ This house is individually listed on the National Register.¹⁰⁶ Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.

¹⁰³ Sweet Grace & Bradley Benjamin, Church Street, pg. 67

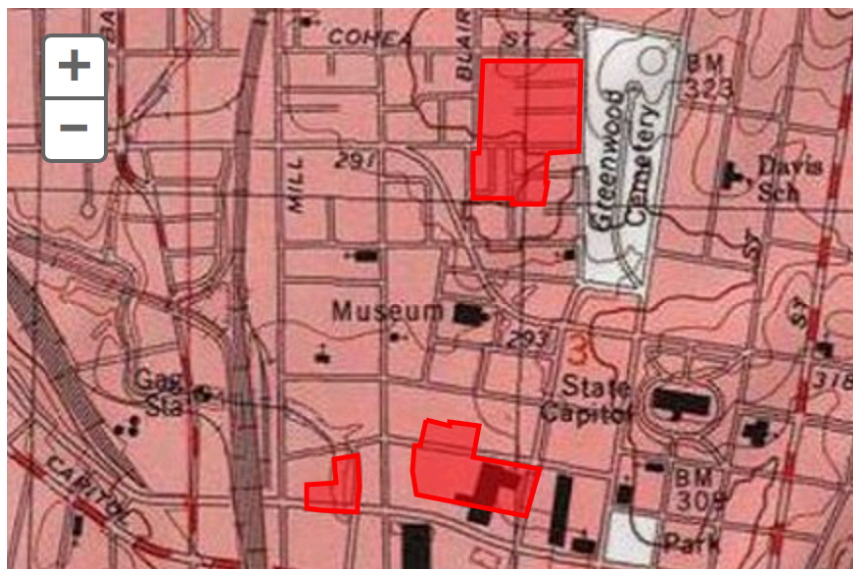
¹⁰⁴ Sweet Grace & Bradley Benjamin, Church Street, pg. 67

¹⁰⁵ MDAH Historic Recourses Inventory

¹⁰⁶ MDAH Historic Recourses Inventory



This map above from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History shows the pre-amendment district



The map above from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History shows the amended area.



338 Monument, ca. 1925, multi-family dwelling which employs elements of the Bungalow style: exposed rafter-tails and tapering porch posts, in a two-story form.

Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.



This may be the home of local contractor Robert Rhodes Jr. at 938 Blair Street. Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.



The houses in the photo above are no longer extant. The brick building in the back ground is the Crystal Palace. Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.

CHAPTER IV.

FARISH STREET DISTRICT, 1980-2016

As early as 1980 there existed a Farish Street Historic District Revitalization Association. According to the Clarion Ledger, Farish Street had been “studied” in 1977, 1981, 1992 with nothing to show for it in 1993.¹⁰⁷ Besides the monumental accomplishment of the area being placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, very little seems to have happened in the 1980s. On October 9th 1993 The Clarion Ledger featured a small article regarding a study and proposed projects for the Farish Street District. An Alexandria, Virginia based consultant firm, Means, was paid \$50,000.00 to compile a study on the neighborhood.¹⁰⁸ This 1993 study called the Farish Street Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Project, was, according to Big Apple Inn owner, Geno Lee Jr. viewed as a positive step by the Farish Street community because the consultants made sure to get the local population's history and opinion.¹⁰⁹ Despite high praise for the Means study, it eventually suffered the same fate as the previous studies.

The Farish Street Task Force, which was created in September of 1992 delivered a summary of Recommendations to Mayor Kane Ditto on March 17, 1993. A *Clarion Ledger* article dated March 2, 1994 describes a city council meeting in which the primary topic was the Farish District. The article summarizes the meeting as a hopeful one but underneath the high

¹⁰⁷ Grace Simmons, *Clarion Ledger, Farish Street Consultants to share info*, Clarion Ledger October, 9, 1993.

¹⁰⁸ Grace Simmons, *Farish Street Consultants to share info*, Clarion Ledger, October, 9, 1993.

¹⁰⁹ Grace Simmons, *Farish Street Consultants to share info*, Clarion Ledger, October, 9, 1993.

expectations based on great ideas, there was also talk of parties not being able to work together.¹¹⁰ These are the same conversations surrounding the district today. The article also discusses the possibility of the National Register District becoming a local historic district. On April 12, 1994, a public hearing was held at the City Hall to consider the designation. Later on that year the Farish Street District became a local historic district.¹¹¹

Shotgun row restoration

The post 1980 History of Farish Street District is dominated by two massive failed projects, the shotgun row restoration project and a proposed entrainment district on Farish Street. Between 1997 and 1999, 35 shotgun houses were renovated.¹¹² Funding was provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, The National Equality Fund, Fannie Mae, and the City of Jackson.¹¹³ In 1997 under the leadership of Mayor Kane Ditto, a memorandum of understanding between the City of Jackson and the Jackson Redevelopment Authority (JRA) was formed with the goal of making Farish Street into an entertainment district. The City agreed to purchase 17 properties on Farish Street with a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The City, after purchasing these 17 properties transferred them to JRA.

¹¹⁰ Grace Simmons, , *Council Praises Farish Street Project*, Clarion Ledger, March 2, 1994.

¹¹¹ Grace Simmons, Clarion Ledger, *Council Praises Farish Street Project*, March 2, 1994.

¹¹² Bryant Kimberly, Northside Sun, September, 6, 2001.

¹¹³ Bryant Kimberly, Northside Sun, September, 6. 2001.



Above is photo of one of the restored shotgun rows circa 2000. MDAH



Above is a row of shotgun houses taken for the National Register Nomination. The district used to be famous for its sheer massive collections of shotguns but today there are hardly any remaining. Photo from MDAH Farish Street National Register File.

The shotgun row restoration project was initially successful. After the houses were restored however the focus immediately shifted elsewhere as is evident in a September 2001 newspaper clipping taken from the Jackson *Northside Sun*. The director of the Farish Street Historical District Foundation (FSHDF) described the Farish Street District restoration effort. He stated, “During this phase we are going to restore and celebrate craftsman bungalows, Queen

Anne bungalows, Creole cottages and a few more shotgun houses.”¹¹⁴ “We have barely done 10 percent and hopefully with our efforts, other private interests will come in and help make improvements in the district,”¹¹⁵ This “phase” of restoration mentioned above never occurred. Back then the director of the Mississippi Heritage Trust indicated that many of the houses due to neglect, were too far gone to be saved but that they would and could direct their energy to save what could be saved and ensure that things did not get any worse.¹¹⁶ Things got a lot worse.

According to an article in the North Side Sun, there were still 600 structures in the District in 2001, only give or take, 150 less than reported in the 1980 National Register. That same year in 2001, the executive director of the Mississippi Heritage Trust indicated that there was a lot of interest in the district but she pointed out, one of their major obstacles was the district's large size and that many of the houses were suffering from demolition by neglect.¹¹⁷

On July 19th 2004, the Farish District hit the front page of the Clarion Ledger, the state's largest Newspaper. They used a catchy headline and a depressing quote at the beginning of the article. “Will ambitious Farish Street project be left singing the blues? And “this area is just pitiful!”¹¹⁸ The quote was from a long time resident of the district. In the first paragraph the writer paints a bleak picture of the state of affairs. “Once the shotgun houses were the promise of better housing surrounding Farish Street in Jackson, now the shacks look as they did before the renovations five years ago.”¹¹⁹ In other words all the work and money that had gone into

¹¹⁴ Bryant Kimberly, Northside Sun, September 6 2001.

¹¹⁵ Bryant Kimberly, Northside Sun, September 6 2001.

¹¹⁶ Bryant Kimberly, Northside Sun, September 6 2001.

¹¹⁷ Bryant Kimberly, Northside Sun, September 6 2001.

¹¹⁸ Laura Hipp, Clarion Ledger, *Will ambitious Farish Street project be left singing the blues?* 06,19, 2004. 01.

¹¹⁹ Laura Hipp. Clarion ledger, 01A.

renovating the shotgun houses had been erased as early as 2004. Today all of the renovated shotguns have been demolished. The Clarion Ledger pointed to failed momentum on the part of two non-profit organizations, the Farish Street Historic District Neighborhood Foundation and the Farish Street Community Coalition as a part of the problem¹²⁰. The nonprofit group, Farish Neighborhood Foundation had spent more than \$2 million. But when pressed on why the shotgun houses were abandoned, the foundation claimed, “they were a very limited partner.”¹²¹ In 2004, the renovated shotgun houses were property of the National Equality Fund, an original partner in the project.¹²² Another big problem for the shotgun house project was the lack of law enforcement. Residents and potential residents were scared away by drug dealers.¹²³ When pressed on the topic of the Farish Street district as a whole, Charles Dunn told the Clarion Ledger that the area’s problem was that current residents were too spaced apart and that there was a lack of community, as well as a desperate need for more law enforcement.¹²⁴ Jackson was and is a dangerous city. The Jackson police department’s strength was and is pushed to the limit; crime continues to be a problem in the District. How can one ask the Police Department to patrol areas

¹²⁰ Laura Hipp. Clarion ledger, 01A.

¹²¹ Laura Hipp. Clarion ledger, 10A.

¹²² Laura Hipp. Clarion ledger, 10A.

¹²³ Laura Hipp. Clarion ledger, 10A.

¹²⁴ Laura Hipp. Clarion ledger, 10A.

that have low population when they are needed in highly populated areas? How can you ask some one to pay rent in an area where they will not be safe?

Entertainment district

Around the time that the renovated shotgun rows fell into ruin, the city was beginning its investment and a planning phase of the future failed entertainment district. Apparently by 2004, the city had spent \$12 million on infrastructure renovations in the planned entertainment district.¹²⁵ In 2002 infrastructure improvements reached \$2.5 million in federal and city dollars. The money was spent on streetscapes and infrastructure improvement. The streetscape improvements actually happened things, however got complicated after that. Long before the Farish Street projects began the City of Jackson created the Jackson Redevelopment Authority (JRA). This group of mayor appointed officials positioned it-self as the purse holder of city projects. The City of Jackson had contracted Performa the company that had completed Beale Street in Memphis, to oversee the Farish Entrainment project but according to the JRA, by 2009 Performa had not held up its end of the bargain. JRA turned the project over to local developer named David Watkins. David Watkins a successful lawyer, turned successful developer and now professor at Jackson State University, is or was in many ways the preservation and investment hero of Jackson. He is a visionary of what Jackson could be and some would say a dreamer. His most successful projects are the King Edward Hotel and the Standard Life Building, two of Jackson's largest and most iconic twentieth century downtown buildings.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Laura Hipp. Clarion ledger, 01A.

¹²⁶ Tyler Cleveland, The Battle for Downtown, Part I: Watkins v. JRA, et al | Jackson Free Press | Jackson MS November 13 2013

In 2009, David Watkins agreed to get on board with the Farish Street Entertainment District Project. Mr. Watkins assumed the \$ 1.5 million debt of Performa. Watkins started a firm called the Farish Street Group (FSG).¹²⁷ In 2010 JRA granted the FSG a 45-year lease.¹²⁸ Watkin’s Farish Street Group included contractor Socrates Garrett, attorney Robert Gibbs, businessman Leroy Walker, Dr. Claude Brunson and former New Orleans Saints star, Deuce McAllister.¹²⁹ Architecture Firm, Dale Partner Architects was contracted to draw up plans.¹³⁰

Watkin’s Farish Street Group received \$5.4 million from the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA). The MDA money went towards infrastructure improvement.¹³¹ Some buildings began to be renovated and leases with business, such as the B.B. King Club began to be negotiated.¹³² In June of 2011, Watkins invested in \$4.67 million of his personal money.¹³³

In November of 2011 Farish Street Group asked the Jackson Redevelopment Authority (JRA) for an \$8 million bond.¹³⁴ A year later JRA entered a memorandum of understanding that it would loan the FSG \$10.25 million, to be repaid with profit of the proposed entertainment district.¹³⁵ JRA however never did issue the bonds, declaring in a lawsuit filed October 2013 that

¹²⁷ Tyler Cleveland, The Battle for Downtown, Part I: Watkins v. JRA, et al | Jackson Free Press | Jackson MS November 13 2013 pg. 2

¹²⁸ Mississippi Business Journal, *Farish Street Headed to Court* msbusiness.com 10/11/13

¹²⁹ Tyler Cleveland, _2.

¹³⁰ Tyler Cleveland, _2.

¹³¹ Tyler Cleveland, _2.

¹³² Tyler Cleveland, _2.

¹³³ Tyler Cleveland, _2.

¹³⁴ Tyler Cleveland, _3.

¹³⁵ Tyler Cleveland, _3.

Watkin's FSG had failed to meet deadlines, and therefore had defaulted on the contract.¹³⁶

Watkins claimed financing was hard to come by during the recent great recession.¹³⁷

R.L. Nave, former reporter for the Jackson Free Press, and current journalist with Mississippi Today, dubbed the most recent legal problems surrounding the Farish Street Entertainment District as the "circular firing squad of lawsuits between the Jackson Redevelopment Authority and David Watkins".

In June 2012, the Architecture firm, Dale Partners, requested a second inspection of the proposed future site of the B.B. King Club. The inspection found that the building had no foundation.¹³⁸ An earlier inspection by an engineer had approved the building.¹³⁹ The revelations that this building needed a foundation added \$1.5 million to the project.¹⁴⁰

In February 2013, Ellis Custom Construction and Dale Partners Architects, filed liens against David Watkins for failure to pay for finished work on the project.¹⁴¹ Mr. Watkins claimed the blame fell on the JRA and the JRA pointed the finger back at Mr. Watkins¹⁴²

JRA wanted Watkins removed from the project. Watkins agreed he would take a backseat and that he would sell the development project to a third party but that any new work must be done in conjunction with his Farish Street Group if the developers wished to take advantage of

¹³⁶ Tyler Cleveland,_3.

¹³⁷ Tyler Cleveland,_3.

¹³⁸ Tyler Cleveland,_3.

¹³⁹ Tyler Cleveland,_3.

¹⁴⁰ Tyler Cleveland,_3.

¹⁴¹ Tyler Cleveland,_3.

¹⁴² Tyler Cleveland,_3.

the historic tax credits he had procured.¹⁴³ In response and without notifying FSG, the JRA cancelled Mr. Watkin's lease on the Farish Street Project on September 25, 2013.¹⁴⁴ In 2013 Socrates Garrett, leveled allegations of securities fraud against Watkins for misusing money from Garrett's Company Retro Metro LLC.¹⁴⁵

In 2014, the Federal government demanded that their grant be repaid. The responsibility of repaying HUD fell on the shoulders of the City however in early 2015 JRA offered to pay the debt owed to HUD in order to prevent further project stalling it seems that the City eventually took JRA up on their offer because as of March 3, 2016 HUD lifted sanctions.

Other Obstacles

I spoke with former mayor Kane Ditto. Mr. Ditto mayor of Jackson, from July 1989 through July 1997. He was preceded by Harvey Johnson, Dale Danks was the previous mayor. In Ditto's opinion the Farish Street residential area never should have been declared a local Historic District. "Those shotgun houses were not suitable for residential habitation then, how can you tell someone they should continue living in a shotgun house, that to them represents poverty and oppression?" Mr. Ditto feels that The Farish Street entertainment district was also an ill-conceived idea because "Jackson doesn't have a demand for such a large entertainment area". City Councilman, Melvin Priester and others say the city should relinquish control of the property, Ditto agrees. Mr. Ditto also explained that in his opinion JRA was dysfunctional because of the frequent turnover in Mayoral leadership. After his administration was defeated by

¹⁴³ Tyler Cleveland,_pg.3

¹⁴⁴ Tyler Cleveland,_pg.3

¹⁴⁵ Tyler Cleveland, The Battle for Downtown, Part I: Watkins v. JRA, et al | Jackson Free Press | Jackson MS November 13 2013

Harvey Johnson in 1997, Harvey served two terms and was followed by Frank Melton who died in office 2009. Harvey Johnson was re-elected and held office until 2013 when civil rights attorney Chokwe Lumumba defeated him. Mayor Lumumba had great organizational and leadership skills but died suddenly of cancer slightly more than a year into his first term. Current Mayor Tony Yarber, who famously dubbed the Farish Street District, Jackson's Albatross was elected in 2014. All of these different Mayors have appointed different JRA board members creating tension due to many of them having vastly different viewpoints and agendas. The tangle of litigation is bogged down in the court-system with no end in sight. Meanwhile, buildings within the proposed entertainment area are falling down.

Another obstacle to developers and preservationist alike is that land in the Farish District, due to its proximity to downtown, is considered pretty valuable. Absentee property owners, who have no love for preservation of the structure, refuse to sell their land believing one day they will strike it rich. I sat down for lunch at the Big Apple Inn, with Associate Professor of History and Director of the Margret Walker Center, at Jackson State University, Dr. Robert Luckett. During our lunch of smoked-sausage and pig-ear sandwiches I looked around the interior of the crumbling leaky building astonished that a business could still function in that space. Dr. Luckett explained that he had procured funds to revitalize the building through the Main Street Program and received a large grant of \$208,000.00 from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, in 2011. The plan required the City of Jackson to purchase the building in order for the grant funds to be distributed. The city was willing to purchase the building for its appraised cost of \$30,000.00 but the displaced property owner believing that the building was worth much more than its appraised value, refused to sell. The project simply died.

The most recent development in the Farish District is that of Mt. Helm Place. This development consists of 88 newly constructed town homes in the vicinity of Mt. Helm Baptist Church from whence it gets its name.¹⁴⁶ The majority of this newly built infill is located within the amended area of the National Registered Historic District. The idea is for the private development, which is also partially funded with public money, is to attract low-income renters who will rent to own their town house over a period of fifteen years.¹⁴⁷ Many contributing structures were demolished to make way for this project, however most of these houses were too far gone to have a real chance of being saved. A handful of occupied contributing houses in the area were spared. Although the designs for these new town houses was not particularly creative or sensitive to the historic fabric of the community, this development is positive in that it is the first real project that has the potential to bring life back to area.



Image above is of Mt. Helm Place development.

¹⁴⁶ Ferretti Haley, *Will Helm Place Revitalize Farish, Jackson Free Press. District?*<http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2014/apr/23/will-helm-place-revitalize-farish-district/>

¹⁴⁷ Ferretti Haley, *Will Helm Place Revitalize Farish, Jackson Free Press.*

CHAPTER V.
CURRENT CONDITIONS

According to a 2012 memorandum from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Historic Preservation Office to the Farish Street Historic District, in 2012 the state office wrote: “The exact number of surviving contributing buildings is unknown at this point but it is possible the district is approaching a tipping point where the number of noncontributing buildings will outnumber the contributing buildings which would put the district at risk for delisting. This could result in the loss of tax credit opportunities for restoration and rehabilitation projects.”¹⁴⁸ Today, four years later, the district is still declining and I am confident the district has reached that tipping point. I spoke with several people involved in Mississippi preservation issues, who told me, off the record, no one wants to know exactly how much the district has lost in the past thirty-six years out of fear of it being delisted. It is difficult to obtain an exact number of extant contributing buildings and it has become clear to me that the exact numbers are not available by design. A proper survey should be undertaken, however it is difficult to determine what is still contributing and what has deteriorated past the point of redemption. Furthermore, almost every month there seems to be another house demolished or burned. I did conduct a quick drive by survey with my wife Emily. Emily drove while I counted. In my initial count, conducted in the car, I recoded 185 contributing buildings this was a generous number considering I probably included several structures dating between 1940 the 1950s. I recounted this number on

¹⁴⁸ Bill Gatlin, Memorandum to Historic Preservation Division, Historic Preservation Division, 02/13/2012.

google maps and decided to increase it to 200 contributing buildings in order to account for some I may have missed. This leaves the Farish Street Nationally Registered Historic District down 514 contributing structures from the 1980 number of 724. The District had lost nearly 75% of its contributing buildings.

Extant Architecture on Farish Street itself is primarily mid-century commercial buildings with a few 1920s Art Deco style and some older building from the turn of the century. There are still a handful of businesses both historic and new on Farish Street they are all vital to the areas existence and future. The remaining houses are scattered around randomly. The ones that stand simply had the good fortune to be lived in and loved.

One of the most vital tourist attractions and historically significant business on Farish Street is The Big Apple Inn, which became nationally known when Anthony Bourdain visited the establishment for his culinary travel show, *Parts Unknown*. This simple commercial structure was the last building constructed by Dr. Redmond and was one of the many properties' that he had built.¹⁴⁹ It is historically significant due to the fact that NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers used the second story of the building, shortly as his office, before relocating to Lynch Street, out side of the Farish District. Despite the roof leaking during heavy downpours, and decades worth of dust covering the walls the restaurant is still going strong in the old building where it has been located since 1939. The Big Apple Inn itself is also a historical link to the past as it serves up cultural heritage in the form of pig ear sandwiches, smoked sausage sandwiches and hot tamales.

¹⁴⁹ Sweet Grace & Bradley Benjamin, Church Street, pg.32



The building above is a 2016 image of the Redmond building; The Big Apple Inn has been open here since 1939. Doris's Beauty Black Shop opened up in the old Redmond Building recently but seems to never be in use.

By far the most successful preservation and restoration story in the Farish Street District is that of the Smith Robertson Museum. The building was constructed as the Smith Robertson School in 1909. Smith Robertson is mistakenly considered Jackson's first school for black children, It was in fact Jackson's first public school building constructed for the purpose of educating black children.¹⁵⁰ Previous Public schools for African American children had been established in an assortment of different buildings. Smith Robertson was given an art deco upgrade in 1929.¹⁵¹ The world-renowned writer, Richard Wright is one of Smith Robertson most

¹⁵⁰ Diana G. Miles, *From Frontier Capital to Modern City*, 31.

¹⁵¹ Cramer, Adel, National Register Nomination Form, 1980,

notable alum. Wright graduated from the middle school in 1925.¹⁵² The building was saved and restored in 1996 as a city museum. The two-story building is U shape and originally had an open-air courtyard. The courtyard has been tastefully glassed in and provides a space for art exhibits. I toured the museum several times and found it has been restored beautifully. The first floor features a wonderful exhibit on James Meredith's struggle integrating the University of Mississippi, Ole Miss. One room of the Meredith integration exhibit features photos of the violent events in Oxford that week in 1963, the next room features an empty classroom with a giant tattered confederate flag hung on the back wall. On the second story, the Museum features an exhibit on the journey of African Americans from slavery through sharecropping and the great migration to northern cities. The second floor also features a children's exhibit on Medgar Evers, the NAACP field secretary who was assassinated in Jackson on June 12, 1963.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, mdah.ms.gov, 35.
¹⁵² Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center,
<http://www.jacksonms.gov/index.aspx?nid=143>



Above photo is an image of the Smith Robertson Museum before its restoration. Photo from National Register Nomination Form, MDAH



Summer 2016 Photo of Smith Robertson Museum



Photo of Richard Wright Mural, on the back wall of the Smith Robertson Museum.
By James Bridgforth

Another museum in the district is the Jackson Police Department Museum. Although it is only open by appointment, the JPD Museum has a great collection of photograph's and weapons. Because JPD cannot keep the doors open, these artifacts would be better off if they were donated to one of the two new museums the State is building, the Museum of Mississippi History or the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.

The Alamo Theater originally built in 1942 had almost been completely destroyed by the time it was reconstructed in 1992. At one point the Alamo was the only functioning theater for

African Americans in Jackson. Ironically like many of the District's important buildings the Alamo Theater is not considered contributing as it was built post 1940.

The Scott Ford Houses at 136 and 138 Cohea Street at first glance are just plain vernacular bungalows but the National Trust has been working with local historians trying to preserve these two properties since 1994.¹⁵³ The Ford houses were built by Lulla Scott Ford in 1930. Lulla Scott Ford's parents had been slaves yet she was able to purchase property and build two houses while operating a business as midwife. She is believed to have helped birth hundreds of black and perhaps white babies in Jackson. The proposal is that the two houses could function as a house museum dedicated to the everyday life of African Americans in Jackson Mississippi their struggle in the culture of the twentieth century and as a museum dedicated to midwifery. The proposal to renovate the Scott Ford Houses was tabled for many years, recently however the exteriors of the two vernacular bungalows were restored, this could be one of the first successful projects in many years.

¹⁵³ Ken P'pool, *letter to National Trust for Historic Preservation* MDAH



One of the most positive things happening in the Farish Street District today is We Will Go Ministries. We Will Go Ministries is a Christian ministries group and out reach program. They created a community center called The Fountain on Farish Street by restoring the old YMCA. Fountain on Farish Street, gives those in need a place to go. The facility provides a swimming pool, a basketball court, a computer lab, and a community garden. Amy Lancaster and her husband David Lancaster and their missionaries tutor local children who need extra help in school. The group also teaches trades and provides employment opportunities as well as a Summer Camp for underprivileged children.¹⁵⁴ We Will Go Ministries, has also restored several old houses in the district.

¹⁵⁴ We Will Go Ministries, www.wewillgo.org6/16/2016



This Queen Ann house above has been restored by and is occupied by members of We Will Go Ministries. It is a fine example of the once common Queen Ann style houses in the District.



In contrast to the resorted blue Queen Ann, this one is covered in wisteria, poison ivy honeysuckle and kudzu. Exposed to the elements it is beyond saving.

Farish Street still boasts several funeral homes; Peoples Funeral home is the most well known. Farish Street also is home to the African store, which also sells hats a shoe repair store, which also sells hats, and bookstore specializing in Christian Books.

The brave and late night music fan can still find live Blues at Frank Jones Corner on Friday and Saturday night. Frank Jones Corner is on Farish Street is in an old service station that has been converted to Jacksons best venue for late nigh Blues. In the winter patrons can stand out side around a barrel fire and eat barbeque sandwiches. The music there however does not get started until around midnight.

Johnny T” s Bistro and Nightclub is the hot new thing on Farish Street, in the historic, exciting location of the old Crystal Palace. More recently the building was a rough joint called Birdland. In its heyday the Crystal Palace hosted the hottest musicians of its time. During WWII the building was converted into a USO.¹⁵⁵ Johnny T is taking the building back to its roots serving up delicious food and live music.

Another hot nightspot in the district is Freelons Da Groove on Mill Street. Freelons is not geared to blues enthusiast and tourist but is more of a modern, hip hop style, entertainment venue. Although it might not fit into the historic idea of Farish Street, Freelons is a local establishment and an important part of the district’s economy and Jackson’s modern culture.

The reality that is Jackson

It is important to put Farish District in the context of Jackson, Mississippi. The city has giant obstacles to overcome. The Jackson Public Schools are failing and crime continues to be a major problem. For a city of its size of 175,000 people, Jackson has an extremely high murder

¹⁵⁵ Holly Kermit W. Reflections of a Historical Street,12.

rate which according to the FBI in 2015 was the 4th highest in the country.¹⁵⁶ The City council is constantly suffering from infighting and at war with the mayor's office. The city government fears state interference and the state ignores its responsibilities to the city. The city continues to suffer from suburban flight resulting in a continuing loss of tax base. Like the rest of the state, the city suffers from a brain drain: Mississippians who receive a college education frequently find jobs outside of the state. Jackson's economy is largely based in state government, medical care and research, and law-offices. There are few blue collar jobs and as a result very high unemployment. To make matters even worse, Jackson also sits on a giant bed of clay; locally known as Yazoo Clay. Eudora Welty called it the "slow moving earthquake". The sediment constantly expands and contracts as moisture levels in the ground fluctuate. This movement plagues Jackson's aging infrastructure.¹⁵⁷ However, Jackson does have several good private and public colleges and universities, a well established art scene, several museums, and a vibrant night life. For those who enjoy food the city offers a wide variety of excellent restaurants and diverse cuisine choices. Jackson is also a very affordable city compared to its neighboring cities.

¹⁵⁶ Therse Apel, Miss. Crime stats reveling, *Clarion Ledger*, <http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2015/10/01/fbi-miss-capital-city-homicides/73181106/>

¹⁵⁷ Curtis, Stover, W. *Yazoo Clay, Engineering Aspects and Environmental Geology of an Expansive Clay*, Mississippi Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Geology, Jackson MS, 1988. <https://www.deq.state.ms.us/mdeq.nsf/pdf/1>.



The photograph above is a 2016 image of the Crystal Palace or Johnny T's Bistro circa 1935, facade has been altered its south wall is much the same as it was in 1979, It is one of the few buildings that is being used in the same capacity as it was historically.



1979 image of the Crystal Place, From the National Register Nomination Form



Above Photo is of Frank Jones Corner. 303 N Farish Street This cement block building had been a filling station.



Photo from Mississippi Department of Archives and History
258, E Church is of one of the last old houses on Church Street. New Infill from the Mt. Helm Place can be seen to the buildings right.



One of the few remaining bungalows. Photo from Google maps street view.



This large craftsman, is one of the last remaining contributing buildings on North Lamar.



This bungalow at 177 Cohea Street above is in poor shape but appears to be hanging on.



Another bungalow in good condition. Photo from Google maps street view.



The two photos above a rare example of a contributing house which has maintained structural integrity all the way up to present day. The black and white photograph is from the 1979 National Register Survey.



141 E. Cohea St. is another example of one of the few remaining Queen Ann, L plan style houses in the neighborhood. Some one has ensured that this structure remains stable.



191 Cohea Street was a fine example of a Queen Ann L plan cottage, it recently lost its porch, which had very intricate wood carving detail.



This two story vernacular craftsman on Church Street belonged to the prominent Brittain family.



Slightly hidden by vegetation, a fine example of a local craftsman bungalow house, in pretty good condition.



Photo above is of the Greystone Hotel which is individually listed on the National Register. Older photo found on pg.39



The photo above reveals the poor condition of some commercial buildings on Farish Street in the proposed Entertainment District.



This commercial building has a brick facade, which is peeling away from inner brick wall. Recently it has become unsafe and the city was forced to erect a barrier on the sidewalk below in order to prevent pedestrians from passing by.



The building above on the corner of Farish and Griffith streets is no longer standing it was located across the street from the building pictured below. Photo from MDAH



This early commercial building is one of the few in good shape in the District.



The building above housed the medical practice of Dr. Brittain



This building is one of the few early twentieth century commercial buildings remaining.



The boarded up windows at the bottom are covered in folk art and graffiti. Although it appears to be in decent shape the vegetation growing around the transom indicates moisture is prevalent.





Due to the health problems the owner of Peaches had to close its doors in 2015







Cement block with stucco exterior, commercial building at one time was a barbershop. Like many commercial buildings in the district this structure is just a shell.



The photo above is of the old cotton seed oil mill. This complex holds great historical significance to the District. One of the areas original industries was a cotton seed mill. The area could be repurposed as a music venue or micro brewery.



Mill Street by the Rail Road Tracks looking south this former industrial section has been made into a skate park.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that Farish Street Flourished from the late 19th century to the Second World War. Reconstruction of the South officially ended in 1877. Black Republicans called it the “the Great Betrayal” The Republican and Democrat parties called it the Compromise of 1877. With the absence of Federal protection, white Democrats through the threat of violence, took total control over the former Confederate States forcing any remaining black politicians out of government and firmly established the Jim Crow order. During the beginning of the twentieth century the South experienced tremendous racial mob violence. Following World War One, the entire nation was swept up by fear of “otherness” and the Ku Klux Klan reemerged as a national force. In this climate of fear and violent oppression, blacks especially in the deep South could do little to improve their situation. And yet it was in this climate and time period that the Farish District grew and prospered.

The Second World War, however, changed the world including the segregated South. Although the military was still segregated, black men were given the chance to fight Nazi and Japanese aggression and oppression. In 1947, Jackie Robinson entered Major League Baseball, in 1948 the US Military was desegregated and in 1949 Margaret Walker received her professorship at Jackson College (JSU). In the 1950s white youth began to listen to and copy black music.¹⁵⁸ As the nation became a more open society, Mississippi dug in its heels and

¹⁵⁸ Favors, Jelani M. *The Greatest Art is The Greatest Propaganda: The Fascinating and tragic Life of Margret Walker Alexander*, 117.

became even more closed. Margret Walker wrote that *Brown vs Board* created more tension and fear in Mississippi than the atomic bomb.¹⁵⁹ It was during this time that wealthier African Americans who resided mostly on Church Street began to leave Farish Street. Many of them left Mississippi altogether, others moved out of Farish Street to newer neighborhoods in Jackson.

The projects associated with the Farish Street District post 1980 are almost all failures. I have found no evidence of outright corruption by any group or individual. The Farish Street District is a failure due to the fact that there have always been too many players. Despite the fact that the vast majority of these players, genuinely strived to succeed, the many projects that have attempted to improve the area have failed because of a lack of cooperation between the different groups involved. The idea of taking a two-block area and making it into a large entertainment district, all at one time, is ill conceived. Positive gentrification happens organically. Jackson cannot be Memphis or New Orleans. If Jackson is anything it is authentic. Beale Street and Bourbon Street are no longer authentic places. If Farish Street is to be saved it will be redeveloped the way it was built, by local small business owners and nonprofits, one building at a time. Like the YMCA, turned into Fountain Ministries, and the old Bird Land /Crystal Palace being restored to become Johnny T's Bistro.

Analysis

The empty lots where rows of shotgun houses, craftsman bungalows and Queen Anne cottages once stood in the residential sections of the district can be replaced, hopefully with creative modern architecture which still gives a nod to the past. Unfortunately, the recent Mt.

¹⁵⁹ Favors, Jelani M, *The Greatest Art is The Greatest Propaganda*, 117.

Helm Place development is not creative nor does it fit in well with the remaining contributing buildings. The empty spaces on Farish Street itself also leaves the possibility of commercial in-fill. The District can be reborn but it will be reborn as a different animal. We cannot recreate the past. Aurilla Norris Young a Music Professor from Jackson State recalled in 1983 that as late as the nineteen forty's most residents of Farish Street had cows and chickens in their backyards.¹⁶⁰ Today of course at least the cows would violate city ordinances banning livestock. Besides the obvious observation that people can't have livestock in their backyards there is another more serious reason why the Farish Street of the past must be remembered but can never be recreated. Farish Street was born out of a racist segregated society. What made it wonderful, was that it flourished despite the horrible cruel reality of the times. This does not mean however that what's left of the District should be bulldozed, forgotten and replaced with a tacky blues themed six flags. We must preserve what is left and let the rest develop naturally.

The question must be asked; does the Farish Street Historic District still have enough contributing buildings to be on the National Register? The answer is No it does not. Regardless of lack of contributing buildings however the Farish District must remain on the Register. When the Clarion Ledger wrote it's big 2004 front-page article, there was already fear that the Farish Street District was on the verge of losing its National Register status. By 2004, the City feared losing federal grants as well as state and federal tax breaks. The National Register criteria for delisting a property includes this statement as the primary reason for delisting: "The property has ceased to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register because the qualities which caused

¹⁶⁰ Alferdteen Harrison, Pittman Mabel, *The Farish Street Historic District: Memories, Perceptions, and Developmental Alternatives (A Selection of Essays and Statements)* Mississippi Council for the Humanities 1984,

it to be originally listed have been lost or destroyed.”¹⁶¹ It is my opinion that Farish District has reached this point where it has lost the qualities which caused it to be originally listed. The district after all, has lost nearly 75% of its contributing structures. However, the roughly contributing 200 building that remain still must be protected by the label of being on the National Register. The Farish District Should remain on the National Register as a Historic District the boundaries however of the District should be reconsidered. The amended area to the district where the Mt. Helm Place development has been built, no longer contains enough contributing buildings to warrant its inclusion and many of the district’s southern blocks are now parking lots for downtown office buildings. Although 75% of the contributing buildings which were extant at the time of the 1980 National Register Nomination are no longer, what remains is the legacy of the people who built the Farish Street District. Many of the most culturally significant buildings in the Farish District that are still extant are listed as non contributing. The 1980 Nomination Form lists the Farish District’s years of significance as 1860-1940. This time of significance should be expanded to 1970. The basis for this Amendment is that the areas true decline was brought about by desegregation in the 1960s and the impact of global capitalism on urban America. The original Nomination’s author was considering’s the area in the context of architectural significance not cultural significance. Many of the remaining structures like the Redmond Building and the First Baptist Church housed crucial meeting during the Civil Rights Movement. The area was already in decline by the late 1940s but it still was a center for culture: Music, Food, Religion’ and Political Life well into the 1960s. Much of this culture can still be found today if you get there at the right time and the right day. Friday and Saturday Night music

¹⁶¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register Bulletin, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>

fans and night owls can listen to the blues until four in the morning. On Sundays churchgoers still commute to Farish District from all around the greater Jackson area to attend their family's traditional congregations.

I asked Dorothy Moore, the famous singer who had grown up in Farish Street, whether she had hope for Farish Street and Jackson in general to be revitalized. She said "Well they have been talking about it for so long...I just hope it happens within my lifetime." Dorothy Davis another local Farish District lady who is president of Farish Street Ministries, says that her group is weary of the failed projects on Farish Street.¹⁶² Farish Street Ministries a conglomerate of the local church congregations is seeking control of abandoned buildings on Farish Street and throughout the neighborhood, which are owned by the city.



A boarded up, craftsman shotgun, summer 2016

¹⁶² Andrew Nomura, wjtv.com/2015/11/19/churches-push-for-farish-street-revitalization-by-asking-city-officials-for-properties/



Above is shotgun house barley hanging on. Summer 2016.

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