

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Gladys Clark

COLLECTION: 4700.0512

IDENTIFICATION: Acadian weaver for the Acadian Handicraft Project

INTERVIEWER: Pamela Rabalais and Yvonne Olivier

SERIES: Acadian Handicraft Project

INTERVIEW DATE: August 17, 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1950s – 1960s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 734, Side A

Clark was born in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, in 1918; Her community was called the Judice Community; Her parents Ambrose Leblanc and Closte Hebert LeBlanc; Learning to weave from her mother; Clark's mother wove cotton blankets for her children (twelve each); Clark has nine living siblings; Gladys Clark is the only one of her siblings that still weaves; Clark was married when she met Louise Olivier, director of the Acadian Handicraft Project (AHP); Clark's maternal grandparents, Ignace Hebert and Donetile Breaux; Clark never saw her grandmother weave; Clark does not know where her grandmother's loom is; Meeting Louise Olivier and getting involved in the project; Clark sewed for the project first, but eventually began weaving; traveling with Olivier to demonstrate weaving; Olivier taught Clark how to drive on one of the trips to demonstrate weaving; Clark and her husband bought their first car from Olivier; Experiences at the International Rice Festival in Crowley, Louisiana, in 1950; Clark and her family reenacted an Acadian funeral procession and they demonstrated weaving and hand milling rice in an Acadian house; They wore costumes during these demonstrations; Weaving different items for the AHP, including, placemats, blankets, hand towels; Using two different looms for different projects, one small, on large; The money Clark made selling items through the AHP went into the houses general budget; Clark was not paid to demonstrate but the AHP covered traveling expenses; A trip to New York sponsored by the Lion's Club to demonstrate weaving; Singing "Allouette" on the train to New York; Clark's parents supported their involvement in the AHP; Discussion of some postcards, letters and photographs from Olivier to Clark and of the women who worked in the AHP; discussion of the costumes that Clark and her family wore during demonstrations; description of a carding party, la cardrie, a gathering where women from the neighborhood would come to a house and help card the cotton to prepare it for spinning and weaving; Ginning brown cotton occurred on the last day that the cotton gin was open; People used the brown cotton for their own use; After Olivier died, Dinky Daspit bought some of the looms and attempted to keep the Project viable; Interviewers read article about Acadian weavers

Tape 734, Side B

Interviewers continue reading article about Acadian weavers, the article is about Clark's mother; Clark discusses how she moved from sewing to braiding palmetto to weaving for the AHP; Olivier taught the children to braid palmetto; Collecting palmetto with her husband and Olivier; Clark discusses the drying process for palmetto; Palmetto drying, striping, soaking it in water to make it pliable; Clark did not see anyone braiding palmetto as a child; Clark does not remember anyone wearing palmetto hats; Discussion of braiding palmetto fans; Clark talks about why she quit braiding palmetto; Olivier would bring baskets from Mexico for the Acadian women to duplicate; Of the items in the photograph that the interviewers and interviewee are looking at, none of the items made by the Acadian women would have been used by the people of the area, according to Clark; Clark used hand spun cotton thread along with commercial thread; Clark taught Elane Bourque to weave for a grant project through Maida Owens; Discussion of carding, including the uses for the cotton once it was carded, either weaving or stuffing for mattresses or quilts; Clark tells a story about her grandmother at a carding party; Clark goes to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, with Olivier to a weaving workshop to learn how to weave patterns; Clark attended the Acadian Bicentennial Celebration in 1955 in St. Martinsville, Louisiana; Clark taught female inmates at Angola to braid palmetto

TAPE: 1 (T734)**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour, 17 minutes**# PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 77 pages**OTHER MATERIALS:** None**RESTRICTIONS:** None