

**Dr. Jackson
The History of The South Since 1860.**

**The evolution of the Annistonian
through the eyes of a citizen.**

**By. Bill Thomas
March 22, 1995**

Mrs. Ivary M. Thompson Hamilton was born in the south and raised in the south. She was raised on the good ole values that god protected the white man and that was life. She has a hard time remembering her past a little but her values she will let you know right up front what she knows and you know better be right. Mrs. Hamilton is a native to north east Alabama and has lived most of her life in the city of Anniston in Calhoun County. She is the daughter of Rosey Lee Thompson and Bud Thompson. Mrs. Hamiltons family was one that had changed a generation back from the farm to the mill. Mrs. Hamilton was a city girl. Mrs. Hamilton was raised in a strictly white life style and that all blacks back then were called such outdated and sheerly degrading terms such as nigger and boy, while all black people at the time were to refer to as white folks as sir or Mister and mam or Miss. Life in the city of Anniston was booming in Mrs. Hamiltons youth. Anniston was soon becoming the cast iron pipe capitol of the world and Mrs. Hamilton had just completed her third marriage and settled in that time the neighborhood. It was right in the center of Annistons pipe manufacturing and most of the workers were white so the neighborhood was predominately white. Many of the black workers and families formed their own cities and suburbs on the outskirts of Anniston such as Hobson City¹².

Anniston, Al has been a quit little industrial town trying to grow in the shadow of such

¹ . This was taken from Mrs. Hamiltons first interview which due to my negligence was destroyed before a copy could be made so through out any reference to the first will have a footnote saying(first copy).

close neighbors as Birmingham and Atlanta. Anniston just hoped it would never have many of the troubles as her neighbors have had. Until the late fifties Anniston managed to keep her self in a dignified manner and stay relatively unheard of. In the late fifties and early sixties Anniston was given center seat in the civil rights movements and I specifically mean the transportation between places. Anniston was a prime place for every one who is any one to pass through because of some flaw Anniston wound up with many of the major routs taken between cities passed through Anniston. It is hard to believe that Anniston stayed as calm as she did but according to Mrs. Hamilton and other literary sources except for the bus bombing on state Hwy. 202 Anniston was quite. Anniston did have to go through the standard desegregation of schools during the sixties but as for that there was not much to note. One of Annistons largest employers was the federal government and the military which had already been desegregated which had been a early ability for Anniston to be prepared for the coming tide of changes of the civil rights.

Mrs. Hamilton who at the time was married to a city bus driver who drove the busses to take people in the city was accustomed to relations with blacks³. The neighborhood where Mrs. Hamilton at that time lived was predominately white due to the jobs offered and the location of the places of employment. McLeroy and Moore Ave. and the area around it were basically middle class white and blue collar workers. Many of the black workers worked right

³. I use the term blacks instead of African-American due to many of Mrs. Hamiltons friends and others preference towards the black race and not the African-American race.

along side of the white workers in the pipe shops so it was not uncommon to see a black family living in Mrs. Hamiltons neighborhood of many of the white people in the neighborhood having black friends visit them in the neighborhood. Anniston was quite and trying to ride out the civil rights era with out much more trouble.

The state though was different or so Mrs. Hamilton seems to say. In the city of Birmingham were church bombings and small disputes between areas of nieghborhoods and marches that history will always remember. The nation was turbulent and many were restless either because they wanted to see a end to the changes happening or want to get out and help make the changes. Mrs. Hamilton though whose last child had finally moved out had contented herself with being a grandmother. The decade of the 1960s were very turbulent and eventful in this area but Anniston managed to keep its quietness⁴.

The 1970s were a little quieter than the past decades but were full of changes. In Mrs. Hamiltons neighborhood the last of the children finally moved away and the number of white families started to dwindle. Mrs. Hamilton started to attend Hill Crest Baptist Church in Saks just north of Anniston. Religion helped Mrs. Hamilton find herself and love her new neighbors or so she says. Anniston was going through a change in the population. Being a military town the civil right were soon forgotten. The new gossip was the war⁵. The cities

⁴. Taken from the Anniston Star special commemorative booklet. June, 1980 page 5-7.

⁵. The Vietnam War 1958-1973.

military economy grew from a very successful Army Supply Depot and Fort McClellan. The constant transfer of new recruits in and out of the fort left it hard for any one to get to know there neighbor enough to hate them. Many of the workers black or white that worked at either the fort or depot were moving out of the city to locations closer to where they worked. Commuting in cars took over and the city no longer needed public transportation so Mr. Hamilton retired from his job at Anniston Transit⁶. Times were changing and so was the neighborhood.

As the factories in Anniston slowly closed down retail was changing to the department store and needed land so they started to follow the move in people to locations outside the fort on the edge of Anniston. Business soon moved into the old shops in Anniston and property value began to drop in the ares around the businesses and closed factories. Lower income families soon found it cheaper and began to move into the old white and middle class neighborhoods. The city was not needed any more for the families and children. Any thing people needed was just a short drive away and as yards became bigger parks began to lose their charm and children.

This was not only just a trend in a small city like Anniston. In many of the large cities in the nation more and more people chose the trend started in the early fifties of being a middle class, white or blue collar commuter who lived in the suburbs. The cities were in poor

⁶. Mr. Adams, former owner of Anniston Transit supplied this information a few years back.

shape and crime was going up. People found the suburb life much more appealing and it seemed that people were a lot better off. Both parents began to work and the family always depended on two cars and television had come of age so that people had much more to concentrate on instead of just an idle visit to the city stores. The 1970s saw the age of the indoor family bonding.

The state of Alabama was cooling of from the strong political rallies of George Wallace and the civil rights of the sixties. The war had took a lot out of the state during the early seventies but seemed to be one of the supporters of it. The state was still having trouble with desegregation in some of its small southern counties but all in all Alabama managed to fare well. Schools saw a growth and movements for renovation and upgrading. People seemed to be trying to get along decently with each other at the time according to Mrs. Hamilton.

The 1980s saw a great deal of change in the city of Anniston for the better. Annistons industry grew larger and new businesses were being inclined to move to the city so the city started to grow. The military had been downsizing and many retirees settled in this area. Mrs. Hamiltons neighborhood though was going through its final change. Mrs. Hamilton and her husband had started to witness many of their friends move away, pass on, or be placed in nursing homes. Her neighborhood was losing the last of its middle class white residents. Many like Mrs. Hamilton had spent their entire lives there and raised a family. Her neighborhood had become her permanate home like many of her neighbors had felt. Mrs. Hamilton and her husband with growing change of race around them decide to stay. They

soon became the only white people over there but Mrs. Hamilton says the neighbors are good people and she did not see any reason to leave.

In most cities when such a drastic change occurs in the location of a major part of the ethnical or racial population changes many cities seem to show a racial attitude in regards to the residents now occupying that area. Mrs. Hamilton and others have mentioned quite often how nothing has changed and it is believed that they mean in the neighborhood. Mrs. Hamilton is quick to tell any one that there are certain individuals in the neighborhood that try to make the neighborhood lower than it is but remarkable the city of Anniston still reacts to that neighborhood as if nothing has changed. Mrs. Hamilton seems to offer the opinion that Annistons having a military base nearby and the life style of most in the city has helped keep Anniston at peace. The city is composed of rapidly changing faces, retirees who hate Florida but love the nice quite south, and many blue collar workers. This is what seems to make peace work between the races in Anniston.

Mrs. Hamilton, despite her traditional southern heritage, seems to have the ability to treat blacks as her equals better than the two generations after her. Mrs. Hamiltons view on the so called race problem today is that of the youth. Mrs. Hamilton believes that the youth is to much in a hurry to grow up and take control. That and the youths use of drugs pushes the problems of race relations as a way to cover up their own actions, and give them a way that they think they seem in control of every thing around them. The youth today according to many news papers are in a rush to grow up and lean toward trying drugs and gangs as a way

to prove themselves, so is this feeding Mrs. Hamiltons opinion or is she just able to realize something we have hard time seeing. Mrs. Hamilton has many friends in her neighborhood and visits many in her neighborhood. This is an individual who was raised on the southern myth and hard baptist traditions.

Mrs. Hamilton also offers the opinion that a lot can be attributed to television and its constant pushing of pointless violence and in her words" the constant over playing of any event that people may consider a racial injustice⁷." Mrs. Hamilton believes that television is a major reason why we all believe that the world is worse than it ever was and gives us such a pessimistic view on events in our lives, the nation, and state. Many television networks and the federal government have started investigations into this topic and have taken some preliminary actions such as television ratings for parents and parental lockouts.

Mrs. Hamilton is very insightful and has good understanding of the people and place around her. She has lived through two world wars and three small ones and many other earth shaping events. She chose at an early age to be a house wife and mother and not to work. I thank her for allowing me to use her words in this paper.

⁷. First copy.

Gift and Release Agreement:

We IVARY M. HAMILTON and Billy R. Thomas Jr.
(Interviewee, print) (Interviewer, print)

do hereby give and grant to Jacksonville State University, all literary and property rights, title, and interest which we may possess to the audio or video recording(s) and transcript(s) of the interview(s) conducted at Ms. Hamiltons Home on the date(s) of 2-17-95 for the oral history collection being compiled by the Jacksonville State University Library.

Ivory M. Hamilton
(Interviewee's signature)

Address 2309 McKleroy
Anniston, AL 36201
Phone 237-5987

Date 2-17-95

B. R. Thomas Jr.
(Interviewer's signature)

Address 1717 Pelham St
Anniston, AL 36201
Phone 237-3613

Date 2-17-95

Interviewee Background Information

Name: Ivory M. Hamilton
Address: _____
Phone Number(s): _____
Approximate age or date of birth: June 30 1910 84
Mother's name: Rosy Lee Thompson
Father's name: Bud Thompson
Places lived and when: _____

Education: Some School

Religion: Southern Baptist
Business, political and social memberships (past and present):
President Sunday School class

Present occupation: _____
Former occupation(s): _____

Special skills: Quilt, craft
Major Accomplishments: Survived two serious surgery

Local events in which you have participated: Quilt for needy

State and/or regional events in which you have participated: _____

National events in which you have participated: _____

International events in which you have participated: _____

Natural born U.S. citizen? Yes/No
Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date: _____
Country from which you emigrated: _____
Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in your possession: _____

Individuals you recommend who might be candidates for an oral history interview: Charles R. Thomas, James Allen Thomas

Additional information: _____

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B. Local

1. Martin L. King Jr.

2. Hwy. 202

III. Changes

A. 1960-1970

B. 1970-1980

C. 1980-1990

IV. Future

Personal Chronology Of Mrs. Ivory Hamilton.

Born June 30, 1910 to Rosey Lee Thompson and Bud Thompson in Clay County Alabama.

Mrs. Hamilton only attended one day of school at the age of six.

She has been married three times but to her request we did not discuss the first two marriages.

The third marriage was to Marrion Hamilton in or around 1950.

Mrs. Hamilton has had six children and was a house wife and grand mother during the 1960's through to the present.

Mrs. Hamilton's last husband passed away in 1990.

Oral History Project Questions

1. Background information.
2. How long have you lived here in Anniston, in this neighborhood Ms. Hamilton.
3. What was your neighborhood here like in terms of the people who lived here around you in the 60s? What were there predominate race?
4. Where did blacks live in the city at that time and what was your attitude and the attitude of others around you, your friends and family?
5. What can you remember about how life was like during the civil rights movements of the sixties?
6. How did you feel about the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr.?
7. How did you feel about the bus incident on highway 202 at that time?
8. Did you feel this affected how the way and place blacks and whites lived entering the 70s?
9. How did this neighborhood change in the 70s compared to the 60s? How did the city seem to change.
10. How did the 80s change from the 60s and 70s in this neighborhood and the city?

11. Did you seem to notice any change in how blacks and whites related to each other from the early 60s to the late 80s?
12. What made you want to stay in this neighborhood even though your friends and family moved away as the blacks moved in?
13. What regrets if any do you have if any about staying and not moving earlier on?
14. How do you see this neighborhood progressing in the future?
15. Do you feel your relations with blacks have changed from the 60s to the 80s, and if so how?

Thank you for allowing me this interview.