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Stories behind the Brick and Mortar: Voices of Mississippi University for Women

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Technology has increased the reach and audience of scholarship, but it has also transformed the delivery of that scholarship. Today, a variety of platforms exist to reach specific audiences, and some traditional methods of sharing information are becoming outdated.[1] Researchers must now learn to use different platforms in order to be a part of twenty-first century scholarship. Instead of a unified focus on scholarly journals and monographs, scholarship has diversified to include things like digital museum exhibits. The field of digital humanities has grown, and universities have introduced new programs to capture students' interests. Although volatile because of its lack of focus, the field of digital humanities creates connections between digital technology and humanities disciplines, therefore expanding the reach and accessibility of what has been a traditionally brick and mortar discipline.[2] This project bridges archival research with newer digital practices, using a digital platform to launch a historic walking tour of Mississippi University for Women (The W), focusing on alumnae voices.

The Center for Women's Research & Public Policy at The W has conducted interviews with alumnae of the University, called the "Golden Girls Oral History Project," annually since 2005.[3] The oral history project seeks alumnae interviewees from the 50th anniversary class at Homecoming each year.[4] These interviews provide alumnae voices describing social history—dorm life, dress code, rules and regulations, dating, student-faculty relationships—in other words, what life was like on campus beyond the academic programs. This project uses interview transcripts and recordings to create a walking tour that will tell a history of the University from the perspective of alumnae and their everyday life on campus.

This project fills a gap in the narrative history of the University, as only two histories of the University exist, *Loyal Daughters: One Hundred Years at Mississippi University for Women, 1884-1984* and *Golden Days: Reminiscences of Alumnae, Mississippi State College for Women*.[5]

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[1] Levi T. Novey and Troy E. Hall, "The Effect of Audio Tours on Learning and Social Interaction: An Evaluation at Carlsbad Caverns National Park," *Science Education* 91, issue 2 (October 2006).

[2] Johanna Drucker, "Introduction to Digital Humanities," *UCLA Center for Digital Humanities*, September 2013, accessed on October 23, 2019, http://dh101.humanities.ucla.edu/?page_id=13

[3] "Golden Girls Oral History Project," *Mississippi University for Women*, n.d., accessed on October 20, 2019, https://www.muw.edu/centers/women/research/oralhistory

[4] With the exception of interviewees Mary Ellen Weathersby Pope ('26), Emily Eugenia Summer ('45), and Mary Elizabeth "Libby" Bickerstaff Payne ('54), which were recorded by the MUW Alumni Association.

[5] Bridget Pieschel and Stephen Robert Pieschel, *Loyal Daughters: One Hundred Years at Mississippi University for Women 1884-1984* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984); Southern

Loyal Daughters explains the administration of presidents, social customs, and traditions but does not engage with oral interviews or focus on alumnae voices.[6] *Golden Days* records alumnae voices, but does not connect those voices to specific campus locations or provide context for the select interviews included.[7] This tour allows participants to explore the social life of campus between 1926 and 1969, highlighting a broad range of alumnae voices. These dates cover a large swath of twentieth-century history and include the desegregation of campus. This project has two parts: the collection of oral interviews and creation of a tour script, followed by the building of a website for the tour and a map.

Literature Review

In *Loyal Daughters*, Bridget Pieschel and Stephen Robert Pieschel provide a basic history of the University's first one hundred years. The book is organized by presidential administrations and takes readers chronologically through major campus changes in the time period covered. The Pieschels create narratives for notable presidents and their accomplishments: J.C. Fant expanded the University and gained its accreditation, Parkinson expanded academics, and Hogarth dealt with race relations. In these years, women became more independent, and the University had to adapt to those social changes but maintain its traditions and historical goal of educating women.

In *Golden Days*, Bridget Smith Pieschel edited and arranged twenty interviews of prominent W alumnae. She explains, "These stories are especially important in identifying and celebrating the specific and lasting effects of women's educational experiences at the Mississippi State College for Women."[8] This source provides rich information from alumnae; however, the stories have been divided by individual experience and not presented in a narrative, analytical, or thematic way. Additionally, this information is not easily accessible to the public because they were not publicly viewable, keeping the narratives of The W alumnae largely hidden. The research base provided by Pieschel provides an excellent starting point for this project, which will add context, a sense of place, and a digital humanities element to the existing oral history sources.

Digital Humanities

This project used a digital approach to make information more accessible to the masses, including alumnae near and far. However, there is a lot of disagreement and tension in the field of digital humanities over even basic parameters for where the field begins and ends, who counts as a digital humanist, and whether the point is to create new technology, employ technology, or

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Women's Institute and Bridget Pieschel, *Golden Days: Reminiscences of Alumnae, Mississippi State College for Women* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008); There are more accounts of The W; however, they are neither institutional or scholarly based. They include Sarah Neilson's *The History of Mississippi State College for Women* and Dorothy Burdeshaw, Barbara Garrett, Jo Spearman, Joan Thomas and Martha Wells' *Legacy of the Blues: A Century of Athletics At The W*.

[6] Bridget Pieschel and Stephen Robert Pieschel, *Loyal Daughters: One Hundred Years at Mississippi University for Women 1884-1984* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984).

[7] Southern Women's Institute and Bridget Pieschel, *Golden Days: Reminiscences of Alumnae, Mississippi State College for Women* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008).

[8] Ibid, xxi.

analyze its use.[9] The American Historical Association defines digital history as "scholarship that is either produced using computational tools and methods or presented using digital technologies," but acknowledges that there are no "broadly accepted guidelines for the professional evaluation of digital scholarship."[10] Anne Burdick et al. present general guidelines for the digital humanities, explaining the reach and importance of this field as well as providing definitions of the field and how scholarship can be evaluated. Their definition of "digital humanities" explains that it is "collaborative, transdisciplinary, and computationally engaged research, teaching, and publication."[11] Mark Sample states that while digital humanities builds tools, the field should focus on expanding the reach of current scholarship:

> We are no longer bound by the physical demands of printed books and paper journals, no longer constrained by production costs and distribution friction, no longer hampered by a top-down and unsustainable business model. And we should no longer be content to make our work public achingly slowly along ingrained routes, authors and readers alike delayed by innumerable gateways limiting knowledge production and sharing.[12]

Overall, it is clear that digital humanities offer the promise of combining the best of historical research with new information and communication technologies in ways that enhance outreach

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[9] Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, and Jeffrey Schnapp, "A Short Guide to the Digital Humanities," *Digital Humanities*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016); "Best Practices for Digital Humanities Projects," *The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Center for Digital Research in the Humanities*, accessed October 23, 2019, https://cdrh.unl.edu/articles/best_practices; Levi T. Novey and Troy E. Hall, "The Effect of Audio Tours on Learning and Social Interaction: An Evaluation at Carlsbad Caverns National Park," *Science Education* 91, issue 2 (October 2006), 262; Mark Sample, "The Digital Humanities is not about Building, it's about Sharing," *Defining Digital Humanities*, 2013, 256; Matthew Kirschenbaum, "What Is "Digital Humanities," and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things about It?" *In the Shadows of Digital Humanities* (2014): 1-18, accessed November 9, 2019, https://mkirschenbaum.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/dhterriblethingskirschenbaum.pdf; Jean Bauer, "Who You Calling Untheoretical?" *Journal of Digital Humanities* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2011), accessed November 9, 2019, http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-1/who-you-calling-untheoretical-by-jean-bauer/; Lisa Spiro, "'This Is Why We Fight': Defining The Values of the Digital Humanities," *In Debates in Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2012), accessed November 9, 2019, https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-88c11800-9446-469b-a3be-3fdb36bfbd1e/section/9e014167-c688-43ab-8b12-0f6746095335; Amy E. Earhart, "Digital Humanities Future: Conflicts, Power, and Public Knowledge," *Digital Studies/le Champ Numérique* 9 (2016), accessed November 9, 2019, https://www.digitalstudies.org/articles/10.16995/dscn.1/

[10] American Historical Association Council, "Guidelines for the Professional Evaluations of Digital Scholarship by Historians," *American Historical Association* (n.d.), accessed November 21, 2019, https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/digital-history-resources/evaluation-of-digital-scholarship-in-history/guidelines-for-the-professional-evaluation-of-digital-scholarship-by-historians

[11] Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, and Jeffrey Schnapp, "A Short Guide to the Digital Humanities," *Digital Humanities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 2.

[12] Mark Sample, "The Digital Humanities is not about Building, it's about Sharing," *Defining Digital Humanities*, 2013, 256.

to a twenty-first century audience. This project, as Sample recommends, employs a historical research approach without being limited by traditional sharing formats.

Another outcome of the rise of digital humanities is that scholars have begun to develop guidelines and best practices to help working professionals create digital historical tourism projects. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Digital Research in the Humanities suggests ways of designing websites for maximum accessibility and clarity, including recommendations like keeping fonts and colors consistent to retain the audience, having audio and video easily playable, and assuring that websites will work on all programs. They, too, emphasize the importance of multimedia delivery as an alternative to "traditional print scholarship."[13] Loïc Tallon highlights the importance of adding technology to museums, such as handheld audio devices, theorizing that people would be more attentive to the museum experience.[14] Levi T. Novey and Troy E. Hall's study of patrons at the Carlsbad Caverns National Park prove the benefits of multimedia experiences in museums. They found that people were more likely to listen to audio descriptions of the exhibits than to read the informational displays within the exhibit. Overall, museum visitors were more pleased with their experiences if they had multimedia ways to experience the exhibit in addition to traditional methods. They also tested participants and found that those who used the handheld audio devices better retained information about the exhibit.[15] This important study demonstrates the promise of multimedia delivery to improve both patron satisfaction and historical knowledge.

Although scholars have begun to develop best practices in digital humanities for museums and national parks, there are no clear practices for walking tours. However, a survey of campus tours (non-historic) reveals commonalities that this walking tour will seek to include, especially ensuring the tour has multiple options for users to experience it, maintaining a tour length of between 30 and 60 minutes, and focusing on small geographic areas.[16] Models with multiple user interface options included Harvard, Montana State, and Ohio State Universities. Harvard offers a self-guided tour that includes a PDF map and thirty-one audio clips; however, it is not as functional on mobile devices and directs people to download each audio clip separately.[17] Basic tours, like that of Montana State University, provide a website that features a campus map with stops that offer a written explanation of the building and an audio

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[13] "Best Practices for Digital Humanities Projects," *The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Center for Digital Research in the Humanities*, accessed October 23, 2019, https://cdrh.unl.edu/articles/best_practices

[14] Loïc Tallon, *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience: Handheld Guides and Other Media* (United Kingdom: AltaMira Press, 2008), 1.

[15] Levi T. Novey and Troy E. Hall, "The Effect of Audio Tours on Learning and Social Interaction: An Evaluation at Carlsbad Caverns National Park," *Science Education* 91, issue 2 (October 2006), 262, accessed on October 20, 2019, http://illinois-online.org/krassa/hdes598/Readings/Technology/Effect%20of%20audio%20tours%20on%20learning.pdf

[16] The idea is that designers of tours should be very cautious about people's ability to cover large distances and hold an interest for more than thirty minutes. A review of seven college tours, including The W's, indicate that most tours take between 30 and 60 minutes.

[17] "Audio Tours," Harvard University, accessed on October 20, 2019, https://www.harvard.edu/on-campus/visit-harvard/tours/audio-tours

description.[18] Applications for campus tours are available at places like Ohio State, but it is clear that the app is actually focused on current students, as most of the features relate to class schedules, cafeteria hours, and student regulations. The app was created to help students navigate the campus and bus system, as well as remember their classes and look up their grades.[19] Well-organized and attractive PDF tours or other hard-copy tours without apps or other technology are also common; examples include The W, the University of Miami, and the University of California Santa Cruz.[20] This survey shows there are tours that also provide unreadable handouts with messy layouts for both pictures and text, such as Murray State University.[21] No university reviewed uses alumnae voices to guide tours and few use multimedia.

Historical Aspect

This project was based on archival research, focusing on an unprocessed audio and document collection of oral histories as the primary source base. The oral history collection is located at the Beulah Culbertson Archives and Special Collection in John C. Fant Memorial Library at The W. Most oral interviews (33 of the 48) were transcribed, and the audio of the oral histories was available for a majority of the interviews. However, the researcher asked alumnae to record for those interviews that did not have audio.[22] A spreadsheet tracked this process, which expanded to include updates on the digitization process as the project required.[23] Overall, the largest portion of this project revolved around the digitization of materials found locked away underneath ceilings of black mold, including interview transcripts and audio clips.

For interview transcripts, the researcher used a quick processing scanner located at the Beulah Culbertson Archives and Special Collections at J.C. Fant Memorial Library to digitize the texts and enable the searchability of key words including *uniforms*, *dating*, and *dorms*. For audio, the researcher uploaded CDs onto a computer. The selected audio was edited down to select cuts using Windows Movie Maker. These processes had to be completed before beginning the formation of this tour, including the selection of voices.

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[18] "Self-Guided Walking Tour," Montana State University, accessed on October 20, 2019, http://www.montana.edu/admissions/walkingtour/

[19] "Self-Guided Walking Tour," The Ohio State University, accessed on October 20, 2019, https://campusvisit.osu.edu/WalkingTour.pdf; There are several applications that are used to build tours, such as Curatescape and Clio; however, they are quite limited and/or expensive.

[20] The current walking tour at The W is a pocket-sized booklet that expands into a full-sized map. This map only shows buildings, and there is very little history included besides the basic information; "Self-Guided Walking Tour," University of Miami, accessed on October 20, 2019, https://admissions.miami.edu/_assets/pdf/web/selfguidedbooklet.pdf; "Self-Guided Tours," University of California-Santa Cruz, accessed on October 20, 2019, https://admissions.ucsc.edu/publications/ucsc-self-guided-tour.pdf

[21] "Self-Guided Walking Tour," Murray State University, accessed October 20, 2019, https://www.murraystate.edu/Libraries/campusLife/Self%20guided%20Walking%20tour%205-2018.pdf

[22] Only Meredith Gueder was not an alumna of the University.

[23] Appendix I.

The transcripts provided alumnae voices; however, with forty-eight voices, the researcher could not include them all. The selection process prioritized alumnae interviews who provided detailed stories about their student life experiences. For instance, Beverly Koch Jones, Class of 1953, was included within the tour twice because she was an excellent storyteller and had strong memories of her time on campus, which included playing tricks on her dorm mother. Another set of voices (5) that were not included within the Golden Girls Oral Interviews, but incorporated into this project, were the voices of African American women—those women who desegregated the campus in the 1960s. Their interviews were key because these voices demonstrate how race affected the experiences of alumnae, and how the university reflects both positive and negative experiences. These women were not all graduates, but in order to share an accurate remembrance of the campus from its alumnae, their voices were essential to include.

The transcripts varied in length and some interviewers proved better at explaining an incident, theme, or idea with more description and precision than others. All of these factors, and the length of the excerpts, factored into which alumnae interviews made it into the tour. The geographic locations were chosen with accessibility in mind. The project prioritized the safest and easiest route through campus either by walking or by wheelchair. Anyone should be able to take this tour.

Technological Aspect

The digital platforms researched for this project included: StoryMap and Omeka.[24] J. Kirby breaks down two versions of StoryMap, StoryMap JS and Story Maps, in a blog post from the Scholarly Commons at the University of Illinois Library.[25] According to Kirby, StoryMap JS creates interactive maps and requires little technical knowledge. It makes use of Google Maps and enables embedded images and audio in an interactive map. However, Google links can corrupt over time, meaning the project will have to always be backed up on another platform. Story Maps uses a tool called ArcGIS to make customized maps, which look more interesting than the traditional Google Map. However, there are several features that are behind a payment wall, such as the ability to lay historical images on top of current images to make an interesting visual effect. So, additional costs would be required to make this project work.[26]

Elizabeth Pepper points out that the basic Omeka is free to use, but there is a payment wall for additional features. Omeka Classic also has large system requirements, limiting the type of computer that could run it.[27] The platform offers many plugins to build onto its features, including a Google Docs Viewer and Geolocation plugin, and has themes to choose from, all of which can be modified.[28] Julie Meloni calls Omeka the "WordPress for museums," which is a

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[24] Omeka Classic (omeka.org).

[25] J. Kirby, "Scholarly Smackdown: StoryMap JS vs. Story Maps," Commons Knowledge-Insights from the Scholarly Commons at the University of Illinois Library, March 2, 2017, accessed on October 20, 2019, https://publish.illinois.edu/commonsknowledge/2017/03/02/scholarly-smackdown-storymap-js-vs-story-maps/

[26] Ibid.

[27] Elizabeth Pepper, "Omeka," *The American Archivist Review Portal*, May 15, 2013, accessed on October 20, 2019, https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2016/07/02/omeka/

[28] Ibid.

popular website builder.[29] However, even the websites linked on Omeka's site are minimalistic, feature no apps, and are unattractive. Initially, StoryMaps JS seemed like the best option since it is one of the few that exists outside of a payment wall; however, the researcher faced several problems as the project progressed.

In January, the researcher found that the audio function on StoryMaps JS was no longer available in the free version, only allowing videos to be attached. This would be a problem because the video would block a majority of the screen. The other options were equally problematic. There were potential problems associated with using a webpage, including the amount of time and skills needed; however, a simple webpage was the best option given the difficulties with the other options. The web builder Wix allows users to build both desktop and mobile websites for free. This web builder was chosen over Squarespace and Wordpress because the researcher had built previous web pages with it. To promote the longevity of this tour and allow future administrators to modify it, the researcher created an impersonal email to link with the website. This email will be handed over to the history department to enable continued maintenance of the walking tour website.

The design of the website is very clean, having followed suggestions by The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Digital Research in the Humanities. This website strives for maximum accessibility and clarity, fonts and colors are consistent, and the audio is easily playable. Additionally, the tour could work on multiple platforms, including mobile and desktop. The webpage is divided into four sections: *home*, *about*, *tour*, and *citation*. The *tour* section centers the content to make it more readable. Photos of both the interviewees as well as the locations featured in the tour make the alumnae voices more relatable and human. The tour directions and audio are included in this section, with the audio numbered to prevent any confusion. The *about* section provides background information on the researcher and the reason the project came into existence, while the *citations* section lists the sources for photographs and audio.

The researcher embellished the current walking map using Adobe Photoshop, editing and coloring in the lines and buildings when needed. Then, the route of this tour was drawn and photo bubbles added. The route is easy to follow because there is a key at the bottom with locations corresponding to numbers on the map. Even with minimal training in Photoshop software, simple and clear edits were possible.

Limitations & Future Research

Lack of funding and resources prohibited some of the goals of this project. First, the ideal digital platforms were cost-prohibitive. There were free versions of all these digital platforms, but they were too limited in space or features to achieve the desired results for the project. Building a website, even with a free, basic website building platform like Wix, was time-intensive. The mobile website builder was most frustrating because it required additional adjustments for every change on the original site. It also took a great deal of time and self-training to digitize audio and cut segments of file for the tour.

In March 2020, the University closed and moved to online classes because of COVID-19. Thankfully, a majority of the project had been completed and online resources were accessible

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[29] Julie Meloni, "A Brief Introduction to Omeka," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 9, 2010, accessed on October 23, 2019, https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/a-brief-introduction-to-omeka/26079

digitally, but there was a lack of test subjects to whom the website could be presented. These types of tours are improved by unbiased reactions. For example, Levi T. Novey and Troy E. Hall's study of patrons at the Carlsbad Caverns National Park prove the benefits of multimedia experiences in museums. They tested participants and learned from their reactions to patron satisfaction and historical knowledge. This tour could have been greatly improved if groups of students were available to review any mistakes. Also, the project would have been improved if the researcher had more contact with alumnae when making decisions about what to include in the tour.

This project could be very useful to the University as a social history for current students and alumni, connecting those who are currently enrolled with those who have graduated decades ago. In the future, the researcher would like this tour to focus on a larger section of university history, maybe even by conducting new interviews specifically for this tour and including male voices. There could also be more information added to the website, including links to the full versions of the oral interviews, transcripts, and archival documents. There are a multitude of directions future researchers could take as this project remains open-ended.

Conclusion

Overall, this project showcases alumnae voices by using their words and experiences to guide a walking tour of Mississippi University for Women. This project combines digital humanities processes with traditional archival research and serves as an example of how historical research and scholarship can be put to twenty-first century goals and ends. The researcher learned extensively about her alma mater and learned several lessons, including the difficulty of curating an original walking tour. This project increases the value of the University by allowing multiple generations to experience the social fabric of campus that has remained hidden beneath black mold.

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Appendix I

GOLDEN GIRLS INTERVIEWS					
NAME	YEAR	AUDIO	TRANSCRIBED	PHOTOCOPIED	MP3
MARY ELLEN WEATHERSBY POPE	1926	NO	YES	YES	NO AUDIO
ANNE PAYNE LOTT MCALLISTER	1930	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	YES
ELIZABETH SMITH GWIN	1930	YES	YES	YES	NO AUDIO
HYACINTH HAYMAN	1935	YES	YES	YES	YES
KATHERINE WORRELL	1936	YES	YES	YES	YES
FRAN IVY	1937	NO	NO	YES	NO AUDIO
CARMEN RANKEN	1937	NO	YES	YES	NO AUDIO
MARY ADELAIDE JOHNSON HAWKINS HALL	1939	YES	YES	YES	NO AUDIO
HAZEL MARTIN HOWELL	1940	YES	YES	YES	YES
EUGENIA SUMMER	1945	NO	YES	YES	NO AUDIO
FLOY (HOY) PARTAIN YORK	1945	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	YES
BARBARA DEAN	1947	YES	YES	YES	NO AUDIO
JOAN MCLEMORE	1947	YES	YES	YES	YES
MARY GLYNN (WILLIAMS) LANCASTER	1948	YES	YES	YES	YES
VELMA ERLEINE BIGNER PARISH	1948	YES	YES	YES	YES
CAMILLE LEHMANN (TEDDER)	1949	YES	YES	YES	YES
FRANCES B. DENT	1950	YES	YES	YES	CANNOT
BETTY BOYLS STONE	1951	YES	YES	YES	YES
CHARLOTTE MOSELEY RHETT	1952	YES	YES	YES	YES
SYLVIA DUCK CLARK	1952	YES	YES	YES	CANNOT
LU BULLOCK LEE	1952	NO	YES	YES	NO AUDIO
BEVERLY KOCH JONES	1953	YES	YES	YES	YES
LENORE LOVING PRATHER	1953	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	CANNOT
JOAN THOMPSON THOMAS	1953	YES	YES	YES	NO AUDIO
CAROLYN PARKSMITHSON RITTER	1953	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	YES
NORMA HICKMAN	1954	YES	YES	YES	YES
MARY LIBBY BICKENSTAFF PAYNE	1954	YES	YES	YES	YES
MARY LIB FRANCIS	1956	YES	YES	YES	YES
BARBARA GARRETT	1956	YES	YES	YES	YES
CLASS OF 1956 JOINT INTERVIEW	1956	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	NO
VANNA MAC (MACKIE) DOSSETT BETHAY	1957	YES	YES	YES	YES
NELL ANN PICKETT	1957	YES	YES	YES	YES
JANET GRAY	1957	YES	YES	YES	YES
BARBARA MCMILLIN WEBB	1957	YES	YES	YES	YES
BETTY BARNETT MITCHELL	1957	YES	YES	YES	YES
JUDY MITCHELL SEAL	1957	YES	YES	YES	YES
MARY HAWKINS	1957	NO	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	NO
DONETTE DUNAWAY LEE	1957	YES	YES	YES	YES
REBECCA BRANTBY MCCLAIN	1958	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	NO
JIMMIE MEESE MOOMAW	1958	YES	YES	NO TRANSCRIPT	NO
BILLIE ANN WEST FOSTER	1958	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	NO
GERALDINE BARFIELD INGRAM	1958	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	NO
BETTY HAYS VAN VALPEN	1958	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	NO
MARY LILLIAN HARRIS WADE	1963	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	YES
BETTY LOU STUART JONES	1966	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	NO AUDIO
ROSEMARY AULTMAN	1967	YES	NO	NO TRANSCRIPT	YES

Stories Behind The Brick And Mortar:
Voices of Mississippi University for Women
Narrator: Lauren Harmon
URL: muwalumnaetour.wixsite.com/tour

The tour begins beside Whitfield Hall, next to the campus map.
Narrator: Since 1884, Mississippi University for Women has created a small, tight-knit community within which its students flourish. Their memories of The W are not forgotten on graduation day; throughout their lives, students remember the impact this University has had on them. This walking tour—lasting roughly 30 minutes—allows you, the listener, to understand the experiences of alumnae at The W, cataloging the late 1920s through the 1960s. I'm Lauren Harmon, Class of 2020, and I will be your narrator. I hope you enjoy this tour of *our* university.

The tour moves across the street, following the left sidewalk, stopping beside the Callaway Fountain.
Narrator: In 1884, Mississippi University for Women staked its claim as the first public women's college in the United States, providing a liberal arts and industrial education for women. When the school opened, it was strictly for white women; and it was one of the only schools in the state that included room and board—allowing women to connect to the social fabric of the campus. Since its founding, the buildings of The W have been noted for their architectural beauty, and although the structure of campus has changed, these buildings have always inspired awe in new students arriving on campus, including Carmen Ronken, Class of 1937, as read by Lisa Lawrence, Class of 1981.

Carmen Ronken (1937): I just thought it was the prettiest place I'd ever seen. It was just beautiful. I remember the bell tower and I thought that was the prettiest thing. And it was. And the campus was just gorgeous. Just gorgeous. I thought - I just thought I'd got into heaven almost.

Narrator: Until the 1940s, the students streaming in and out of these buildings would have been in uniform, as uniforms were required until September 1945. These uniforms are mentioned in the song 'Hail To Thee,' which says, "Here's to our uniform of blue." Hyacinth Hayman, Class of 1937, remembers details of each uniform she wore.

Hyacinth Hayman (1937): You wore a solid navy blue when you were a freshman, and the next year you could add some white trimming and the next year you could have a white collar with navy blue on it and your senior year you could have a solid white collar. So, everybody knew what class you were.

The tour moves to Callaway Hall's front steps.
Narrator: Callaway Hall, originally called Main Dormitory, predates the founding of The W and was built as a dormitory for the Columbus Female Institute, the University's predecessor. That makes this building, which dates to 1860, the oldest on our campus.

Today, it houses upperclassmen; however, for Beverly Koch Jones, Class of 1953, it was a freshman dormitory where she and her classmates played tricks on their House Mother—an older woman who lived with them in the dorm, similar to a modern-day Resident Assistant (RA).

Beverly Koch Jones (1953): Yes, Ms. Janie Stennis and she was kin to Senator Stennis. I believe she was his sister. I'm not sure, but I think she was his sister. But yes, we had Ms. Stennis. And some of the girls - she was very large - and some of the girls would come in, she rode the elevator, we had one little elevator, but it was not allowed for us to ride it except for moving in luggage. And out. So Ms. Stennis would go up to check rooms or whatever she had to you know, get things quiet or whatever and she would ride the elevator up. And so a lot of times the girls from the fourth floor, when they came from lunch, would get on the elevator and ride it up to the fourth floor and leave it. And she would get so upset because the elevator was not where it was supposed to be, you know, that was not good.

Narrator: While today's students have the luxury of riding the elevators whenever they please, students are always looking for ways to have fun, and it's probably still true that some of that fun comes at the price of frustration on the part of their RAs. Another aspect of university life was dating, which was regulated heavily by the University. Students had to get permission to leave campus for dates. For some time, the chosen date even had to be approved by a social advisor. In addition, students were only allowed to go on dates during the weekend. However, Janet Carol Davis, Class of 1957, remembers that students would try to break these rules to have a little fun.

Janet Carol Davis Gray (1957): Okay. Some of the girls who were much more adventurous and much more social than I was would have mid-week dates. Of course, they couldn't date during the middle of the week, but they would have a mid-week date. They would meet down at the Catholic Church and then they would come in through fire escape, climb those fire escapes and come.

Narrator: It seems alumnae have interesting tales surrounding dating and practical jokes, but what about the more mundane aspects of university life? Today's students might be surprised to learn that throughout much of the school's history, students' laundry was done for them. As a student, Charlotte Ann Mosely Rhett, Class of 1956, remembers how the laundry system worked.

Charlotte Ann Moseley Rhett (1956): You were issued a laundry bag when you got up to school as a freshman, you were issued a laundry bag and that was your bag for the whole year, four years, all the time you were there, four years you were there. My number was 1140. I don't remember my post office number, post office box number, but I remember my laundry bag number. And you, they would pick it up one day and deliver it one day. And so you know, you would put whatever you wanted to send to the laundry down in your bag and then you'd just drop your bag at the back door of the dormitory and they would come and pick it up and then when it was clean they would deliver it back to the dormitory and you would pick it up. So sometimes there'd be, you know, you pick up your roommate's or she might pick up yours or something like that, everybody

was always hauling each other's laundry bags. Cause usually we'd just kind of drop them down from the top of the stairwell down to the down bottom to get them downstairs.

Narrator: The laundry was taken to a building located near modern-day Hogarth, and its workers were predominantly black. Until 1966, black women were excluded from the campus except as workers, like in the laundry or as maids or cooks. Following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Hogarth Administration made efforts to deny application materials to African Americans, but in 1966, the University took steps to carefully choose black applicants for admission. In September 1966, three undergraduate students—Diane Hardy, Barbara Turner, and Laverne Greene—as well as three graduate students—Jacqueline Edwards, Mary L. Flowers, and Eula M. Houser— were admitted. Because these students lived in Columbus, they were "day students" and did not live in the dorms. In 1968, integration of the dorms began when Toni Harrison Moss and others arrived on campus. She explains interactions that happened between black workers and students.

Toni Harrison Moss: Of course there was blacks – well, people working in the back with the food and you know what? We would go, Marion and I would go through the line and she would be at the end of the line, I guess to see what — how much food they — you know, that was just something that she'd — she would do on occasion. And so, and sometimes when there was something that the workers knew that we would really like, they knew how to put it on our plates…to make it appear that it wasn't as much as it was.

The tour moves into the front lawn of Shattuck Hall.
Narrator: Today, students are confused when they hear the term Zouave, but it was an important activity for the campus for the first half of the 20th century. In fact, the drill was performed for President Taft during his campus visit in 1912! During Zouave, W students would wear their physical education uniforms and arrange themselves in strict, military-like formations with coordinated hand and feet movements as a form of exercise. The woman that popularized this campus performance was Miss Emma Ody Pohl – the famed physical education instructor who taught at The W for 48 years. Today, "Ody the Owl" is a reminder of her influence on intercollegiate sports. Newspapers reported that large crowds, upwards of 5,000, came from across the South to watch Miss Pohl lead her Zouave Drills. Miss Pohl's talents were not only in physical education; she also helped co-write many of the University's songs, including 'Hail To Thee'. Like many alumnae, Mary Ellen Weathersby Pope, Class of 1926, could never forget Miss Pohl, and spoke of her intimidating presence. Dr. Bridget Pieschel, Class of 1979, reads for Pope.

Mary Ellen Weathersby Pope (1926): I remember Miss Pohl-scared to death of her. She would yell at you, you know, if you were supposed to be doing something with your right foot and you did it with your left: she'd say, "Weathersby, do you know your right foot from your left foot?" Well, at that stage when she would say that, I did not know my right foot from [my left] - of course, I would just freeze! She was that kind of person. I was not one of her favorite pupils, because I wasn't very graceful, and I never was one of the [special] dancers … She would stand up on the fountain and direct us.

She could see to the back row - we were in sections, you know - and she could look way back at anybody and if you were out of step, she could tell.

Narrator: Miss Pohl clearly had a strong will and good eyesight. More than one student remembered that she could spot gum-chewing from a long way and would bark orders to spit it out--scaring them to death! Pohl was strict and one of the early feminist faculty members on campus. She was an advocate for the National Women's Party – which was a radical women's rights group at the time pushing for an Equal Rights Amendment. She helped several students land jobs with the organization, including Louise Wier and Mary Moss Wellborn, Class of 1925.

The tour focuses on Shattuck Hall.

Narrator: Located next to the Zouave field is Shattuck Hall. Shattuck, built in 1910, was the only dining center (other than the Golden Goose Tea Room). The dining room was located on the first floor and dorm space was above. At one time the building was four stories tall, but a fire destroyed the top two floors in 1953. Donette Dunaway Lee, Class of 1957, discusses her dining experiences, which are very different from the cafeteria style dining students know today.

Donette Dunaway Lee (1957): Probably my best memories are of the dining hall. We all ate together [all three meals], if you wanted to eat breakfast, which I always did. A lot of people slept through breakfast, and you had to be there by, I don't know if it was seven or seven-fifteen. Anyway, you had to be there before the doors closed. We would go into Shattuck, which is where the dining hall was located, and we waited out in that big lobby until the doors opened. Then everybody went in and took their places. The food was ready, and it was delivered to your table family style, eight per table. People worked in the dining hall; they were called monitors, and they worked as part of their scholarship. Each year we got to select which table we sat at and who sat there. So, by the time we were seniors, our good buddies were all together! We'd come to the table at breakfast, lunch or dinner and catch up, you know, and have a chance to visit. We had white linen tablecloths and white linen napkins and the food was prepared from scratch right there. They made all the desserts: the banana creme pie and the graham cracker torte and black bottom pie, oh, the desserts were fabulous, as well as all the rest of the food. I mean there just was hardly anything that we didn't think was great. And we were expected to use our manners. Back then, people from outside The W would sort of make fun of us as being a finishing school, which was not the case at all. It was not all about becoming a Southern lady. However, we were reminded often that we were supposed to know how to behave ourselves. So, at the table we were supposed to use good manners. But I distinctly remember that [there was] one thing that we would not listen to the Dean of Students about when she fussed at us. We liked to drink coffee after the meal was over. And we would put our elbows on the table and hold our coffee cup and sip and visit and sip our coffee with those elbows on the table. And it just upset the dean of students so bad! She would chastise us for our unmannerly way of drinking our coffee. But we got away with it.

The tour moves to the Gazebo.
Narrator: There were many places that acted as meeting centers for students, but there has never been one as memorable as the Goose. It was located here at the Gazebo. The Goose encouraged social interaction, from dining, meetings, parties and formal dances—holding many valuable memories for alumnae. During the Hogarth Administration, the building was destroyed to make way for the Simmons Administration Building; however, it's memory persists. For many, the Goose's destruction was devastating, including to Mary Williams Lancaster, Class of 1948.

Mary Williams Lancaster (1948): Oh, the dear old Goose. That was our, you called it cafe, on the campus. But that's where everybody gathered for a break and it was real close to Music Hall and we'd run over to the Goose and I think you could get a Coke for a nickel or something like that, oh, and doughnuts. They had wonderful doughnuts. And we would buy a doughnut and sit down and talk and take a little break from practicing and classes and all and lo and behold, once some president came along and tore the Goose down. And that was heart-breaking when the Goose came down.

Narrator: Although the Goose is remembered fondly by many students, students also recall difficult times there, including Laverne Greene Leech, who was one of the first three African American undergraduate students at The W in 1966.

Laverne Greene Leech: One day, I was sitting there, alone...at a table...eating my hamburger and fries. There were some other kids across the — right over from me, and they started laughing, and poking fun at, you know, why are you here, and what are you eating, and you're just garbage, and stuff. And they picked up a garbage can, and walked over to my table, and dumped it right on my food.

Narrator: The years of desegregation were incredibly hard for the black women who came to The W seeking an education. However, by the 1970s, black women had gained access to more than just a seat in the classroom - they were part of the social fabric of campus, including dorm life.

The tour moves in front of Fant Hall.
Narrator: As we move further back on campus, you will find more dorms. Today, Peyton and Fant Halls are empty, but until the 21st century, they were occupied. Until the mid-20th century, residents of Fant Hall could also sleep on the building's fourth floor breezeways during hot months. Beyond breezes, Norma Sue Hickman, Class of 1954, explained how students made good use of the big windows the building offered.

Norma Sue Hickman (1954): And I remember the last day that I was here as a senior, oh, there's was lots of confusion that day. The, I mean, there was lots of hustle and bustle. People really gettin' out. And the thing that I thought was so funny is one girl had a, her parents they had a pickup truck. And this was in Fant Hall, you know at that time it was a senior dormitory. And they pulled the truck up, you know, right under the window from the third floor and she had all her belongings tied up in a sheet and they lowered it from the third floor into the bed of this pickup truck and off they went.

The tour moves across the street from Summer Hall.
Narrator: In 1960, the Fine Arts Building was constructed to house the art and design programs. In 2002, a tornado ripped through campus, destroying the building. The building for Art and Design was rebuilt on the same spot and rededicated as Summer Hall in 2017, after long-time faculty member Eugenia Summer, who graduated from MSCW in 1945. Dianne Adams, Class of 1971, was one of the first black women to major in art in the late 1960s. She describes an early experience in the program.

Dianne Adams (1971): My first day in the art department, I was walking to class...When I walked in somebody come in and [said], 'I didn't know they were coordinated enough to major in art.' The professor was behind me and heard the comment. At the beginning of the lecture she said, 'Ms. Adams has more creativity in her little finger than you will have in a lifetime.' After that, I didn't hear any comments.

The tour moves in front of Painter Hall.
Narrator: On the front campus, Painter Hall has acted as home to the Humanities, English, Literature, Philosophy, Languages and History, as well as Geography, and Political Science for decades. Juanita McCown, Class of 1934, remembers how her history teacher loved to gossip about a famous Mississippi author. Hight's recollection is read by Andrea Stevens, Class of 1992.

Juanita McCown Hight (1934): Dorothy Oldham was my world history teacher my freshman year. We digressed every day because she would tell us some more about William Faulkner because her sister, Estelle, had just married William Faulkner. We had those tall radiators, and she would stand up there and stroke those radiators every day in class and tell us the latest things on Faulkner.

Narrator: Barbara Garrett, Class of 1956, discusses the quirky characteristics of her favorite English teacher, while Earlene Friday discusses the impact that her professor had on her life, developing her writing skills that would later help in her career.

Barbara Garrett (1956): I loved Dr. Covington, my freshmen English teacher, and I remember his mannerisms that he'd always hit his left foot as he'd go around the desk to talk to us, come closer to us. And then he'd go back, but all repeatedly he'd hit that foot' But he was such a gentle soul, such a sweet man. And I think I really particularly enjoyed him.

Earlene Friday: I decided that I learned so much in English that I did not know – I decided to take Mr. Carlton again because I had improved so much from the moment I started in that English class, and Peggy Sue said, "Who do you have for English this semester?" That second semester, and I said, "Mr. Carlton." And she said, "You are crazy! Why would you take that man again? He is unreasonable," Or something to that effect. Don't quote me—Those were not the exact words, but that's basically what it meant. And she said, "I took another class because he is totally unreasonable. He is so hard!" And I said, "I wanted to learn English. I wanted to learn to speak it. I wanted to learn to write it." I did not know—and I took it again, I got a B the second semester. And he later told me that I have improved in English more than any other freshman that he

had ever encountered. And I just loved Mr. Carlton because he graded my paper, and he circled what I had done wrong. He made me write the rule and go back and correct my paper and go back and basically rewrite it, which was a great learning experience for me, and I love Mr. Carlton to this day...

The tour crosses the street towards Pohl Gym.
Narrator: Now abandoned, Old Pohl Gym, named after Emma Ody Pohl, was once a center of activity, from swimming lessons to dances. Although dances also happened at the Goose, many dances happened in the gym. Beverly Koch Jones, Class of 1953, remembers her sophomore prom at The W.

Beverly Koch Jones (1953): We had the class dance. We had a dance in the old gym. And what was fun was our sophomore prom we had. And we invited, and we had cards, we signed, you know, a dance card, and you'd get everybody to sign what number dance you were going to dance with them. And then I remember my husband who is now, who was my date that night, and he didn't think about getting a corsage and he felt so bad because everybody had a corsage and I didn't have one, you know. But it didn't make any difference. I couldn't go help decorate because I was sewing my dress. I made my dresses and I had a little bitty sewing machine and I put it on a stool, and I was sewing all this black net and it was a beautiful dress. It was a velveteen top and black net circle with a big ruffle, and it had a black velveteen bow that came around. It was really pretty over a hoop skirt.

The tour walks towards Carrier Chapel, beside the front doors next to the fountain.
Narrator: Like today, not all students lived on campus and "day students" or "town girls," as they were then called, did not have the same experiences as students who lived in dorms. Elizabeth Smith Gwin, Class of 1930, recounts her feelings about being socially excluded on campus but eventually finding her place in The W's community. Gwin is read by Maridith Geuder, Director of Special Projects and former Director of University Relations at The W.

Elizabeth Smith Gwin (1930): We had one room on campus which was called the "Town Girl's Room." It was in old Industrial Hall, which is where the chapel [Carrier Chapel] is now. This room had old broken-down wicker furniture in it, and it smelled like wet galoshes and stale cigarette smoke. The town girls didn't go there. It seemed just so unfair to me, since not many people went there. So, between classes I went to the library and studied and when I got home I took my uniform off and lived my own life with no social restrictions. Most town girls felt that way. We felt as if we weren't a part of the college since we weren't included in things. But when I was a junior somebody told me that Miss Pohl had put my name on the list of people she wanted to walk for the wedding. So I went down and walked for the wedding and was chosen and that's the first time I felt as if I really were an integral part of college. And of course the next year the ones who had been in the wedding the year before were in the chorus for the next year's wedding. That was a big deal, you know.

Narrator: The Junior-Senior Wedding was a time when all students, whether they lived on campus or not, could come together in an elaborate tradition. Dr. Bridget Pieschel states it was "a beautiful symbolic ceremony illustrating the unity of the sister classes: the freshman and the juniors."

The tour moves passed the fountain, making their way across the street towards Whitfield.

Narrator: Regardless of how you came to The W or your experiences at The W, all students have walked into Whitfield Hall in their caps and gowns to graduate, emerging from the building as alumni. In this tour, which focuses on alumnae voices and The W's history, participants walk through the campus that so many students have shaped over the years, hearing the types of experiences they had, whether it be sneaking out of the dorms for dates or hearing stories about William Faulkner from their English teacher. The W has had many ups and downs, but it continues to prepare new generations of women, and men since 1984, for the world outside its gates.

Narrator: Our first alumni president at The W, Nora Miller, Class of 1983 explains her first impressions of campus, how our university has changed over time, and its importance to alumni.

Nora Miller (1983): I first stepped on this campus as a prospective student in the spring of 1979. The campus was beautiful and in full bloom. It looked the way I had always pictured a college. The historic buildings and campus traditions make this such a special place. Then and now, this campus has always made me feel that there are opportunities for growth and endless possibilities. We change with each passing down, just as we grow and change as individuals and as a society. We were formed as the first public college for women in 1884 to serve an underserved population and provide educational opportunities for intellectual growth, self-awareness, and vocation. We serve a much broader population now, but our mission remains the same. The Long Blue Line began with the blue uniforms worn by the students long ago, and it continues today in the hearts of our alumni.

Narrator: This concludes *our* tour—thank you for listening. For more information about The W, visit our university archives in person or online at the Fant Library website.

The tour ends in front of Whitfield Hall.