

Laura Jackson Edwards

Early Settlers' Personal History Questionnaire, WPA  
Interviewed by Sarah R. Scott Yell County, Ark. October 25, 1940.  
"Early Negro Life in Dardanelle"

Transcribed by Andrea E. Cantrell, University of Arkansas Libraries, 2003. [See transcriber's notes](#)

NOTE: This interviewer recorded answers in groups as shown here.

1. - 12. Laura Jackson Edwards, Dardanelle, Arkansas, was born in Mississippi on a Friday in March and she is "somewhere around eighty." Her mother died when Laura was three months old and her white mistress, a Mrs. Elsie Jackson, raised her. The Jackson family brought her to Arkansas soon after her mother's death. They traveled in wagons drawn by oxen. "Aunt" Laura was married to a Dardanelle negro, John Edwards.
13. The Jackson home was made of logs covered over with boards. The rooms were large and [a?] large open hall ran the length of the house. Each room had a fireplace and candles furnished the light at night.
14. - 16. [skipped]
17. - 18. Each family in those days raised its own hogs, chickens, wheat, corn, potatoes, oats, and sorghum. All clothing was homespun. Aunt Laura's master raised sheep for wool for their clothes and she and her mistress spun their thread.
19. - 22. [skipped]
23. The farm implements were all homemade of wood. Some of these were wagons, plows, wooden-teeth harrows, and gull tongue-harrows. "Aunt" Laura says she remembers when the Arkansas River was just wide enough for two boats to pass. She says she used to get on a steam boat and dance all the way up and donw[down?] the river.
24. - 29. [No answer]
30. - 34. The only school that "Aunt" Laura attended was one that was conducted on the Jackson premises in Carden Bottoms about twenty miles south of Dardanelle. Her teacher was Ned Williams. The school was free and she remembers studying the old "Blue Back Speller."  
"Aunt" Laura has cooked and kept house for many different families in Dardanelle, also for the Powers and Blackwell hotels, which were among the first ones in Dardanelle.  
She remembers her mistress baking wheat and sweet potatoes real brown during the Civil War, grinding it and using if for coffee. She also remembers the soldiers stripping their house of food and burning the straw beds, break[ing?] the mirrors, dishes and everything that was of any value. They would then go to the pastures and kill all the cows and hogs. She says that if the "Federals" came and

wanted to know where anything was they had to tell for if they didn't "they would burn their feet off in a fire." She went into the house one morning and the soldiers had her mistress before the fireplace fixing to burn her feet because she wouldn't tell them where her money was. "Aunt" Laura finall[y?] told them and they went away.

She has eight children, eleven grandchildren, and ten great-grand children. She makes her home with a daughter in Dardanelle.

31. - 59. [Numbers for these questions not listed, however answers to some of these questions are included in 30-34 above.]

The above questionnaire is intended solely as a skeleton outline to assist the interviewer in giving his subject leads. It is improbable that any one individual can answer all the questions fully but it is advisable to ask them all anyway. Record the answers on plain paper numbering the answers to correspond with the above questions, if possible.

**AT THE TOP OF THE PAPER ON WHICH YOU RECORD THE ANSWERS BE CERTAIN TO PUT YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, DATE AND REFER TO ARKANSAS HRS FORM J.**

Do not limit yourself to the above questions. If the subject goes off on any tangent follow it to see if it is of historical interest. Remember to get Who, What, When, Where, How, and Why on every possible question. As regards matters of location, such as Indian sites, early buildings, tombstones, etc., be as definite and detailed as possible. Give pertinent data i.e., whether or not buildings are now occupied and if so by what or whom, and in either case, in what state of preservation and repair.

AH/gm-9/13/38