

SPRING 2023

Down the Bay

Oral History Project Update

Thank You, Down the Bay Community!

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The Down the Bay Oral History Project is celebrating its one-year anniversary! In that time, over 60 community members have shared their memories of the neighborhood with us, and many more have volunteered to contribute. Thank you to the amazing Down the Bay community for your generosity in sharing these memories. We're honored to preserve them for future generations in the University of South Alabama archive!



What is the Down the Bay Oral History Project?

The McCall Library is creating a public archive of memories of Down the Bay. Dr. Kern Jackson, Ryan Morini, Jada Jones, and others are conducting oral history interviews with community members to preserve the history of Down the Bay.

If you're interested in sharing your memories of Down the Bay, contact the McCall Library at (251) 341-3900 or oralhistory@southalabama.edu for more information. Follow the project on Facebook and Instagram: @USAarchaeology

Down the Bay: Food and Photos Day

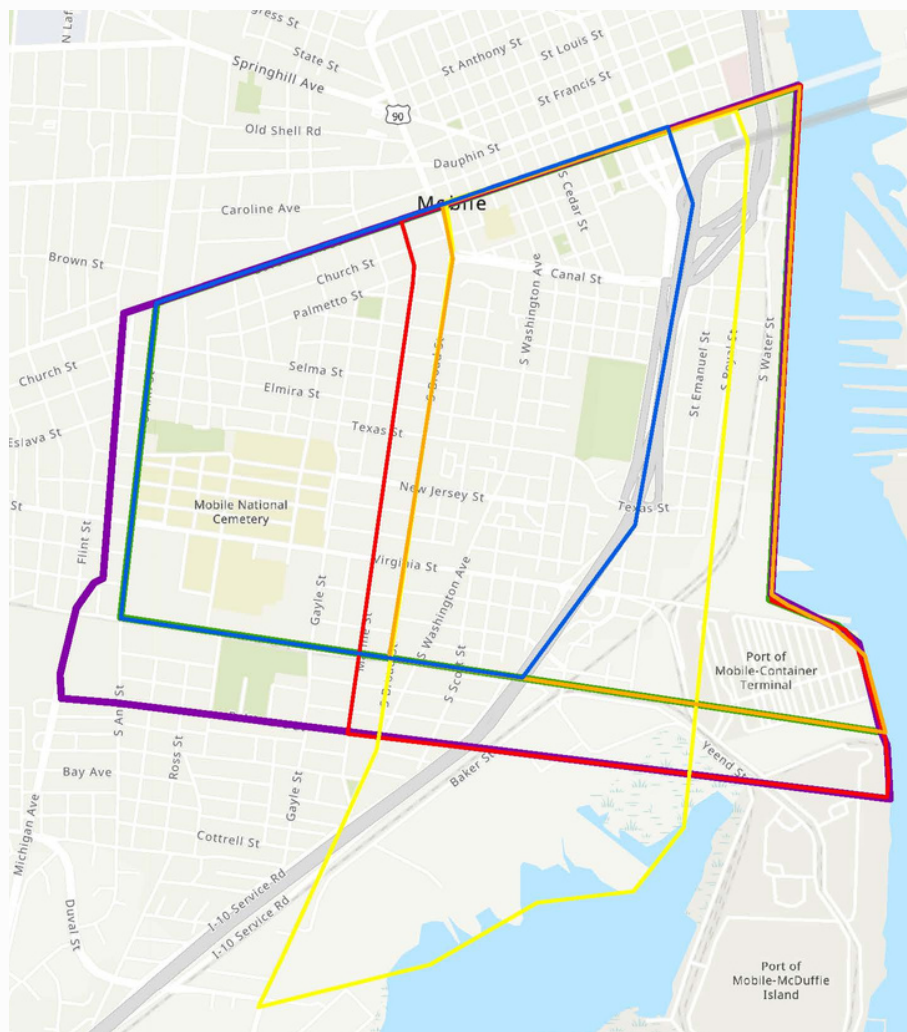
Join the Down the Bay Oral History Project on **Saturday, April 1** from 10 am - 2 pm at the James Seals Jr. Recreation Center (540 Texas Street).

We will share historic photos from the McCall Library, memories of food from the Down the Bay Oral History Project, and artifacts from the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeology Project related to food and cooking.

Oral Historian Andre Taylor from William and Mary will share his work about memory and food at 11 am. This event is free and lunch will be provided!

Down the Bay Neighborhood Boundary

Where is Down the Bay? It depends who you ask! Our questions about the boundaries of the neighborhood in our oral history interviews have produced a variety of answers. Check out some of the most common answers in this map. What do you consider the boundary for Down the Bay?



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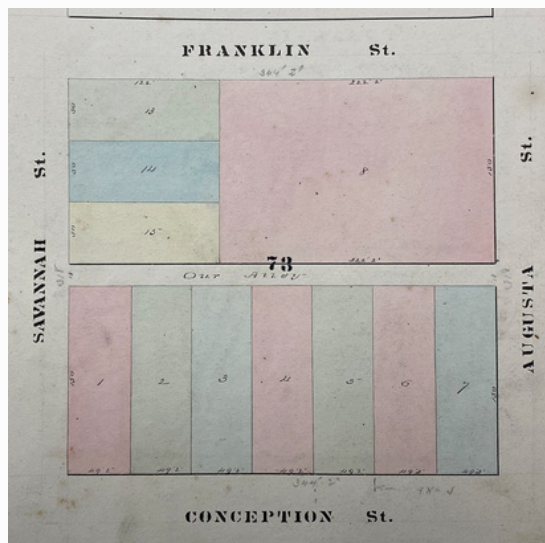
We have learned a lot about Down the Bay during our oral history interviews over the past year. We've also gathered historic photos of Down the Bay from the McCall Library Archives, excavated artifacts from the neighborhood as part of the I-10 Mobile River Bridge Archaeological Project, and collected historic documents and maps.

Many people have shared their memories of skating on Texas Hill on Christmas Day:

"And on Christmas Day—this was when we were younger—we just stayed on Elmira Street. Everybody skated. But as my brothers got older, they went to Selma Street. And Selma Street was filled with kids, skating from Selma all the way up to Texas Hill. And everybody came across Broad Street, 500 of them at a time, you know. But it was just—everybody had roller skates, and peppermint sticks that you stuck in an orange." -Wilbur Coleman Nesbitt



A glass skate found in a trash deposit in a privy at RV City



Others remember living on Our Alley, between Conception and South Franklin Streets, shown to the left in the 1868 Pillans map:

"at the Texas Street Park, we have a Down the Bay reunion. And I could sit out there by myself because from where I could sit, I could visualize exactly where Ours Alley was, and I could see our house, and it'd bring tears. I could see that area where I was born and remember it."

-Earl Safford Sr.

The Ditch runs right through Down The Bay. The photo at the right shows the ditch at the corner of Virginia and South Lawrence Streets:

"There was a ditch we called the Big Ditch... that Ditch, it was wide as a street... [A]nd every now and then, when it rain really, really hard, it'll flood real bad where that Ditch was."

-David Smoots

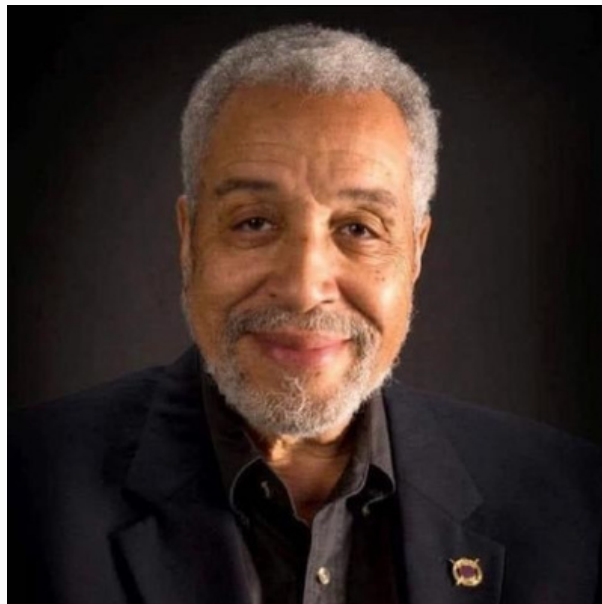


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Nearly everyone remembers Down the Bay as a tight-knit, self-sufficient community:

"The Down the Bay community within itself was a city; we had everything. It was a community that, everybody knew everybody. That was your family. I didn't have too much of a family growing up, but Down the Bay. And that's why, when it was taken away from us and we were displaced like we were displaced, we lost a lot. We lost that connectivity that we had. We lost that community feel, that safe and secure feeling that we had with Down the Bay. And it affected some people greatly... Down the Bay, the community was my family. I knew that nothing was going to happen to me Down the Bay. I knew I was safe Down the Bay. And everybody knew everybody Down the Bay."

-Marjorie Kenny Jones, author of "Who Are You? Staking A Claim in This Land"



Dr. Joaquin Holloway Jr. passed away on December 11, 2022. Dr. Holloway was a faculty member and librarian at the University of South Alabama for over 25 years. He remembered his childhood in an interview with Jada Jones and Ryan Morini:

"I remember the first excursion I had around the block, leaving my house on Savannah Street at 855, and then going west up to Broad Street on the sidewalk, and then turning and going south on Broad Street until I got to the next corner, which was Selma Street. Then I turned and went east on Selma Street until I got to Jefferson Street. And then I turned again north, and went back—. That was my first excursion by myself, on a bicycle, around the block in the neighborhood. Yeah. [Laughter] But I remember that very distinctly, you know? And we used to also go skating regularly. We'd go up Texas Hill, and we'd have a good time skating there. And you know, sometimes we'd all get a little bit out of range, but it was okay. It was all good."

-Dr. Joaquin Holloway, Jr.