

Interviewer: Carla Hilgert

INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY

Name: Jane K. Graham

Date and Place of Birth: Nov. 14, 1916 Alton, IL

Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Interview Date, Time, and Place:
11/17/01 10:30 am 2222 Sals St. Alton IL 62002

Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):

- lived entire life in Alton, just turned 85 yrs. old
- not born in hospital because of race - African Am.
- didn't get birth certificate until 1977 - only child
- took trolley to go to school
- couldn't eat in many restaurants in town because of race
- taught school in Alton
- lived in same house since 1957 she & husband had built

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:

- books looked at during interview:

Alton Illinois Illustrated Published by James Allen
Reed, St. Louis MO & Alton IL 1919

The Best of Alton. Charlotte Stetson.
G. Bradley Pub. & Inc. 1999

Carla Hilgert
History 447
Ione Gorham Bio.
11-30-01

Ione Gorham has lived her entire eighty-five years in Alton. During those eighty-five years she has seen a lot of change in Alton. When she was growing up or “coming up” as she likes to say, they had no street lights in her neighborhood and she rode the streetcar to school for a mere four cents.

Ione Gorham was born in Alton in 1916. She grew up as an only child, but not a lonely child since she had many friends and cousins. Ione likes to tell the story of how it wasn't until sixty years later in 1976 that she finally got her birth certificate.

Apparently when she was born the doctor never filled one out for her. Fortunately for her, in those days you did not need a birth certificate to register for school, go to college, or get a job. She attended the local public schools in Alton and Shurtleff College. Like many Altonians, Ione stayed in Alton to teach in the very school district she attended. After her and her husband were married they bought a piece of land and had a house built for themselves. This is the same house Ione lives in today.

One of the biggest changes Ione has seen over the years is integration. She has many stories to tell. Stories about how her mother had her at home because she was not allowed to go to the hospital, or about how in high school she and her friends always had a day off from school so that the white students could take a field trip of a boat ride down the river, and lastly about how as a teacher she was invited to lunch but told they hoped she would not accept. For many people, incidents like this might make them bitter or resentful, but not Ione. She says her mother really educated her conscience and taught her to like people for who they are and not by their race. An attitude like that has made Ione Gorham a happy healthy person.