

KentuckyHistoricalSociety

Kentucky Folklife Program

*Rural Heritage Development Initiative Central Kentucky Cultural Survey
in partnership with the Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology at
Western Kentucky University*

Field Notes

County: Boyle

Interviewee's name: Marthetta Clark

Date: 11.2.2007

Location: Danville, KY

Interviewer's name: Meredith Martin

Interviewer's email and phone number: Meredith.martin466@wku.edu; 479-957-0551

Archival code for audio: RHDI.Boyle.11.2.2007.Clark.mp3

Archival code for photos (if applicable): RHDI.Boyle.11.02.2007.Clark.jpeg

Additional Notes: _____

I heard about Mrs. Marthetta Clark from Bev Cox after speaking with Bev about Homemaker's in the area. Bev got Mrs. Clark's name from the Boyle County Extension Office who said that Mrs. Clark was a wonderful seamstress and textile artist. When I first spoke with Mrs. Clark on the phone she was unsure about doing the interview but then decided she wanted to do it. She explained that she does many different kinds of textile arts and shows her work in gallery shows in the area. We scheduled the interview for my second day in Boyle County, after my interview with Teresa Martin.

After my interview with Teresa Martin I did not have a lot of time to get to Mrs. Clark's home. After speaking with her on the phone a few times, I thought I understood how to get to her home, but I did get lost after taking a wrong turn. I finally made it to her home a few minutes late for the interview. She met me outside and was telling by to a visitor who was on his way out. There was a beautiful dog in the back yard barking at me very loudly. As we made our way into the house I found out that Mrs. Clark's husband had died only three weeks before. I had no idea. She said she wanted to do the interview however because it was good for her to do things like this.

I began to set up by equipment in her sitting room, which was beautiful and full of sunlight. The room was filled with photographs of her family and beautiful patterns and colors on the couches, chairs, and throw pillows. The walls are painted a nice yellow so that the whole room glows.

Mrs. Clark had laid out some of her work in her bedroom for me to see and she showed me the kind of things she does. Her work is colorful and full of patterns. I had heard from other people in the area that her work was very unique and unlike much of the other work done in the area. Her work is immediately eye catching with bright colors of blue, green and red. She also uses a lot of patterns and some shades of black and brown. She makes jackets, purses, aprons, and vests as well as rugs and pillows. We brought her work into the sunroom for me to photograph and she tried on some of the pieces so that I could photograph them on. She said that she often wears her work or gives it away. Occasionally she sells them. She also said that she likes to skip from style to style and always try something new. After we began recording the interview she would often think of other pieces she wanted to show me and go get them. Her repertoire is quite large and matching fabrics and working with color, she says, is her favorite thing to do.

She also considers her work art she says.

As we were conducting the interview she also had a few people stop by, one man to drop off his coat to be mended. She also takes in sewing work and alterations. Her phone rang often and it appears that Mrs. Clark has many friends who check in on her. We talked about her work, but we also talked about the neighborhood she lived in and how it has changed since urban renewal. Like many African American communities throughout the U.S., Urban Renewal destroyed communities and homes, breaking apart neighborhoods. In the future, more research should be done about Urban Renewal in Boyle County's only major city, Danville. Urban Renewal seems to be a very understudied subject in oral history in Kentucky and needs more attention if we are to ever understand the area's history. We also talked about her work at an area factory and her four children, three of whom still live in the area. We also talked about her inspiration for her work. We were not able to talk as long as I would have liked because she had to meet some people.

Near the close of our interview, a close friend and her son came by to visit and we talked for a while before I packed up my things. You will find that their voices are on the end of the recording.