

Learning Lagniappe: Educator Extras Educable Children Records (Mississippi), 1850-1965

http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/educablechildren/

These records from MDAH collection, digitized by FamilySearch, include lists of educable (school age) children submitted by Mississippi counties to the state's Secretary of State and Department of Education. The earliest records, dating 1850-1894, are lists prepared by counties and filed with the Secretary of State. Records dating 1906-1965 include lists prepared by the Superintendent of Education in each county and filed with the Department of Education. The lists vary in content by year and may include such information as name, age, gender, race, election district or ward, name of parent or guardian, address, and reason for withdrawal from school.

Subjects that can be addressed within this Digital Archive:

Children, education, education laws, genealogy, federal censuses, state censuses, race, segregation, civil rights, Mississippi government, poverty, and agriculture.

Suggested Classroom Activities:

Search for a school from your county or city and discuss as a class how they compare with the school today.

For more lessons and activities based on the Digital Archives and other collections visit the Classroom Materials page on our website at

<http://www.mdah.ms.gov/new/learn/classroom-materials/lesson-plans-and-teaching-units/>

Teacher Discussion Guide on Reverse

Teacher Discussion Guide

Use lists from the MDAH Digital Archive entitled “Educable Children Records (Mississippi), 1850-1965,” (found at http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/educablechildren/) to lead your class in a discussion analyzing and interpreting the following people and topics:

Click “Browse Records by County” and discuss aspects of enumerations (to catalog or list) and censuses in addition to the significance of these Mississippians to culture and history:

Eudora Welty: Go to “Hinds-City of Jackson,” then “1927,” at the bottom of the page type “149” in the box and hit enter. Welty is in line 14.

1. Why is Eudora Welty known as a prominent Mississippian? Eudora Welty was a well know author of novels and short stories based in the South. Her novel, *The Optimist's Daughter*, won the 1973 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Welty was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1980 and became the first living author to have her works published in the Library of America series.
2. What is the C.S.L. column? C.S.L. stands for Compulsory School Law. This column indicates if the enumerated child was subject to the compulsory school attendance. While all children between the ages of 6 and 20 were counted for the educable children lists, under the original 1918 C.S.L. only children between 7 and 14 were required to attend school. In example, of the three Welty children, only Eudora's brothers, Edward and Walter, have a “c” in the C.S.L. column indicating they were required to attend school because they were 14 and 11 respectively. Eudora, already 17 in 1927 was not required by law to attend school.
3. Discuss why Jackson is the only city to have its own enumeration. As the capitol of the state, historically Jackson has had one of the largest populations in the state. This means there was a higher density of children, in a more urban environment. Multiple children from different families lived on the same street. Providing house numbers and street names ensured greater accuracy in the enumeration.

Medgar Evers: Go to “Newton,” then “1931,” at the bottom of the page type “177” in the box and hit enter. Evers is in line 23.

1. Why is Medgar Evers known as a prominent Mississippian? Medgar Evers was a World War II veteran, civil rights activist, and leader of the Mississippi chapter of the NAACP. In this capacity he investigated the murder of Emmett Till, helped organize boycott campaigns, participated in efforts to integrate the University of Mississippi, and raised NAACP membership.
2. Medgar Evers' brother, Eugene, is noted as W1. What does this mean? According to the code list at the top of the page, W1 (withdrawn) stands for work at home. At 18, it would be reasonable to expect Eugene to work instead of attending school. However, the listing of W1 (work at home) instead of W4 (completed school course) indicates that Eugene might have been withdrawn from school before he received a full education because his family needed his labor more than he needed an education.

James Meredith: Go to “Attala,” then “1941,” at the bottom of the page type “180” in the box and hit enter. Despite the misspelled last name, Meredith is at line 13, listed as “J.H.”

1. Why is James Meredith known as a prominent Mississippian? James Meredith was an Air Force veteran who became the first African American student admitted into the University of Mississippi in 1962. In 1966, he organized and started the March Against Fear to encourage voter registration and combat continued racism after the passage of federal civil rights legislation. Still living, Meredith is also known as a writer and political advisor.
2. On these records, “Race” is listed at the top of the page along with school information. What does this tell us about education in Mississippi in the first half of the 20th century? Laws and social norms segregated Mississippi society by race in the early 20th century. In the case of education, Section 207 of the 1890 Constitution states, “Separate schools shall be maintained for children of the white and colored races” (see http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/series/constitutions/detail/34709) and provided the means of separating African Americans and whites. If followed to the letter of the law, these schools should have been separate but equal. In practice, however, limited resources, unequal funding by state government, and the economic situation of many African Americans meant that black children received a poorer education than white children.
3. Discuss what mistakes in the list tell us about census taking and looking for ancestors in records. In the early 20th century, censuses and enumerations were collected by individuals. Oral communication meant that many early records have misspellings or common names. Genealogists need to look for variations in the records when looking for ancestors. Today, censuses are self-reporting which means that there is greater chance for accuracy in the records.

Elvis Presley: Go to “Lee,” then “1945,” at the bottom of the page type “68” in the box and hit enter. Presley is in line 10.

1. Why is Elvis Presley known as a prominent Mississippian? Known as “The King of Rock and Roll,” Elvis Presley was a singer and actor of pop, blues, and gospel music. An army veteran, during his career he was nominated for fourteen Grammy Awards and won three. At the age of 36 he received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. Additionally, Presley has been inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (1986), the Country Music Hall of Fame (1998), the Gospel Music Hall of Fame (2001) and the Rockabilly Hall of Fame (2007).
2. Presley may have had family in the area. How can you tell and why could this information be important? There are a total of six families with the last name of Presley in this list; some of these may have been aunts, uncles, and cousins. When conducting genealogical searches in censuses it is often easier to find relationships between parents and children than it is to find relationships between siblings and cousins. Lists such as the Educable Children Records often provide evidence of family relationships after 2 siblings move out of their parents' homes and establish their own residences and families.