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An Interview With

MRS. FRANCES MUFFULETTO

April 22, 1978

Interviewed by

Daisy Greene

Mississippi

Department of Archives and History

and the

Washington County Library System

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Interviewee: Frances Loyacono Muffuletto (Mrs. Charles)
Interviewer: Daisy Greene

Title: An interview with Frances Loyacono Muffuletto (Mrs. Charles), April 22, 1978 / interviewed by Daisy Greene

Collection Title: Washington County Oral History Project

Scope Note: The Washington County Library System, with assistance from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, conducted oral history interviews with local citizens. The project interviews took place between 1976 and 1978. The interviewees included long-term residents of the Greenville-Washington County area in their late 50's and older.

GREENE: April 22, 1978. This is Daisy Greene interviewing Mrs. Frances Muffuletto, who lives at 318 Orlando Street.

Mrs. Muffuletto, tell me something about your childhood days in Italy.

MUFFULETTO: Well, there's nothing much I can say, but I went to school. That's all I can say about that.

GREENE: You went to the Sisters' school?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. There was no public school. They were all Catholic schools.

GREENE: What was your mother's name and your father's name?

MUFFULETTO: Ignace and Mary Anne Loyacono.

GREENE: Do you remember anything about the trip to America?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. We went to Palermo, and then we took the ship to Naples. In Naples, we stayed two days, and then we went to New York, and in New York we stayed a couple of days with Cousin Nettie. She was living there. And then we went to New Orleans. We came by train to Greenville. They didn't have cars.

GREENE: How old were you when you came?

MUFFULETTO: Seventeen or so.

GREENE: How was living here in Mississippi when you came? Do you remember anything about it?

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MUFFULETTO: Yes. It was very rough. We didn't have concrete streets. It was all muddy. Muffuletto had a horse and buggy and he used to come get me sometime, and we used to go to the country for pastime.

GREENE: Whom did you marry?

MUFFULETTO: I married Charles Muffuletto.

GREENE: Where did your children go to school?

MUFFULETTO: I didn't have children.

GREENE: Oh, you had no children.

MUFFULETTO: The rest of the family had the children.

You see, there were three brothers - the Muffulettos.

GREENE: All in Greenville?

MUFFULETTO: All in Greenville.

GREENE: One was named Paul?

MUFFULETTO: Yes, Paul, Charles, and Sam, and they were all married, and they had a restaurant when I came here; then they had a hotel. They built a hotel, and we had a hotel with the dining room and everything.

GREENE: What were some of the good foods they used to serve?

MUFFULETTO: They used to come from New Orleans, where they'd get the shrimp and all kinds of fish; and other things came from different places.

GREENE: Now, that was the Muffuletto Hotel?

MUFFULETTO: Yes, the Muffuletto Hotel, on Washington Avenue.

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GREENE: And it didn't burn. Your husband just sold it?

MUFFULETTO: Just sold it, yes, because he was sick. Paul died first, then my husband was very sick, and he died. So when he died, there was only one brother left, so he decided they were all together all the time; they were all married, and they all lived on this street.

GREENE: One right beside the other?

MUFFULETTO: Yes, they lived on Orlando Street since 1911. I got married. They built these houses, one after another. All three of the brothers were married. Each one had his own home, and all were together.

GREENE: Did your parents come over to America, too?

MUFFULETTO: Yes, and they died here, too. My mother died three years after I was here. I came here in 1905.

GREENE: Mrs. Muffuletto, Mr. Joe Loyacono had a shoe shop.

MUFFULETTO: The shoe shop is still here.

GREENE: Where did he learn the trade?

MUFFULETTO: In Italy. He was a shoe-maker in the old country. He didn't come first to Greenville, he had a shop in New Orleans. He came from Italy by himself first, then he took the two boys who were big enough to travel, and they went to New Orleans and stayed there about seven years, and then they went back to Italy. And my mother was sick. After

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she died, they decided to go back to New Orleans again. One of the brothers had gotten married and my father had a shoe shop here in Greenville. He sold the shop - the same shop that is still here - and my brother had the shop, Joe Loyacono, and my brother worked until he was old; he was old when he came back. You see, he had to come here twice. And he got sick and passed away here in Greenville.

GREENE: Mrs. Muffuletto, do you know anything about those ovens they had in the yard to make bread? Did your mother have one?

MUFFULETTO: Yes, but we didn't have it here. They had it in New Orleans and different places. I didn't see it myself

GREENE: Where did they have those out-door ovens?

MUFFULETTO: In the yard. You built those brick --

GREENE: I wonder why they had the oven in the back yard.

MUFFULETTO: They made their own brick, and they didn't have any stoves and no gas and no lights. They used to use the charcoal. And they made bread like in the old country. It was wonderful bread.

GREENE: I see.

MUFFULETTO: It wasn't everybody had it. The Italians who came here were used to different things in the old times; and my father used to make the furnace to make the

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bread like that.

GREENE: Do you remember anything about that convent the Sisters operated, St. Rose of Lima?

MUFFULETTO: Yes.

GREENE: Do you remember any of those Sisters?

MUFFULETTO: Sister Sedonia. I remember her.

GREENE: Do you remember Sister Aquina?

MUFFULETTO: Yes, I remember her, but I didn't go to school there.

GREENE: How long has St. Joseph's had the Fair in the Fall? Have you been working with it for a long time?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. I quit three years ago. I knitted dozens of pot holders - crochet, I mean. I'll show you some.

GREENE: What were they selling them for?

MUFFULETTO: Over there they gave them for prizes, and they'd raffle some of them. Now, here they are. This one is not finished yet.

GREENE: Are you a member of the Sewing Circle - St. Joseph's Sewing Circle?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. I'll call Joe to bring one of my pot holders. Joe, open that drawer and get me a pot holder.

JOE: Yes, Aunt Frances.

GREENE: Is the Sewing Circle connected with St. Joseph's Bazaar?

MUFFULETTO: It's St. Martha's Society.

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GREENE: And you have five ready for the Fall Fair now.

MUFFULETTO: I make them when I have the chance.

GREENE: You make baby coats?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. And I make them and sell them sometime.

GREENE: What about the baby bootees?

MUFFULETTO: Yes - and baby bootees.

GREENE: Have you made many of those?

MUFFULETTO: Yes, And pillows - here's one here. Catherine and Margaret, come look at this one.

GREENE: You made those?

MUFFULETTO: I make them in different colors, and I stuff them.

GREENE: You made those for the Bazaar?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. I made some last year. We have two groups - bazaars. There are so many. On one side of the town and one on the other side. They make the Carnival together. I make some for one and some for the other. I make some for Leland, Mississippi. I have a Priest in Leland, my nephew, one of my brother's sons.

GREENE: What is his name?

MUFFULETTO: Father Loyacono.

GREENE: What is his first name?

MUFFULETTO: Charles.

GREENE: Your brother's son? He is named for your

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brother, Charles, isn't he?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. He was a barber - Charles Loyacono.

GREENE: You said you were out of the Sewing Circle for the last three years.

MUFFULETTO: I've been paying my dues. I was sick, and I couldn't do anything at that time, so I got out; and I haven't been out of the house.

GREENE: How many years have you been connected with that Sewing Circle?

MUFFULETTO: Since it started, I think. I was one of the first few ladies together. We got together and started it. I don't remember the names.

GREENE: I went down to your brother's shoe shop and interviewed Allen Hamilton --

MUFFULETTO: We think a lot of him. We love him.

GREENE: And I told him if he ever sold the --

MUFFULETTO: Yes, he told me about it.

GREENE: He did? I told him if he ever sold the shop and wanted to get rid of St. Joseph's statue, to let me know, because I --

MUFFULETTO: But the statue belonged to the shop. It goes to my nephew, I think.

GREENE: He told me that your brother had given it to somebody else. You know, I started at Sacred Heart when it opened.

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MUFFULETTO: You did. I didn't know you were Catholic.

GREENE: Mr. Hamilton also told me that your brother repaired shoes for the Priests and Sisters at no charge.

MUFFULETTO: And he does, too, and he's not a Catholic.

GREENE: That's right.

MUFFULETTO: I send shoes to him when I'm sick, and I want a little heel on because I can't stand flat, and I said I wanted to pay. He called me once and asked me how I was doing. He worked for my brother for years, and then when my brother died he left it to Doe Signa, and after him Allen was to inherit it. But some of what he makes goes to my nephew, because he has to pay the rent; so he handles the shop alone. I don't think he has anybody. My nephew was working with him - Doe Signa - you remember him?

GREENE: Yes, I do.

MUFFULETTO: Well, he worked in that shop almost the same as Allen. When he got married he went to the shop to work in Leland.

GREENE: How is Father Loyacono doing?

MUFFULETTO: He is doing fine. He is the Priest in Leland. He was in Vicksburg, and then he was here a little while. You know, they change sometimes, send them to

another place. Have you met Father Charles?

GREENE: I've just seen him. I haven't met him. Now, tell me about your anniversary. Didn't you have a Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration?

MUFFULETTO: That was a long time ago.

GREENE: No, I mean recently. Was that a year ago - your Jubilee?

MUFFULETTO: When I was 90.

GREENE: When?

MUFFULETTO: January 8th. My friends and nieces and nephews all came over here, and my niece made a birthday cake almost as big as that table, and we had a nice time. And the man who makes the picutres for the paper - do you know him?

GREENE: The photographer.

MUFFULETTO: Do you know him? Serio?

GREENE: Yes, I know him.

MUFFULETTO: One of the boys who finished at Catholic School, and he wanted to take a picture and put it in the paper.

GREENE: Mrs. Muffuletto, when you were a girl in Italy, do you remember anything about Christmas celebrations? Did they make the decorations for the tree, or buy them?

MUFFULETTO: They'd make it - everything - at that time. They'd make the figures and the baby.

GREENE: What did they make the figures of?

MUFFULETTO: Most were some kind of pastries.

They would march into church like they do here, and the children - they were all Catholic. They didn't have any other religion. They were all the same religion.

GREENE: Did you know Father Korstenbroek?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. We used to love him to death.

GREENE: He was a good man.

MUFFULETTO: A good man.

GREENE: He built the church, didn't he?

MUFFULETTO: He built the church and the convent.

GREENE: Do you know Father Sheridan?

MUFFULETTO: Yes. (Tape interference)

GREENE: Where did you go when the flood was here?

MUFFULETTO: We stayed at the hotel. We had a three-story place, and we stayed up there. At first, we had half of Greenville in there. That's right. People didn't know what to do or where to go. They had children and they all went upstairs. Everybody stayed up that night, because you couldn't lay down. We had to leave the house and go up there. And this house, the water came on the floor - the water - not too high in there, but it ruined the matting on the floor.

GREENE: It was muddy.

MUFFULETTO: Yes. And they got boats, little boats; and they used to come with the boats and pick up stuff we could take over there. We stayed three months. And the

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people, after a few days, they started to get out of town; they used to put them on the levee. They would take them to Vicksburg by boat. My brother lived in Vicksburg, but I didn't go. Most of the time our family stayed at the hotel. We had plenty of food. The dining room and everything was flooded. And the elevator was going up and down. We watched outside - people, dogs, animals, dead in the water. It was deep. We had to stop the elevator on the second floor. We didn't have bread for three days, and then they had to bring it in a plane, and government men from the levee would come and get them in the boats and they used to cook for the people on the levee, and they would feed them.

GREENE: Do you remember anything about the Yellow Fever Epidemic?

MUFFULETTO; But I didn't know anything they were talking about.

GREENE: You didn't hear anything about the quarantine they had to let people in or out of Greenville?

MUFFULETTO: Yes, that's right. I remember they used to do that.

GREENE: But you don't remember where the quarantine post was?

MUFFULETTO: I don't remember.

GREENE: You've got a good memory. God bless you.

MUFFULETTO: Thank you.

(End of Interview. Transcribed by Alice C. Nagel)

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