

Interview (Monologue) with Irene Williams and Choir, Rome, Mississippi, 1940

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Irene Williams: The meeting day at Oak Grove Church. The first Sunday in August was a [gallant (?)] occasion for the Negroes on the place that was the day the big attractive meeting began, over at Oak Grove Baptist Church. A day of praise for the new dresses, the new suits, and new hats; for each Negro was dressed out in his Sunday best. About 10 o'clock in the morning they would be on their way to church and it looked as if the [di ??? vest (?)] of white, pink, blue, red, yellow and variegated colors had out-rivaled themselves in putting out the brightest colors in which, of which their dresses were made from. Every passing road on the place, was filled with those who were going to church. And the woods rang with their joy and happiness and their calls to each other:

"Morning there sister Macy, how you all?"

"Oh, I's tired, but we're [fine] thank you. How you all?"

"That sure am a pretty dress what you got on."

"What you get, hee, hee, hee, hee you going out shine all them niggas in Oak Grove Church today. Yes, Ma'am, you sure is going out shine us all."

"Now you shut your mouth, Gene. You knows you just poking fun at me. How's your ma? Where's Fannie?"

"Oh, she comming. She got herself all dressed up. She say she going to get [a (?)] hat today and beat the very stuffing out of that gal a Suzy. But I tell her if that's the spirit she's going to church in she got to stay at home. But she promise me that she behave herself and be one of the first mourners on the bench. And I tell her she can come on to church."

This was only preliminary of what would take place when they all met under the big oak trees on the church grounds. All the [kit (?)] and kin, kin from miles around would be there in their gayest mood. Soon, those inside of the church would begin this, this song that would bring them in and start the worship, and the big meeting began.

Old Ship of Zion!

Tis that old ship of Zi-on. Tis that old ship of Zi-on. Tis that old ship of Zi-on. Get on board. Get on board.

She havelandedman-ythou-sands. She havelandedman-ythou-sands. She havelandedman-ythou-sands.

Get on board. Get on board.

Yes, get on board I got good religion.

She havelandedmyownmother. She havelandedmyownmother. She havelandedmyownmother.

Well. Well. Well.

Get on board. Get on board.

Praise the Lord I got [salvation (?)] in my soul.

Between 3 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon you would see them coming on their way back home. Now, the chickens in the barnyard had ??? for Bro. Andy and Bro. Pfeiffer had a mighty tooth for fried chicken when they were postulating the word, which meant in real terms, were preaching. Brother Andy, did the preaching. And Bro. Pfeiffer was the said brother and amen man. In the most tense moment when the [mornings (?)] mourners' bench was filled full the mourners and the mightiest calls were being made for them to come through. Oh, brother Pfeiffer would go to the door and plead for the [*Mrs. Irene Williams sings*] *Lord to come his self. Not to send his son. We got no time to fool with children here tonight. Come right through the cornfield. Don't take time to come all the way around the road by Mr. John Coleman's. Because these mourners are just about ready to come through.*

Then the others would join in the prayers by singing—

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