

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Edna Jackson

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Jackson, Edna, 1944-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 8, 2017
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2017
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:59:44).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Political official and civic leader Edna Jackson (1944 - ) served in numerous positions at Savannah State University from 1971 to 2001, before becoming mayor of Savannah in 2012. Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 8, 2017, in Savannah, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2017_043
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Political official and civic leader Edna Jackson was born on September 18, 1944 in Savannah, Georgia to Henry Reid and Georgia Branch Dillard. She graduated from Alfred E. Beach High School in 1962, and then earned her B.S. degree in sociology in 1968, and her M.Ed. degree in political science education in 1972, both from Savannah State University. Having joined the NAACP Youth Council as a high school student, Jackson became active while at Savannah State, travelling throughout the South for voter registration drives and sit-in demonstrations.

Jackson began her career as a social worker with the Economic Opportunity Authority for Savannah-Chatham County Area, Inc. In 1971, Savannah State University President Prince Jackson, Jr. hired Jackson as the director of the university's emergency school assistant program. During her time there, she also worked as the director of alumni affairs and coordinator of the Elderhostel Program before her retirement in 2001. Jackson then served as alderman at large on the City Council of Savannah for three terms, and mayor pro tempore of Savannah for two terms. In 2012, Jackson became the first African American woman to be elected as mayor of Savannah, serving for one term.

Jackson was the recipient of the A Working Woman in Need's Top 10 Working Women of the Year Award. She was also named an Outstanding Alumnus by Savannah State University and one of the 2012 Power Women by *GeorgiaTrend* magazine.

Jackson also served as the southern regional vice president and national vice president of Savannah State University, as vice chairman of the Chatham County Democratic Executive Committee, as a member of the board of representatives for World Trade Center Savannah, and as a chairperson of the Chatham County Hospital Authority. She was also a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., St. Phillip A.M.E. Church, the U.S. Selective Board, and the Georgia Advisory Committee for the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. U.S. Congressman John Barrow appointed Jackson to serve on the Military Academy Selection Committee and the

Regional Committee of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. She also served on the Board of Directors for the Savannah Regional Second Harvest Food Bank and on the board of the Equal Opportunity Authority. Jackson has one son, Kevan Jackson.

Edna Jackson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 8, 2017.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson was conducted by Denise Gines on February 8, 2017, in Savannah, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Political official and civic leader Edna Jackson (1944 - ) served in numerous positions at Savannah State University from 1971 to 2001, before becoming mayor of Savannah in 2012.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Jackson, Edna, 1944-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jackson, Edna, 1944- --Interviews

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# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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# Occupations:

Mayor

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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# Administrative Information

## Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

## Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson, February 8, 2017. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

## Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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# Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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# Detailed Description of the Collection

## Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson, Section A2017\_043\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:37 ?

The Honorable Edna Jackson was born on September 18, 1944 in Savannah, Georgia to Georgia Branch Dillard and Henry Reid. Her maternal family originated in Waynesboro, Georgia. Jackson's mother, Georgia Branch Dillard, was born in Augusta, Georgia to Sadie Royal Branch and Herbert Branch in 1922. The family later moved to Savannah, where Jackson's grandmother became a domestic worker and her grandfather worked on the Central of Georgia Railway. Jackson's father, Henry Reid, was from South Carolina. After Jackson's parents divorced, her mother moved to Tampa, Florida, where she married Mansfield Dillard and opened a restaurant. Jackson and her sister, Margie Reid Williams, remained in Savannah, where they were raised by their maternal grandmother and maternal aunt, Lillie Branch, in a small home without indoor plumbing. Jackson's grandmother had only a third grade education, and emphasized the importance of literacy. The family later moved into a rooming house owned by her sister's godmother.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson, Section A2017\_043\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:49 ?

The Honorable Edna Jackson began her education at the Florence Street School in Savannah, Georgia. A headstrong student, she was directed by her teachers towards the student government, where she became a leader at an early age. Jackson also joined the NAACP Youth Council at the West Broad Street YMCA. There, she met civil rights leader W.W. Law, who encouraged her to learn about the history of the NAACP. Jackson went on to attend Cuyler Junior High School, where she became interested in science and math. In 1959, she enrolled in Alfred E. Beach High School. There, she took private calculus lessons from her math teacher, Virginia Wynn, since the subject was not formally offered at the time. In addition to the student government, Jackson became involved in drama productions, the 4-H club and the Student Library Assistants of Georgia. She also attended NAACP sit-ins and demonstrations with Carolyn Quilloin Coleman, Joan Tyson Hall, Ernest Robinson and Mercedes Wright Arnold.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson, Section A2017\_043\_001\_003, TRT: 3:34:44 ?

The Honorable Edna Jackson began attending national NAACP conventions with W.W. Law and Eugene Gadsden in 1960. She became familiar with the political process, and met leaders like Floyd McKissick and Kelly Alexander, Jr. Jackson enrolled at Savannah State University in 1962, but left after one semester to become a youth organizer with the NAACP in Florida. In 1963, she was arrested during a wade-in to desegregate the beaches on Tybee Island, and she also led a group of students from Florida to the March on Washington. Jackson then returned to Savannah, where she worked with organizers like Bobby L. Hill, Bernice Turner and James Brown, Jr. In 1964, Jackson went to Alabama to assist NAACP leaders Ruby Hurley and Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Encouraged by her supervisor in the NAACP, Jackson returned to Savannah State University later that year, and continued working for the NAACP on weekends. She also married George Jackson, whom she divorced shortly after the birth of their son, Kevan Jackson, in 1966.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson, Section A2017\_043\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:16 ?

The Honorable Edna Jackson graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology from Savannah State College in 1968. That year, she was hired as a social worker at the Economic Opportunity Authority for Savannah-Chatham County Area, Inc. In 1971, Savannah State College President Prince Jackson, Jr. offered

her a position with the Emergency School Assistance Program, where she organized high school students in support of desegregation. Jackson was encouraged by her supervisor, Hinton Thomas, to return to school, and completed a master's degree in political science education at Savannah State College. At the time, the program was in the process of merging with Armstrong State College. After graduating, Jackson continued working as an administrator at Savannah State College. She also served as the chairperson of the Chatham County Hospital Authority, and managed the local campaigns of Democratic candidates like Governor Zell Miller, Governor Roy Barnes, President Jimmy Carter and President Bill Clinton.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson, Section A2017\_043\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:09 ?

The Honorable Edna Jackson was elected to the Savannah City Council as an alderman at large in 2000. She served as mayor pro tempore under Mayor Otis Johnson from 2004 to 2012. That year, Jackson became the first African American woman to serve as mayor of Savannah, Georgia. At the start of her term, she worked to unify the city council, and installed Stephanie Cutter as the city manager. After discovering corruption in the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department, Cutter fired police chief Willie Lovett, and appointed Julie Tolbert in the interim. In 2014, a black civilian named Charles Smith was fatally shot by police officer David Jannot while in police custody. Jackson immediately organized a meeting between Cutter, Tolbert and the activist community to facilitate peaceful protests. During this time, Jackson encountered opposition from Savannah's business leadership. She suffered a heart attack during her reelection campaign, and lost the mayoralty to Eddie DeLoach in 2016.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Edna Jackson, Section A2017\_043\_001\_006, TRT: 6:28:09 ?

The Honorable Edna Jackson was widely recognized for her civic contributions to the City of Savannah, Georgia. She received the Richard R. Wright Award of Excellence from Savannah State University, and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's Edna Branch Jackson Community Service Scholarship was named in her honor. At this point in the interview, Jackson reflects upon her legacy. She also talks about the need for activism at the time of the interview. Jackson concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.