

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hana Stith

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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>	Stith, Hana, 1928-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Hana Stith,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 30, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:26:08).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Community leader Hana Stith (1928 - 2018) taught in inner city Fort Wayne, Indiana, schools for thirty-six years. Stith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 30, 2002, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_136
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Hana Stith was born on August 25, 1928 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She spent 36 years teaching there, mostly in inner city schools where she felt her skills were most needed. She earned respect for her teaching skills and her compassion for children.

Stith joined the junior branch of the NAACP before graduating from Central High School in 1946. She received a scholarship from the Fourth District Lay Organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and used it to attend religiously affiliated Wilberforce College in Wilberforce, Ohio, the first institution of higher education owned and operated by African Americans. A dispute between church and state caused Wilberforce to temporarily lose its accreditation and Stith finished her education at St. Francis College. She earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees there and was certified by Purdue University in guidance and counseling.

When Stith became a teacher in 1960, she was one of the first African Americans hired in the Fort Wayne Community Schools. She spent 22 years as a classroom teacher and then became a Title I teacher, instructing students who needed individual attention in reading and math. She retired from teaching in 1996 and became a docent for the Lincoln Museum as well as a board member of the local NAACP chapter. She co-founded the African/African American Historical Society in 1998. In 1999, she found a home for the African/African American Historical Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. After the museum opened on February 1, 2000, it soon became recognized as the premier museum of African American history in Indiana. She serves as president of the society and curator of the museum.

Stith has taken an active role in the affairs of her community. She was an original member of the Fair Housing Group and an early member of the Panel of American Women. As the first female appointed to the Fort Wayne Redevelopment Commission, she served twelve years under four mayors and set a record for serving longer than anyone else. She also was appointed to the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, serving four years, and the Fort Wayne Board of Safety, serving six years. As a member of the Turner Chapel A.M.E. Church, she was the

director of the Commission on Christian Education. She taught Sunday school for 17 years and organized the church's first vacation Bible school.

Stith passed away on September 5, 2018.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Hana Stith was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 30, 2002, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community leader Hana Stith (1928 - 2018) taught in inner city Fort Wayne, Indiana, schools for thirty-six years.

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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:

Stith, Hana, 1928-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Stith, Hana, 1928---Interviews

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African American educators--Indiana--Fort Wayne--Interviews

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Women museum curators--Indiana--Fort Wayne--Interviews

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Women museum directors--Indiana--Fort Wayne--Interviews

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## Organizations:

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HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

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Community Leader

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

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CivicMakers

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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 Hana Stith, July 30, 2002. 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 Hana Stith, Section A2002\_136\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Hana Stith describes her family background and childhood. Her mother, Viola Mew Bryant Jones was born in 1899 in Brunson, South Carolina and her father, Miles Bryant, was born around 1884 in Hampton County, South Carolina. Stith's parents were married around 1915 and moved to Indiana in 1916 where her father found work as a carpenter and her mother worked as a maid. Stith was born on August 25, 1928 and is the youngest of three siblings. Her father died in 1930 and her mother remarried in 1932. Her mother gave birth to two more children before Stith's stepfather and youngest brother both died in 1936. Stith was raised by her mother and uncle, Augustus Bryant. Stith attended the Justin N. Study Elementary School and the Washington School for junior high school, where she excelled at spelling and at oratory.

African American educators--Indiana--Fort Wayne--Interviews.

Women museum curators--Indiana--Fort Wayne--Interviews.

Women museum directors--Indiana--Fort Wayne--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Hana Stith, Section A2002\_136\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:35 ?

Hana Stith describes her community in Fort Wayne, Indiana, her experience at Central High School, and her experience at college. Stith remembers Fort Wayne as a highly segregated city where black social life was centered on churches and the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center. Stith attended the integrated Central High School, but was not allowed to cheerlead or attend dances and did not receive any counseling from the Dean. While in high school, she worked at the Chicken Shack, a black-owned restaurant frequented by both white and black customers. Stith graduated from high school in 1946 and enrolled at Wilberforce University on an elocution scholarship, but she left the school when it lost its accreditation in 1947. From then until 1950, she lived in Harlem, New York where she met and married her husband Harold in 1948. They moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana to work at General Electric. Stith graduated from the University of Saint Francis with her B.A. degree in education in 1960 and her M.A. degree in 1965.

Video Oral History Interview with Hana Stith, Section A2002\_136\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Hana Stith describes her experience as a teacher in Fort Wayne Community Schools and the founding of the African/African-American Historical Society and Museum. In 1960, Stith became the first black teacher at McCulloch Elementary School in inner-city Fort Wayne, Indiana. In 1965, Dr. Levan Scott became the first black principal at McCulloch and helped strengthen the school's ties to the community and increased the study of black history. Stith worked for twenty-two years as a classroom teacher in Fort Wayne elementary schools and fourteen years teaching Title I remedial classes before she retired in 1996. From 1975, Stith worked with the Allen County Historical Society to increase the representation of African American history in the schools; and on May 17, 1998, she co-founded the African/African-American Historical Society. In 1999, Stith renovated the former Phyllis Wheatley Community Center into the African/African-American Historical Museum.

Video Oral History Interview with Hana Stith, Section A2002\_136\_001\_004, TRT: 0:26:20 ?

Hana Stith discusses the history of African Americans in Fort Wayne, Indiana and lists many of the people whose histories are in the African/African-American Historical Museum, including Rosetta Moses-Hill, Heather Headley, Dr. Levan Scott, and Samuel Stewart. She also talks about Indiana's history of racism and segregation, and the few cities in Indiana that have African American

populations like Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Elkhart, Evansville, and Terre Haute. Stith shares her plans for expanding the museum into a larger space in the future and updating the technology in their facilities in order to accommodate traveling exhibitions. She also reflects upon her legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Hana Stith, Section A2002\_136\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:03 ?

Hana Stith narrates her photographs.