

Northern Macomb County Branch NAACP  
Presents:

# Looking Back to March Forward

Exploring the Black History That Helped  
Shape a Community

1. High School  
2. Primary School  
3. City Ground  
4. Cemetery

Published by E. J. Conner  
BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF

R O M E O  
1868.

5. Methodist Church  
6. Baptist  
7. Congregational  
8. American Hotel

# Looking Back to March Forward

Discovering the Black History  
That Helped Shape a Community

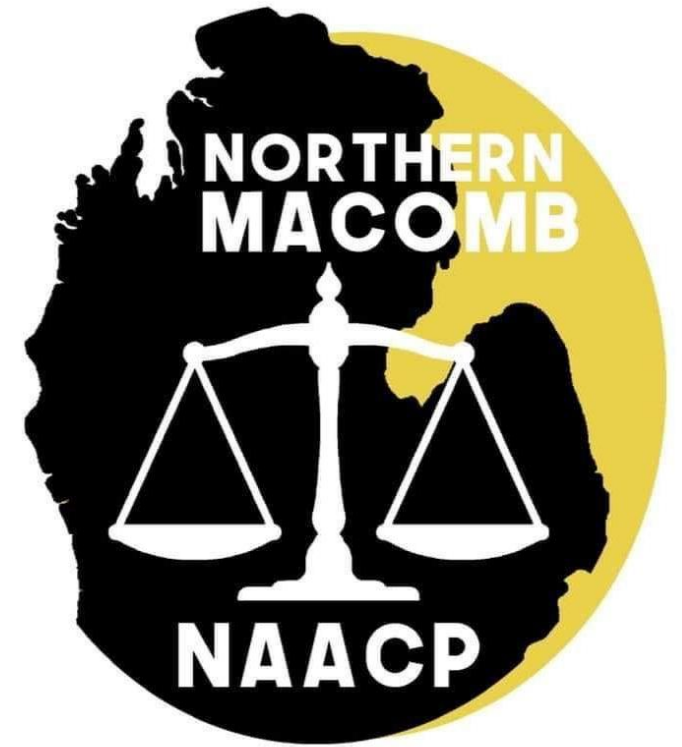
We would like to extend a special thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Beringer, curators of the Romeo Arts and Archive Museum, for their help with this project. Please visit the museum at 290 N. Main Street to learn more about the history of Romeo!

Project Organizers:

Tristam Craig

Emily Mellits

Lexi Hart



# Introduction

We at the Northern Macomb County Branch NAACP, feel that education is the key to bringing unity to our communities and to our country. As Maya Angelou said, "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again." Learning the often-overlooked parts of our history help us become more aware, more understanding, and more determined about the future we want for our children.

We are thrilled to have discovered many important stories about Black

history in Romeo, Michigan. Many of our founding members are Romeo High School alumni, and had never heard these stories. We hope to change that narrative for our current and future residents. There is so much more to learn about Romeo's history as a whole. Please consider connecting with the Romeo Historical Society if you would like to learn more!



# Points of Interest

## 1 Union Soldiers

### Romeo Helps the Union Army

Romeo Cemetery (NW Corner of W St. Clair and Morton St.) Romeo, Michigan 48065

## 2 Maria Muzzy

260 Church St. Romeo Michigan 48065

## 3 Amanda Moore

184 Hollister St. Romeo, Michigan 48065

## 4 Royal Blends Baseball

Near 464 N. Bailey St. Romeo, Michigan 48065

## 5 Project Hope

355 N Bailey St. Romeo, MI 48065

## 6 Amanda Moore School

209 Dickenson St. Romeo, Michigan 48065

## 7 Second Baptist Church. Pearl Craig

250 Dorsey St. Romeo, Michigan 48065

## 8 First Congressional Church

### Reverend John Sella Martin

102 Church St. Romeo, Michigan 48065

## 9 13 Starkweather Family

219 N. Main St. Romeo, Michigan 48065  
70199 Campground Rd. Bruce Township, MI 48065

## 10 Romeo Class of 1951

108 S. Main St. Romeo, Michigan 48065

## 11 Henry Bibb

141 S Main St. Romeo, MI 48065

## 12 Elizabeth Fowler (Womble)

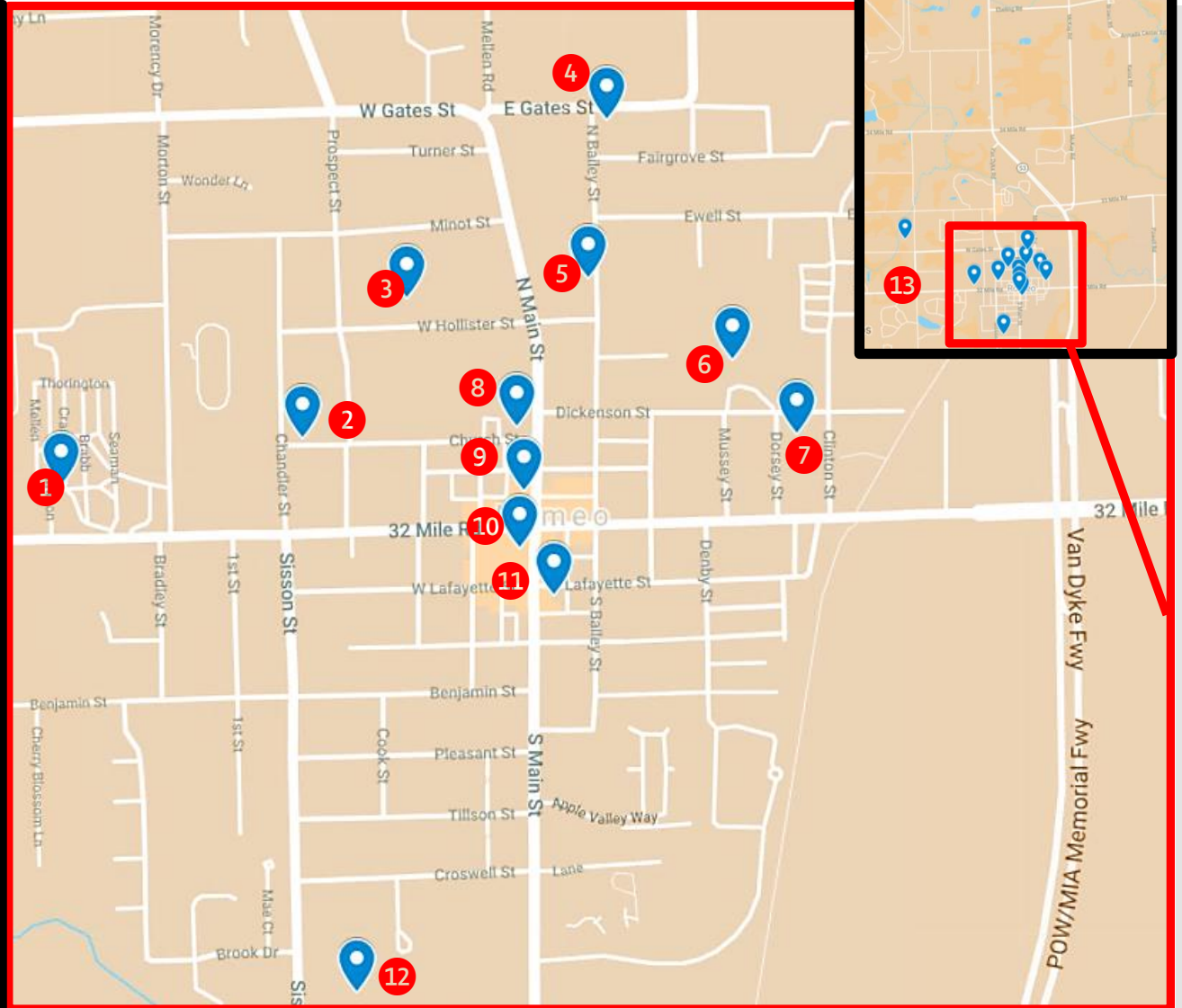
### Della Bell (Womble)

### Pearl Craig (Hovendove-White)

399 Sisson St. Romeo, MI 48065

## 14 Robert McKay

78440 McKay Rd. Bruce Township, MI 48065



# Union Soldiers

Cpl. Kinchen Artis  
1831-1905

Pvt. Peter H. Ebo  
1831-1910

Pvt. Samuel Huff  
1832-1886



In 1862, Black men were allowed to fight in the Union Army, due to Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Before then, Federal Law dating back to 1792 prohibited Black men from enlisting.

During the Civil War, there were roughly 179,000 Black soldiers, or roughly 10% of the Army.

There are three Black Union Soldiers from the Civil War buried in the Romeo Cemetery and two of their names (Ebo and Artis) can be found on the Civil War Memorial. They served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan Colored Infantry, later known as (102<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry).

The first soldier was Cpl Kinchen Artis DOB: 07/15/1831 in Ohio. He died 09/18/1905 at the age of 74. His gravesite is in Section 10 of Romeo Cemetery. He enlisted in Company H, First Michigan Colored Infantry on December 19, 1863 at the age of 32 years. According to a special veteran census conducted in 1890, this veteran suffered from chronic diarrhea and deafness in the left ear, probably as a result of his service in the Civil War. He was mustered on January 4, 1864. His widow's name was Carolina.

...continued on pg. 6



Romeo Cemetery (NW Corner of W St. Clair and Morton St.)  
Romeo, Michigan 48065



# Union Soldiers

Cpl. Kinchen Artis

1831-1905

Pvt. Peter H. Ebo

1831-1910

Pvt. Samuel Huff

1832-1886



...continued from pg. 5

Next is Pvt Peter H. Ebo DOB: 3/2/1831, New York. He died 3/19/1910 at the age of 79. His gravesite is located in the Romeo Cemetery in Section 3. Pvt Peter Ebo enlisted in Company F, 1<sup>st</sup> Colored Michigan Infantry on March 6, 1865, from Armada, at the age of 34. Ebo mustered out at Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865. According to a special veteran census conducted in 1890, this veteran suffered from rheumatism which developed during his service in the Civil War. Peter Ebo's son would go on to play for Romeo's baseball team, the Royal Blends.

Last, is Pvt Samuel Huff, born in 1832. Died: 9/1/1886 at the age of 53. His gravesite is located in Section 3 of the Romeo Cemetery. Private Huff enlisted in Company G, 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan Colored Infantry, on December 29, 1863 from Detroit, at 30 years old. He was mustered December 30, 1863. At the time of his passing, Huff lived in Bruce Township, and was buried in the Romeo Cemetery on September 3, 1886 as an indigent soldier. According to a special veteran census conducted in 1890, in a statement from his widow,

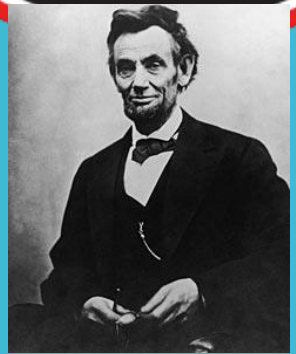
Mary, this veteran died of a problem with one of his legs. Amputation is listed as the cause of death in the Death Record of the State of Michigan and Macomb County.

His headstone originally stood upright, but now has fallen flat and will soon be overgrown with grass and weeds and this veteran's service during the Civil War could be lost.



Romeo Cemetery (and Morton St.)  
Romeo, Michigan 48065

# Romeo Helps the Union Army



In April of 1861, President Lincoln asked Michigan to provide a fully armed regiment of infantry. Michigan's Governor, Austin Blair, received the telegram at his home in Jackson. Governor Blair immediately left for Detroit to speak with the state's Adjutant General, John Robertson. They had the difficult task of figuring out how to recruit, organize, arm, equip and train a regiment in a very short time frame. An even bigger problem, was how to pay for it. It was determined that it would cost approximately \$100,000 to meet President Lincoln's request. At this time, Michigan's treasury was nearly depleted. Detroit pledged roughly \$50,000 to the cause. The rest of the state would have to cover the remaining costs. Some residents of Romeo felt strongly about the cause and together donated \$3,000. Today, that amount would equate to roughly \$95,000! President Lincoln went on to say, "Thank God for Michigan."

**APRIL 16, 1861**

Lincoln asked Michigan to provide one regiment of infantry fully armed. Governor Blair said it would take \$100,000. Detroit pledged \$50,000. The rest of the state needed to raise the balance.

The citizens of Romeo gave the following:

*May 2:*

Neil Gray	\$1000
E. W. Giddings	\$200
A. M. Growe	\$100
Hugh Gray	\$500
Robert Hamilton	\$50
C. B. Newberry	\$100
J. W. Dyer	\$50
E. S. Snover	\$100
Elisha Calkin	\$100

*May 29:*

F.S. Crisman	\$50
John Smith Jr.	\$200

*June 4:*

Abram Powell	\$50
Eba Dennis	\$50
John Frishman	\$100

**TOTAL**                    **\$2650**

Total raised by the rest of the state was \$81,020  
 With Detroit the total raised was \$131,020  
 Lincoln's response, "Thank God for Michigan."



# Maria Muzzy



Maria Muzzy, the daughter of Joel P. Muzzy, was a woman of fortitude and courage. She left her Romeo home at 260 Church St, to head South to teach recently freed slaves at the Union Academy, in Columbus, Mississippi. Maria was joined by five other women from the North. The Union Academy was run by Superintendent J. N Bishop and consisted of four hundred students.

On March 12, 1871, the Romeo Observer printed a letter that Maria had sent to her family. It read, "I write hastily and only a few words, to tell you that the Ku Klux Klan have not got me...They passed by our house last week, a little before daybreak without molesting us. We have been repeatedly assured that if they do come here they will not harm the ladies, unless we attempt to defend Mr. Bishop. He himself has no fear of them, because he thinks it is perfectly understood that if they kill him the blacks will burn the city."

Maria Muzzy later went on to teach at Berea College in Kentucky. You can find her family's gravesite in the Romeo Cemetery.



260 Church St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065



# Amanda Moore

## Amanda Moore

1868-1964



Amanda Moore was born in 1868 in Petersburg, Virginia and was one of fourteen children. She was the daughter of slaves but went on to dedicate her life to the welfare of homeless, needy, and sick children.

At the age of 17 she came and worked on a farm near Washington, Michigan. Over the years she worked in Mt. Clemens and Romeo, before moving to Kansas and working on a 5,000 acre ranch. While Amanda enjoyed living in Kansas, the dry and dusty climate was not good for her allergies. She decided to move back to Michigan. In 1903, after working in Mt. Clemens, she saved up enough money to purchase her home at 184 Hollister Street in Romeo. From 1906 until 1954, she was a foster parent to 164 children, ranging in the ages from five weeks to seventeen years, in the home on Hollister.

The first foster child arrived at her home in 1919 from The Children's Aid Society in Detroit. The 164<sup>th</sup> child arrived at her home in 1954. At the ceremony, Miss Marie Clark, the last of her wards, explained how Amanda had a desire he to get a large lot and a big house and take all of the little girls she could. That's exactly what she did.

In 1971, Amanda Moore Elementary School was dedicated in her honor to commemorate her kindness,

caring, and teaching to many foster children. At the dedication ceremony, were two of those children: Marion (Hood) and Marie (Rosenborough) MacDonald, known as the MacDonald twins. The twins were RHS class of '51 graduates. Another one of those children, was Marie Clark, who resided with Amanda Moore until her passing in March of 1964 at the age of 96. During the dedication ceremony in 1971, Ms. Clark, who still resided in the Hollister home, eulogized Miss Moore and reviewed her life and contributions to the community of Romeo.

Nearly 600 residents attended the dedication ceremony. The tremendous response from the community and former residents caught school officials completely off guard. They had expected 100 people at the most and 10-15 people at the minimum, when School Superintendent, Robert Reid, had gloomily forecasted that rain clouds formed and threatened the dedication. Instead, nearly 600 residents showed up, the rain held off, and the tribute to Miss Moore was beautifully delivered. Throughout the dedication, those who knew her acknowledged her selflessness. This was said to be the largest turnout for a dedication event in the Romeo School District.

184 Hollister St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065

# Royal Blends Baseball

1904



In 1945, Jackie Robinson broke the color line and signed a contract with Brooklyn's Triple-A minor league farm club, the Montreal Royals. In 1946, Robinson officially broke the major league color line when he put on a Dodgers uniform in April 1947. However, Romeo had the minor leagues and major leagues beat by over forty years with their own integrated baseball team, the Royal Blends. The Royal Blends had a black player, the son of Peter Ebo, who served in the Union Army.

On July 13, 1904, the Romeo Observer printed this, "The Royal Blends will cross bats with the Richmond team at that place Friday. Dalby and Clark will do the battery work for the Royal Blends." The Royal Blends are believed to have played at the location of the old track as seen in the picture below. Today this location is just North of Amanda Moore Elementary School, at the corner of Bailey St and Gates St.



Near 464 N. Bailey St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065



# Project Hope

## James and Betty Burke



James Burke was a Romeo teacher and member of the town council. He and his wife, Betty, held meetings in their home for "Project HOPE". Project HOPE was a church based group that brought together people of many faiths, attempting to address decades of intolerance and lingering Jim Crow practices. James and Betty rented out their upstairs apartment to a young Black woman.

Betty Burke decided that the only way to integrate the local restaurants was to personally walk local Black citizens right through the front door and sit down with them. Because of her husband's standing in the village, the restaurants did not argue with her. Betty went on to serve on the Romeo School Board of Education.

James and Betty's son, Stoney, recalls being woken by his father early one morning, and sent out to scrub their sidewalk of a nasty message. Someone had written "NIGR LUVRS" in black tar, large enough to take up the entire width of the sidewalk.

During one of their meetings of Project HOPE, an ignorant person decided to drive by their house and shoot their mailbox. A mere six inches higher, and the bullet would have entered the living room where the meeting was being held. James Burke never replaced that mailbox. Stoney said, "That mailbox has been a

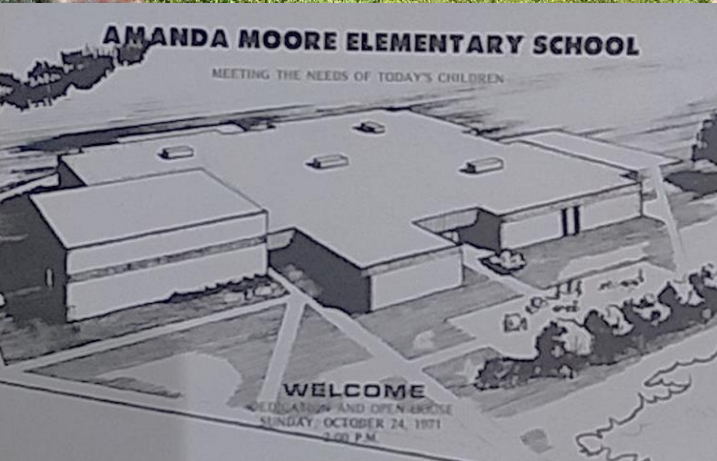
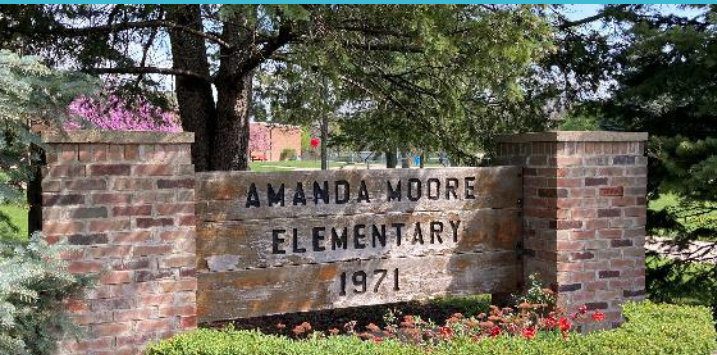
reminder to me my whole life that standing up for your convictions can be dangerous. To do nothing and turn your head only encourages evil and delays the solution."



355 N Bailey St.  
Romeo, MI 48065

# Amanda Moore School

Established 1971



How do you say thank you to a woman who devoted her life to helping children? In 1971, on a Sunday afternoon, Romeo residents named a new elementary school after Amanda Moore, who spent more than 60 years giving homeless children a home.

Superintendent Robert Reid said that, "Miss Moore was one of our finest citizens and we are proud to name a school after her." Some of the children helped by Miss Moore's efforts were present at the ceremony.

In Addition, a large oil painting of Miss Moore was unveiled at the ceremony and hung in the lobby of the school. The history of Amanda Moore describes her desire and efforts to help underprivileged children in need of shelter, love and guidance in life.

"Miss Moore was strict in every sense of the word," stated Ms. Marie Clark, her last and oldest ward. After Amanda Moore's passing, Ms. Clark continued to live in the Hollister home until even her own passing. Miss Moore firmly believed that prayer changes things and loved the Bible verse that says, "Train up a child in the way he should

go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Northern Macomb County Branch NAACP 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President (Tristram Craig) knew Miss Moore as a child. He said, "I was witness to how even the children who didn't live in her home were not exempt from her expectations of their conduct and were always respectful and well behaved when in her presence."



**THREE WHO GAVE TRIBUTE TO MISS AMANDA MOORE** are shown above following the dedication of the new Amanda Moore Elementary school Sunday. Left-to-right are Mrs. Marlon Hood and Mrs. Marie Roseborough, who as the MacDonal twins, were wards of Miss Moore; and Miss Marie Clark, who was raised by Miss Moore and still resides in her home. Miss Clark eulogized Miss Moore and reviewed her life and contribution to the community a part of the dedication ceremony.  
—Observer Photo

209 Dickenson St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church

Established 1918



The history of the church begins in 1918, when a group of local Christians began meeting in their houses to pray and worship together. During one of the meetings, the discussion was started about building their own church. They were all in agreement and the men approached the village about having a place to hold church services.

They were granted the use of the upper floor of the hall on Rawles Street, where the old fire station was located. The use of this hall, including heating and lights were provided by the village at no charge. These were the humble beginnings of 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church, which was first called Community Church, under Pastor Reverend Mills.

Just three years ago in 2019, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the deed to the church states that October 13, 1919 is the date this church was founded. That makes 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church of Romeo, MI, the oldest Black congregation in Macomb County, Michigan.

Letters of Recognition were given from the Village of Romeo, Village President, Christine Malzahn and the Governor of the State of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer.

Photos show the original church in black and white with the children coming out for this photo after Sunday School.

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250 Dorsey St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church

Established 1918

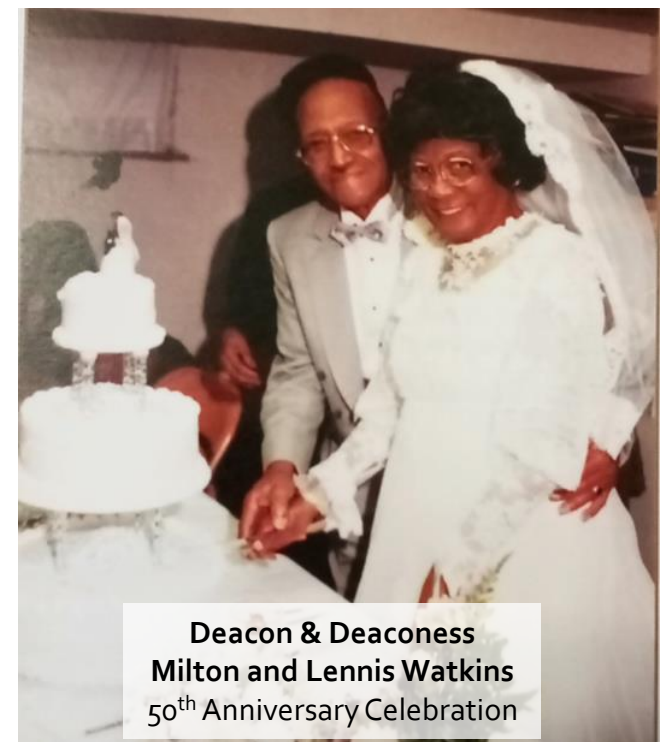


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The new church was built by Deacon Milton Watkins, father of Sylvia Steward, the mother of the church, along with Pearl Craig. Mother Steward is also the church Nurse. Mother Steward is a lifetime member of 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist and her father was a builder and deacon of the church.

Other photos are of Deacon and Deaconess Carl Webb Sr., Deacon and Deaconess James Shumpert, Mother Pearl Craig, along with Mother Sylvia Steward and Tristam Craig, son of Pearl Craig, the oldest member and currently 104 years old.

Other prominent members include Retired First Sargeant Major, Richard Arland Brooks, a lifetime resident from Romeo, except for when he was overseas or deployed in the United States Army.



**Deacon & Deaconess Milton and Lennis Watkins**  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration



**Deacon & Deaconess James and Sarah Shumpert**



**Deacon & Deaconess Carl and Eddie Jean Webb**



**Mother Pearl Craig and Tristam Craig**



**Mother Sylvia Steward**

250 Dorsey St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065



# Pearl Craig

Born 1917



Pearl Craig was Macomb County's oldest resident at 104 years young. She passed away June of 2022. She faced adversity throughout her life and overcome.

Everyone knows the story of Rosa Parks not giving up her seat on a bus to a white passenger. For Pearl, it wasn't a transit bus, but a school bus, and she was in the driver's seat. Pearl Craig was one of the first three Black bus drivers for the Romeo School District.

When Pearl was a young, expecting woman living in Georgia in 1937, a white passenger got on the bus and ordered Pearl to give up her seat. She responded that she was carrying a child and the bus driver acknowledged this, and asked the man to find another seat. After some nasty words to Pearl and the driver, the passenger found another seat. Pearl didn't make history like Rosa Parks did, but she was just glad that she got to keep her seat, which she had no intention of giving up.

Pearl was the oldest registered living person in Macomb County before her passing. Along with making history in the bus garage, she was the Mother of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church or Romeo, which was established in 1918. Pearl was one year older than the church itself, which is the oldest Black congregation church in Macomb County.

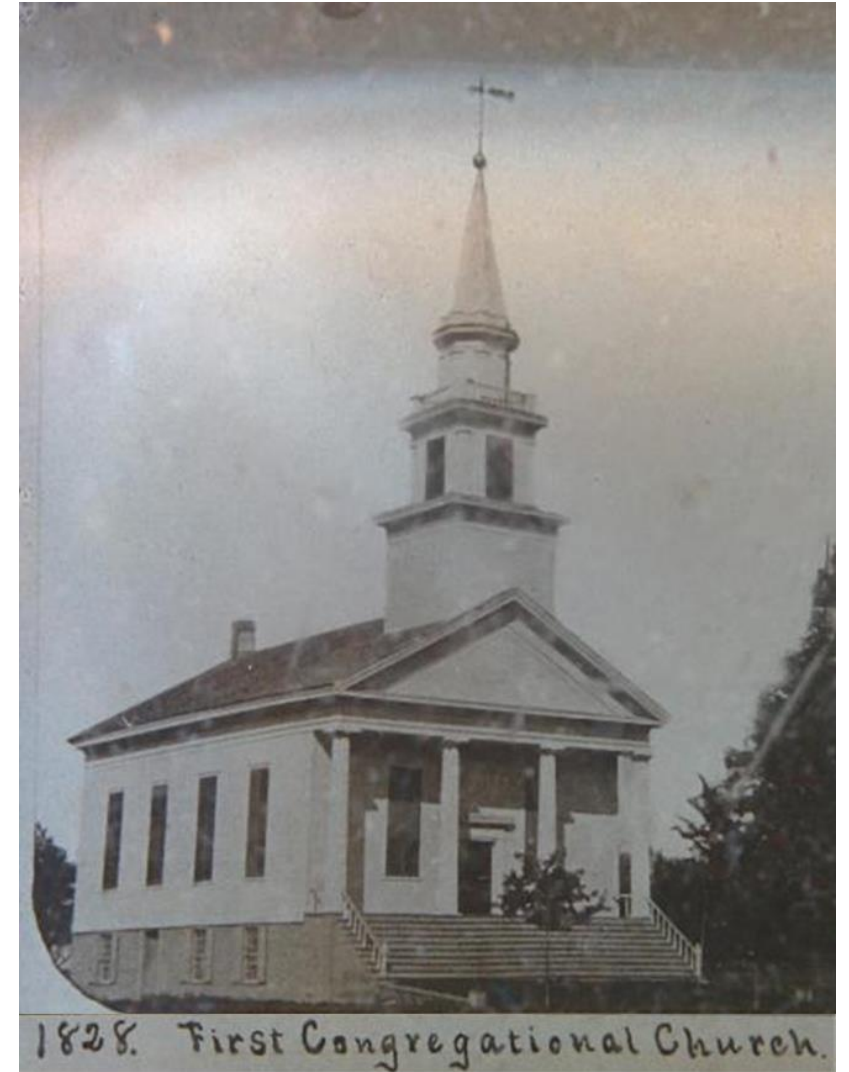


# First Congregational Church

Established 1828



The First Congregational Church, at 102 Church Street, was established in the heart of Romeo on August 23rd, 1828. The church became part of the United Church of Christ, which has a long history of advocating for peace, justice, and inclusion. The United Church of Christ was founded in 1957 with the union of two Protestant churches: The Evangelical and Reformed Church, and the Congregational Christian Churches. Historically, they are the first white denomination to ordain an African American. They also participated in the anti-slavery movement and were active in the Civil Rights movement.



102 Church St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065



# Reverend John Sella Martin

1832-1876

John Sella Martin was born enslaved in Charlotte, North Carolina on September 27, 1832. In 1856, Martin escaped slavery and arrived in Chicago after forging freedom papers. After escaping, he became an avid abolitionist and worked with other fugitive slaves on a lecture circuit. Martin arrived in Detroit, Michigan in 1857. One of the stops on his lecture circuit was in Romeo, Michigan. J. S Martin spoke to locals at the original Romeo Congregational Church.

A Romeo newspaper, The Romeo Argus, advertised his lecture saying, "J.S Martin, a fugitive slave, who has been figuring pretty largely in Detroit papers lately, will lecture this evening in the basement of the Congregational Church. His credentials, which he has shown us, we think are genuine, and commend him to the public." Martin went on to become an ordained Baptist minister. In 1860, he took over at Joy Street Baptist Church, the oldest black church in Boston.

Martin passed away on August 11, 1876. Although he had been battling a chronic illness, his death was ruled a suicide. He was 44 years old.



**J. S. MARTIN**, a fugitive slave, who has been figuring pretty largely in the Detroit papers lately, will lecture this evening in the basement of the Congregational church. His credentials, which he has shown us, we think are genuine, and commend him to the public.

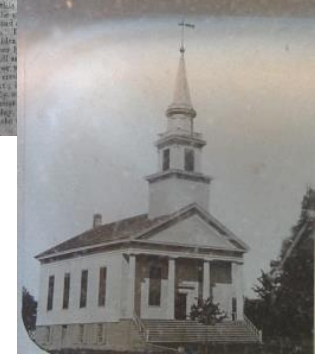
**THE ROMEO ARGUS.**  
VOL. I. ROMEO, MICHIGAN, JULY 9, 1857. NO. 9  
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**POETRY.**  
THE EXCELSIOR.  
In the month of June, when I feel the dew,  
May say that he has been here,  
Think of some other man who would be willing,  
And a man who would be willing,  
While I was in the house,  
And I'll be glad to see you,  
Look forward with hope to the future.

**BLA'S OFFICERS.**  
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J. S. MARTIN, Editor.  
J. S. MARTIN, Correspondent.  
J. S. MARTIN, Contributor.

**COUNTY REGISTER.**  
J. S. MARTIN, Register.



102 Church St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065

# Starkweather Family



Helen Starkweather



James Starkweather

Starkweather is one of the most recognized family names in Romeo. Located on Main Street, is the home of Helen Starkweather, a Romeo icon. Helen was an art and drafting teacher who taught at Romeo schools for over 40 years. She bequeathed her home and art studio on 219 North Main Street to the Village of Romeo and to the Romeo Historical Society. In her will, she stated that her home should be used as an art and cultural center.

Helen's paternal great-grandfather was James Starkweather, who came to Romeo in 1824. He and his wife Roxanna, had eight children.



219 N. Main St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065

James Starkweather was an active abolitionist in the area, along with other men including Robert McKay, Reverend Hurd, Loren Andrus, J. A. Tinsman, the Brabb families, James Thorington, and William T. Snow.

Born in 1801, James Starkweather came to Romeo, Michigan from Preston, Connecticut in 1824 and purchased the Starkweather Farm property in 1825, constructing a small log cabin for he and his family of eight before building the present home. The Starkweather Home dates to 1834 and is one of the oldest homes standing in Macomb County. The original 10 acres on which Simpson Park Camp began were donated by James Starkweather in 1865. You can still see the home on the Simpson Park property. Simpson Park historians say the home was associated with the Underground Railroad.



70199 Campground Rd.  
Bruce Township, MI 48065

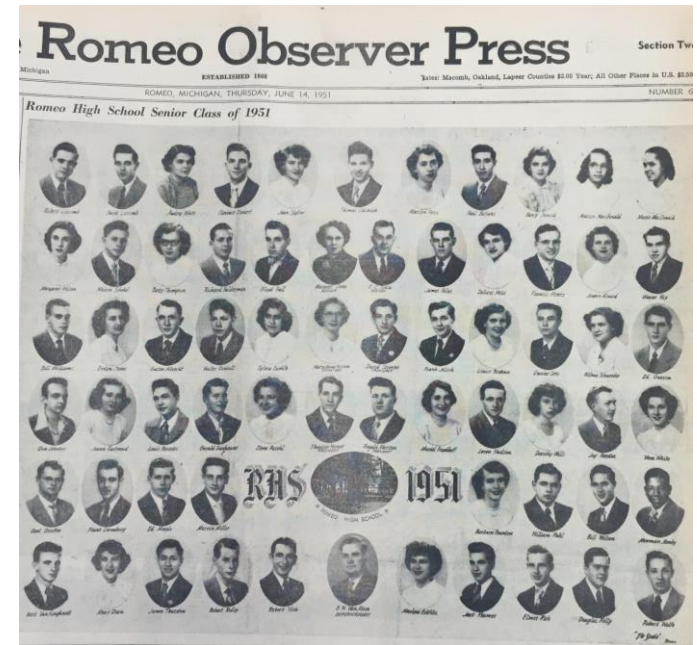


# Romeo Class of 1951



Vera White, owner of Vera's Balloons- R-Fun in downtown Romeo, shared this amazing story. Vera was a member of the Romeo High School class of 1951. There were three Black students in the class, including twin girls, Marion and Marie MacDonald. These twins were raised in a foster home by Amanda Moore, who is famous for raising 164 children in her home over the years. The third student was Newman Newby, who went on to attend Western Michigan College (now Western Michigan University).

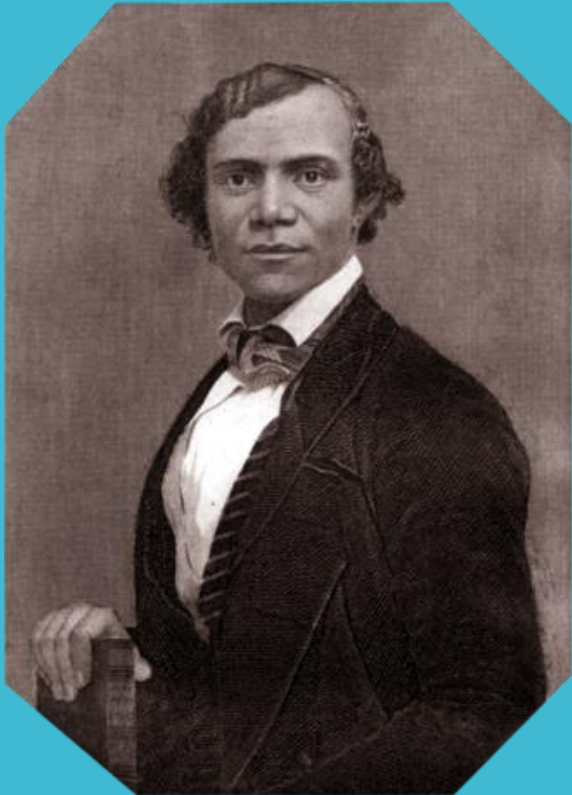
During their class trip to Chicago, one twin went to the front desk of the hotel and was denied entry because of her skin color. In solidarity, the class decided to find a different hotel. This was not an easy feat because at that time, African Americans weren't allowed on busses in Chicago. Despite these obstacles, Mrs. Kenneth Corby and Mr. E. C. Ojala, the Romeo High School senior class sponsors, found them a new place to stay. That evening, a dance was planned. When they arrived at the dance, their black classmates were refused entry. The whole class left in support. Stop in to Vera's and tell her thank you for sharing this incredible piece of history!



108 S. Main St.  
Romeo, Michigan 48065

# Henry Bibb

1815-1854



## "Signal of Liberty"

May 5, 1845

### ANTISLAVERY LECTURES.

In Macomb, St. Clair, Oakland, Genesee and Livingston Counties.

Henry Bibb, a fugitive from slavery, will address meetings at the following times and places, commencing each evening at half-past six o'clock. The friends in each vicinity are requested to make suitable arrangements and to give as extensive notice as possible. Mr. Bibb's narrative is deeply interesting: He never fails to satisfy every hearer, and as so favorable an opportunity for an address is not likely to occur again, it is hoped that friends will make the most of the present occasion. The ladies are especially invited to attend; they will hear the most interesting details ever presented to them without a word to wound their feelings.

Mount Clemens, Monday May 5th.

St. Clair, Wednesday " 7th.

Port Huron, Thursday " 8th.

County of St. Clair, one week, from May 9th to 17th.

Romeo, Monday May 19th.

Pontiac, Tuesday " 20th.

Waterford, Thursday 22d.

White Lake, Friday 23d.

Novi, Saturday 24th.

Kensington, Monday 26th.

Green Oak, Tuesday 27th.

Northfield, Wednesday 28th.

Attention is requested to the report of the Detroit Committee, respecting Mr. Bibb, and he is commended to the hospitality of friends as one worthy of their confidence.

S. B. TREADWELL,

Chairman of the State Central Committee.

Jackson, April 21st, 1845.

Henry Bibb (1815-1854) was born in Shelby County, Kentucky. In 1842, he escaped slavery and fled to Detroit. Bibb then began to travel around the United States to lecture and became a well-known abolitionist and activist.

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1845, Henry Bibb's lecture route made a stop in Romeo, Michigan. He is believed to have spoken in the Romeo Hall. While this building no longer exists, it was located at what is now the People Driven Credit Union at 141 S Main St, Romeo, MI 48065. Bibb's lecture circuit was printed in The Signal of Liberty newspaper, an anti-slavery/abolitionists newspaper. In 1851, Bibb launched the first black newspaper in Canada, The Voice of the Fugitive. On August 1, 1854, at the age of 39, Bibb passed away at Windsor, Canada West.



141 S Main St.  
Romeo, MI 48065



Elizabeth Fowler  
(Womble)

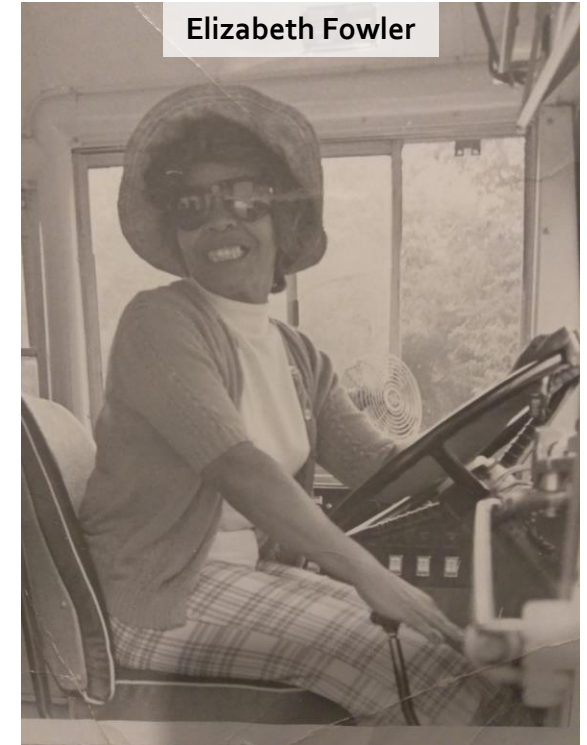
Della Bell  
(Womble)

Pearl Craig  
(Hovendove-  
White)

Elizabeth Fowler, Della Bell (Elizabeth's sister), and Pearl Craig (friend) became Romeo School District's first three black bus drivers.

These three women took on the challenge that were presented them, following the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, men fighting off in the Vietnam War, and social unrest. Trusting these three Black women with the safety and care of white children raised some eyebrows and resistance. By the time the first ninety days had expired, these were the three most recognized drivers at the Romeo bus garage. The kids and (most) parents accepted them at first, and eventually everyone embraced them with the trust of their children. They all drove for the Romeo School District for 16 years or more.

At the time, Christian Holmes was the Supervisor at the Bus Garage and Lambert Wesolowski was the Garage Mechanic. Howard Patton a.k.a. "Tiny" was the Senior Driver and the link to getting these three women driving school buses for the Romeo School District.



Della Bell

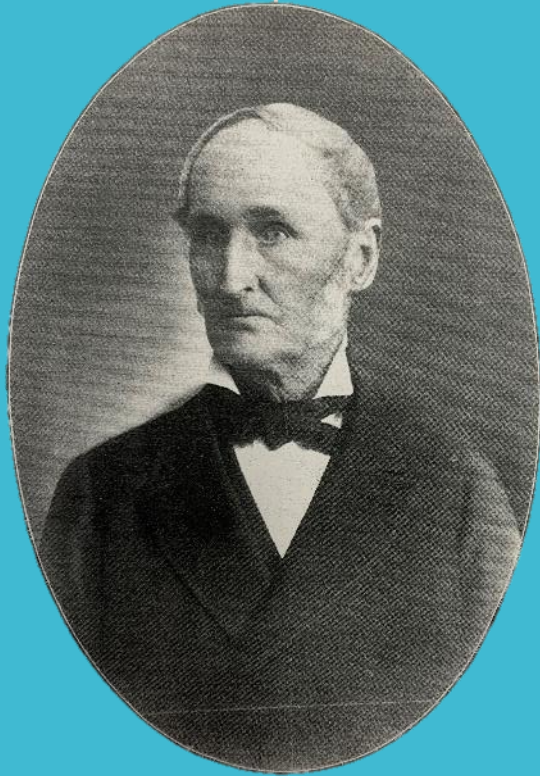
Pearl Craig



399 Sisson St.  
Romeo, MI 48065

# Robert McKay

1813-1896

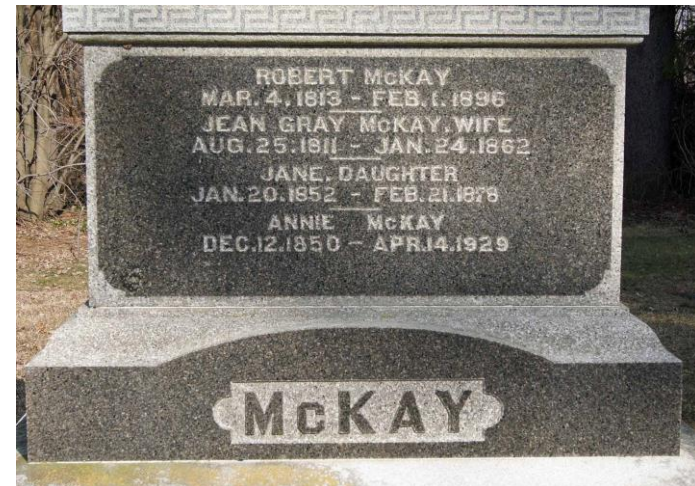


Robert McKay was born on March 4th, 1813, in Scotland. He emigrated to the United States at the age of 17. When he lived in the south, he saw African Americans enslaved in bondage and witnessed them being sold at slave auctions. It was then that he decided to join the cause to abolish slavery.

He moved to a farm in Bruce Township, Michigan in 1841. In 1842, only two votes were cast to abolish slavery in the township. McKay casted one of those votes. He was one of several local subscribers to *The Signal of Liberty*, an Ann Arbor abolitionist newspaper, and he was connected to the "Underground Railway" organization which helped enslaved African Americans find their way to freedom in Canada. Based on local historical documents, it is believed that his home on McKay Road in Bruce Township, was a stop along their path to freedom. In 1854, he was elected Bruce Township's Justice of the Peace.

His other accomplishments include organizing and being elected as the director of the Citizens National Bank of Romeo, Michigan, as well as organizing and being elected president of the

Farmers Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Macomb County, Michigan in 1875. He was a highly regarded citizen who worked for the advancement of people's welfare, religious, moral, and political interests.



78440 McKay Rd.  
Bruce Township, MI 48065