



**African-American Settlements and Communities in Columbus, Ohio** | A report



African-American  
Settlements and Communities  
in Columbus, Ohio

A Report

COLUMBUS LANDMARKS FOUNDATION

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Above: Hilltop, unidentified child with dog, circa 1915.

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Above: Janet Grant Walker Smith, daughter of a Baptist preacher, moved with her family from Dayton to Circleville, Ohio before marrying and settling in Columbus on the North Side. She represented the Ohio Federation of Colored Girls when the National Association of Colored Women picketed the White House in 1946 to protest recent lynchings of African-American men.



# PREFACE

Our Story--The African American Preservation Initiative in Columbus, Ohio

***“My house.....50,000, 60,000 other people’s houses...But this here is my house. Weak steps, unsteady posts, poor wiring, roof tumbling down almost, yet...still my house.”***

***Dr. Anna Bishop***

*Columbus, Ohio today is a thriving city with an ever changing landscape in its central business area. There are skyscrapers and a new commons center for residents to enjoy leisure moments. New town houses are being developed, redefining the center city as an area for upscale residential living. Many people may assume that residing in Columbus’ business district is a unique concept, but 200 years ago this very same area served as the initial location where many, if not most, of Columbus’s black residents called home. Many people may think life for African Americans was the Near East Side...but here is the rest of the story to provide a profile of how African American communities came to be throughout Columbus.*

*A variety of circumstances brought African Americans to Central Ohio, thought to be a safe distance from Southern slave catchers who were sent to retrieve the runaway slaves. The runaways came as fugitives from bondage and may have felt safe in Columbus. Others ended their journey as passengers of the Underground Railroad here while others continued to Canada. Some entered Central Ohio under different circumstances, coming as free colored people. They heard of opportunities, and some were sent to Ohio by slave masters who had emancipated them.*

*The African American Landmarks Preservation Initiative (AALPI) of Columbus Landmarks Foundation began with a list of settlements contributed by Doreen Uhas Sauer: Flytown/Goodale; Africa; The Badlands; Burnside Heights; American Addition; Hanford Village; Franklinton; Peter’s Run; Seventh Street; Laneview; Milo-Grogan; Hilltop; as well as the Near East Side. The list, however, continued to grow and change.*

*Why these communities? Were they unique? What were their stories? These African American settlements in Central Ohio tell a story of a people, a story of memories about struggles against oppression, a story about finding an environment safe for their children, a story of strengths and resilience against great odds.*

*The communities that became home to black populations developed through various circumstances and opportunities. Many of the circumstances determined when and where people could migrate and on the necessities they could gather to survive.*

*This project explores the creation of a number of settlements that developed as African American communities, identifying within those African American settlements, community—its people and landmarks—the known and unknown of his or her stories.*

*As we try to understand what made African American communities unique in spite of the common beliefs held by the greater white society, Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary reminds us that we have to understand the uniqueness of African Americans, some of whom brought with them African culture while others developed by their experiences in the slave-driven America. She notes that African Americans were a strong and seemingly infinitely resilient people. As Dr. DeGruy Leary asserts, “We are an industrious people...we are a creative people...we are a just and forgiving people...and we are a spiritual, loving, and hopeful people.”*

*Reita Smith*



Above: Unidentified man in front of a Columbus theater, circa 1915.

# Introduction

*“Because a story is a story, you may tell it as your imagination and your being and your environment dictate.”*

**Nelson Mandela**

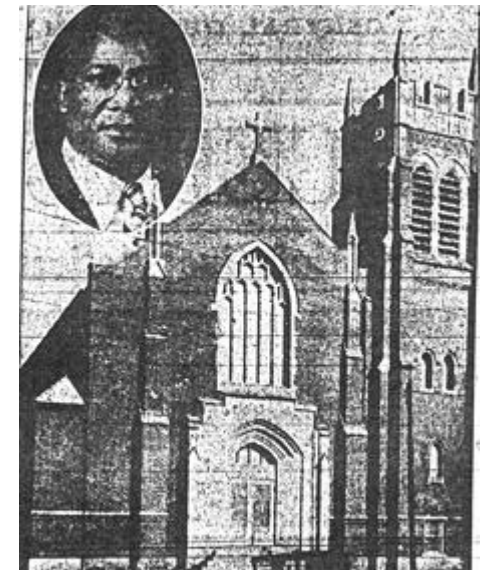


The impetus behind the African American Preservation Initiative was the coming together of three things—the loss of historically significant buildings that documented the history of Columbus, the passion of one woman, and a map.

Poindexter Village was the result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s vision to develop affordable public housing for the nation after the Great Depression. Poindexter Village was one of the first models in the country and was designed by Howard Dwight Smith, Columbus’s prolific architect who designed the Ohio State University’s Stadium. The village was designed to have courtyard spaces shared by all the families between the rows of brick townhouses. This public housing was in response to the needs of the many who were recovering from the effects of the Great Migration at the turn of the twentieth century and from the deprivations of the Great Depression in the 1930s. In addition, the public housing units would provide assistance to servicemen and federal workers. Once the pride of the community, the housing replaced the former Blackberry Patch and provided dignified housing for the future artists, teachers, college professors, professionals, politicians, social activists, government workers, writers, film makers, coaches, doctors, dentists, and families who lived there.<sup>1</sup> Today, only a few of the units remain standing.

Centenary Church on East Long Street, three stories tall with a five story steeple, was begun in 1900, the work of a congregation who had put aside their own dreams of its completion on a number of occasions for the greater needs of the community in the early twentieth century. Ministering to the physical needs of those coming to Columbus in the Great Migration, the congregants continued to worship in the excavated basement with little more than a makeshift roof over their heads through rain storms and bitter winters, waiting for the day when they could afford the red brick walls and stained glass windows for the sanctuary to be built.

Designed by an African American architect, the Centenary church ironically lasted little more than a century before



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Above: Two of the remaining houses of Poindexter Village.

Right The loss of Centenary Church sparked concerns among the neighborhood and historic preservationists. Seen in this picture, Rev. William Williams who headed the efforts to complete the church in the early 20th century.

it came down for the progress of yet another new plan for the Near East Side's redevelopment. These plans have often resulted in empty lots, unfulfilled visions, and a landscape of deserted historical record--once a vibrant African American community for more than eight decades. The loss of the church troubled many residents of the Near East Side and historic preservationists in Columbus.

Reita Smith, a longtime resident of Columbus, an inductee of Ohio Genealogy Society's First Families of Ohio, and a member of Franklin County Genealogical and Historical Society's African American interest group, was inspired by the work of Indiana Landmarks. The organization had established a permanent committee dedicated to preserving Indiana's African American heritage. The question she asked was, "Why not here?"

Confusing, hard to read, and with a few notable flaws, a hand-drawn map of Columbus was originally in a University of Chicago sociology study by Roderick McKenzie. It showed settlement patterns by race and nationality and the industrial corridors across the city in 1918. Not all of Columbus's ethnic groups were shown, but the map clearly showed scattered African American communities across the city.<sup>2</sup>

The map was brought to the attention of a group of interested parties assembled by Reita Smith, who were concerned about the loss of the Centenary church and the African American landmark that was Poindexter Village.

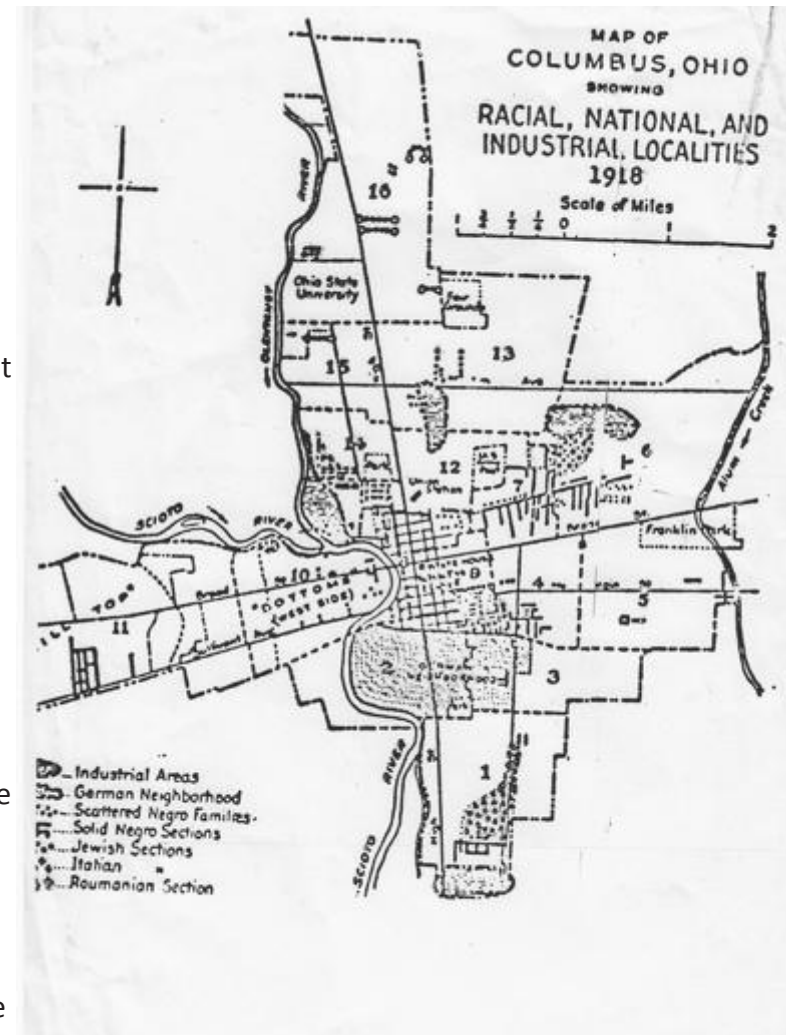
These three factors—preservation losses, an inspired (and inspiring) woman, and an 80+ year old map—led to the formation of a task force within Columbus Landmarks Foundation to seek funding to research early African American settlements and communities in Columbus. It was hoped that this history might provide context and historical clues about important buildings and landscapes that should be preserved and/or identified. The McKenzie map gave a snapshot of the city in 1918. Committee members and volunteers researched leads—remembering settlements and neighborhoods, though often now gone, and discovering others through interviews, family histories, census data, scrap books, old newspaper clippings, secondary and primary sources, and additional maps.

Though some settlements have vanished, their stories help us to rethink and redefine what is assumed to be known about the African American experience in Columbus.

Toni Smith, Julialynne Walker

*"Embedded within our built heritage are the markers of our technological, historical, and cultural evolution. These are the documents of our existence. It is for all of these reasons that the preservation of heritage is essential."*

Cody Fong



Above: This 1918 map began the quest to find out more about African-American settlements in Columbus.

***“History is not everything, but it is a starting point. History is a clock that people use to tell their political and cultural time of day. It is a compass they use to find themselves on the map of human geography. It tells them where they are but, more importantly, what they must be.”***

***John Henrik Clarke***

***“The majority of whites had little sympathy for their black neighbors. In Columbus, as early as 1827, a committee of the House of Representatives reported that free blacks...’undercut white labor and supplied a disproportionate number of convicts in the penitentiary’....Many of the city’s leading citizens were active in the Ohio State Colonization Society which held its annual meeting in Columbus on December 29, 1828...Most members of the free black community opposed the colonization movement....”***

***Charles Cole***

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, two early settlements developed in the Northwest Territory on the banks of the Scioto River, near the Olentangy River. The first was Franklinton (1797) on the west bank of the Scioto River. The second, Columbus (1812), was established on the east side of the river to become the capital of Ohio.

These new communities were symbols of hope and freedom to African Americans as they migrated into Ohio. They would be seen as possible safe havens--sources of opportunity by generations of African Americans who sought freedom from bondage but had been hindered by oppression.

## **Early Nineteenth Century African American Settlements—Beginnings, Trails, and Crossroads**

The city of Columbus was across the river from the older town of Franklinton founded 15 years earlier in 1797 by surveyor Lucas Sullivant. As the city grew, so did the diversity of its residents. The 1810 federal census counted residents in the newly-formed Franklin County, recording 43 “free colored people,” about 1% of the county’s population. “But that number included only those who had no reason to fear being counted by a U.S. marshal or his assistants—the authorities also responsible for enforcing a 1793 fugitive slave law and its later versions. Ohio, like the Northwest Territory before it, had outlawed slavery. But black residents who did not have freedom papers had no legal protection.”<sup>3</sup>

The Lucas Sullivant family is important in tracing the existence of early African Americans in Central Ohio. Sullivant kept close relations with his father-in-law who kept slaves on his plantation in Kentucky. Sullivant may have helped or “turned a blind eye” to fugitive slaves who passed through Franklinton. His wife, Sarah Sullivant, also took in a child, the infant son of Arthur Boke, Sr., a surveyor who worked with her husband. In Green Lawn Cemetery records, Boke is listed as “colored servant.” Joseph was five years old when his mother, Sarah, died; hence the note that Boke was Joseph’s “nurse.” Joseph Sullivant became a “foe of slavery.” He moved “...from the unsympathetic environment of Franklinton to Columbus where he joined in the clandestine activity of the Underground Railroad.”<sup>4</sup>

In areas surrounding Columbus and other Franklin county settlement areas, African Americans arrived in the 1820s and 30s. Groups of free people of color came from Virginia by wagon to Ohio

in response to reports of opportunities, bringing families, trades, and skills. In 1835, Abraham Depp purchased five hundred to six hundred acres south of Delaware, Ohio. Elias Litchford bought five to six hundred acres closer to Columbus; and Samuel W. Whyte, Jr., purchased two hundred acres, later changing his profession from mechanic to medicine.

In 1807 and in 1808 only a few marriages were recorded in Franklin County between black men and women, including a union between a man and “a Black woman, who was liberated by David Nelson.” Nelson was a miller on Alum Creek; his house still stands on Nelson Road.

The census of 1810 probably did not record all African Americans in Franklin County. Fear of defending one’s legal status or undocumented status may have accounted for 43 “free colored” persons. In 1820 there were 132 free people of color and in 1830 there were 288.

By the time of Columbus’s incorporation as a city on March 3, 1834, the population had reached 5,000. In 1840, the total population had grown to 6,048, of which 573 were Negroes.

In the 1850s, some previously enslaved Africans from Virginia arrived, given their freedom upon their masters’ deaths. In one instance, each of the slaves was given \$100 dollars and moved to a 200-acres parcel called Scioto, Ohio then located in the eastern and southern parts of present-day Hilliard, Ohio. In another example, Caroline Brown arrived with her two children from Virginia with sufficient funds to have a large house on present-day Livingston Avenue built for her.<sup>5</sup>

Other examples of newly emancipated slaves who arrived in Central Ohio were families from North Carolina. A group of 28 African Americans arrived near Westerville in 1859 to establish a small hamlet called “Africa.” These emancipated people eventually purchased land, becoming part of the community that was a documented stop on the Underground Railroad.

Page No. 29

SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in Civil and City of Columbus in the County of Franklin of Ohio, enumerated by me on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1870.

Post Office: Columbus Ohio

1	2	3	4			7	8		10	11	12	13
			5	6	0		9	10				
Name		Sex, Age, Color, and State of Birth			Profession, Occupation, or Trade	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate	Place of Birth	Color	Married	Single	Female
1	2122	Walter Amanda	50	M	W	Hotel Hotel			Virginia			
2	2123	Samuel Powell	25	M	W	Porter in Grocery			Ohio			
3	2124	Bill Nancy	30	F	W	Housewife			Alabama			
4		— Robert	17	M	W	Salvage			Virginia			
5		— King Mary	16	F	W	At Home			Ohio			
6		— Esai	7	M	W	—			Ohio			
7		— Johny	2	M	W	—			Ohio			
8	2125	Abner Jane	17	F	W	Housewife			Alabama			
9	2126	Johnnie David	16	M	W	Iron Shipyard			Virginia			
10		— Lewis	12	M	W	Keeping House			Kentucky			
11	2127	Wade Martha	12	F	W	Housewife			Virginia			
12		— Emmett	11	M	W	Brush Station			Ohio			
13		— Raphael	10	M	W	At Home			Ohio			
14		— Miller	10	M	W	—			Ohio			
15	2128	Henry Samuel	10	M	W	Teacher			Ohio			
16		— Magilda	8	F	W	Keeping House			Ohio			
17	2129	Leahy Elizabeth	10	F	W	Keeping House			Pennsylvania			
18		— John	12	M	W	At Home			Ohio			
19		— Elizabeth	11	F	W	—			Ohio			
20	2130	Lyons Louis	25	M	W	Wagoner			Pennsylvania			
21	2131	Smith Coleman	15	M	W	Teacher			Virginia			
22		— Virginia	12	F	W	Teacher			Virginia			
23	2132	Beulah Alexander	15	F	W	Teacher			Virginia			
24		— Sarah	11	F	W	At Home			Virginia			
25		— Frank	7	M	W	—			Virginia			
26		— Profie James	10	M	W	Salvage			Alabama			
27		— Archie William	10	M	W	Hotel Porter			Alabama			
28		— Aggie Abigail	16	F	W	Hotel Waiter			Virginia			

Above : An example of a Franklin County census record from 1870.

# Central Business District

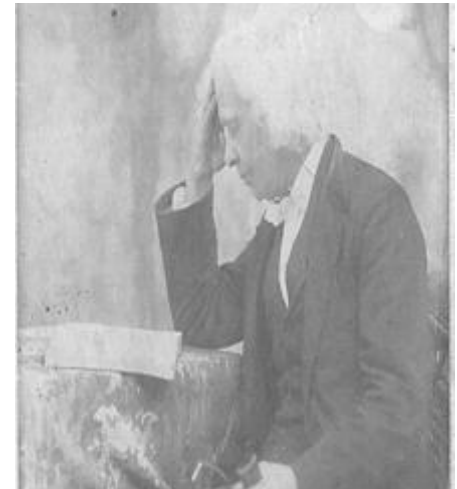
Pioneers who settled in Columbus created trade, transportation, business, and housing. The merchants and business owners commonly built their homes as one-story or two-room frame homes. They built stores, taverns, banks, market houses and hotels. As Columbus grew from log cabin dwellings, African Americans resided adjacent to the central business district, (Mound Street on the south; Long Street to the north; the Scioto River to the west and Fourth Street to the east). They also lived in small enclaves—Peter’s Run, the Canal Basin, West Long and West Spring Streets, and other areas.

Streets that were part of the original 1812 city plan going north and south were Fourth Street, Third Street, High Street (the major thoroughfare), Front Street, and West Street (with the east bank of Scioto River as a boundary). The thoroughfares going east to west starting at the south boundary were: South Street, Mound Street, Friend Street, Rich Street, Town Street, State Street, Broad Street (the major thoroughfare), Gay Street, Long Street, Spring Street, North Street and Last Street. The streets or alleys between the streets were very important because housing—especially for African Americans-- was behind the main streets.

Alleys where African Americans lived included: Mulberry Alley between Spring Street and Long Street, later changed to LaFayette Alley; Elm Ally between Long Street and Gay Street; and Lynn Ally between Gay Street and Broad Street. Many of these street names changed as the city grew.

The United States Census, prior to the Civil War and well after that conflict, can trace examples of families who lived and boarded in the early streets and alleys.

Yancy Goode lived on East Elm Ally in the 1860s. After he returned from the Civil War, he and his family lived on Water Street (no longer existing). His stepsons, William and Edward Rickman, lived on Lafayette Alley and on Water Street. By 1892, as the city began to grow and blacks began to move farther east, the Rickman family had moved to 1340 East Mann Street (which became Hawthorne Street). Yancy’s stepdaughter, Jenny Cordell was married Cory Adams at the Mann Street address by the prominent minister Rev. James Poindexter in 1901.



Above: A picture of the Rickman family from Lyman & Wells Studio, circa 1900.

Right: Rev. James Poindexter of Second Baptist Church.

A small cluster of blacks lived to the south of the central business district close to Mound Street in an area known as Peter's Run. The area was less desirable because it led to the wharfs along the river, the warehouse district, and the tanneries whose offal washed down the ravine and into the river.

When Columbus was a young city, new inhabitants needed to be many-faceted. Census data reveals many skilled workers and artisans among early African Americans settlers. The occupation of barber was one held by many black men in Columbus. Even through the Civil War, black barbers were considered especially proficient in their techniques of dyeing white men's hair into a particularly attractive "senatorial" silver, even applying their skills to the occasional Confederate officer who was permitted to leave Camp Chase "on his honor" that he would return to the prison camp. As an integral part of the nineteenth-century's world of men and politics, African American barbers used gossip and overheard information to their advantage as conductors on the Underground Railroad that operated out of the early downtown. The Rev. James Poindexter, who lived at 45 North Fourth Street, was the first African American elected to City Council and to the Columbus School Board. He was a barber by trade and a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

There were also carpenters, tailors, draymen, laborers, and others who were the proprietors of their own businesses. One talented individual was David Jenkins. He was skilled in painting, glazing and plastering, he contracted for large projects, and he employed black artisans. Jenkins and his men

worked on the Statehouse several times as well as on the exclusive Neil House Hotel and the homes of Columbus' most prominent businessmen. Jenkins also established the first black weekly newspaper in Columbus, the 'Palladium of Liberty', first published in 1844, with the subheading "We Hold These Truths to be Self-Evident That All Men Are Created Free and Equal."<sup>6</sup> In doing so, he created writing opportunities for many other black people and encouraged political activism.



## Poindexter's Hair Luster.

THE SUBSCRIBER MOST RESPECTFULLY begs leave to inform the Ladies of Columbus and vicinity, that she has secured the right to use and to sell

## J. Poindexter's Hair Preparations,

and that she will wait on ladies at their residences for the purpose of selling those preparations, Shampooing Ladies' and Childrens' heads, and doing or instructing in doing whatever may be necessary to the health and beauty of the scalp and hair.

Orders left at Mr. Poindexter's Barber Shop, 113½ High Street, or at 35 North Fourth Street, will be promptly attended to.

Above: Rev. James Poindexter was Columbus's most well known early civil rights leader and abolitionist, but he was also a barber by trade and seen in this 19th century advertisement.

Left: Downtown Central Business District, looking north from State Street bridge in the late 1800s.



# Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Settlements— Migrations, Marginalization, and Segregation

*“Several separate neighborhoods had served as foci of black settlement and would continue to be among the most prominent black neighborhoods throughout the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century as the city’s black population grew. In none of them, however, did blacks constitute more than about 30% of the population before 1916.”*

David Gerber

By 1870 almost 85% of Columbus’s African Americans lived in clusters throughout the city and in five of Columbus’s eight wards.<sup>7</sup> As in other Ohio cities, African Americans lived close to work in industries, railroads, downtown businesses, and service industries such as hotels and restaurants. However, unlike Cleveland’s racial patterns where neighborhoods experienced growing concentrations of African Americans in only three contiguous wards, Columbus’s pattern was more dispersed. At the turn of the twentieth century, the largest concentration of blacks was north and east of Broad and High Streets.



About 650 blacks or 35% of Columbus’s total black population, c. 1870, lived along East Long Street and East Spring Street in a neighborhood mixed by class and by race. As in other Civil War era areas in Columbus, rich and poor lived on different streets but in close proximity to each other. White and black poor lived in close proximity to each other. West Long and West Spring Streets housed many poor as industry and shops associated with the prison labor of the Ohio Penitentiary spread along the Scioto River. Here, by the turn of the twentieth century, another mixed neighborhood grew in the shadows of the penitentiary—Tin Town—a slum, so named for the cobbled together refuse used to build shacks.

Following the Civil War, rapid industrialization, the collapse of economy in the South, new immigration and the Great Migration would redefine race relations across the North. Racial intolerance and white insistence to “hold the color line” (keep blacks in their place) reached a high point in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Above: Long and High Street was the site of the early African-American business community. The Atlas Building replaced these buildings in 1905.

# Near East Side History - Consolidation and Continuity of a Community

What is now known as the Near East Side community (I-71 to Nelson Road, Broad Street to I-670) has been home to the largest settlement of African Americans in Columbus since the early twentieth century. As the largest of the African American settlements—the Near East Side is explored also in a section of this Report on Settlements and Neighborhoods: Blackberry Patch, Bronzeville, and Poindexter Village. The Near East Side’s development is linked especially to transportation and manufacturing, institutions, education, churches, medical care, labor, and segregation policies.

The community on the East Side did not develop from an agricultural community but represented a migration from the South, primarily from Virginia. People settled there before 1890, as well as, into other parts of Columbus. Initially blocked in by marshland and bogs, this land was eventually drained, first for farmland then for housing as businesses developed and transportation improved.

But for much of Columbus’s Near East Side, It is only during the latter half of the nineteenth century that the real story begins. Population growth exploded along transportation corridors, supported by early industrialization. Columbus, after the Civil War, experienced a growth in population from industries started during the war effort. African Americans, who had been displaced by war arrived in Ohio.

While growth had been minimal in the decade prior to the war in Columbus, by 1870, the population doubled and doubled again with each successive decade until 1920.<sup>8</sup> Initially bound on the east by Fourth Street, the beginnings of the Near East Side community grew into pockets of residences, supported by specific institutions such as the railroads and the stockyards. These opportunities attracted local citizens to move eastward as far as Alum Creek.


*“The Avenue was that great... everybody was looking to open a business. They wanted to own a shop on the Avenue. . . . Mt. Vernon was a mixed area at the time. It wasn’t all black. It had Italians, blacks, Jewish people living in the area, as well as, working in the area. And all owned property, from the railroad tracks on the north to Broad Street on the south, Taylor Avenue on the east and Hamilton Avenue on the west. It was like a pocket in itself, and it was a business area in itself. And everyone worked together, hand in hand. . . .You didn’t have to go anywhere else to buy anything.”*

*Thomas (Tommy) Campbell*



Above: Hamilton Park, unidentified children, circa 1915.

# Transportation and Business

<p>Something New on the Avenue</p> <p><b>The Old Virginia Pastry Shop</b></p> <p><i>Fine Cakes and Pies with the Rich Flaky Crust</i></p> <p>Small Pies 10c each      Large Pies 40c each</p> <p>Parker House Rolls 15c</p> <p>Cinnamon Rolls 20c per dozen      Pan Rolls 10c per dozen</p> <p><i>We Specialize in Cakes for Saturday and Sunday</i></p> <p><b>W. M. BOXLEY</b> 1218 Mt. Vernon Avenue</p>		
<p><b>The Little Gray Kitchen</b> <i>HOME COOKING</i></p> <p><i>Pies and Cakes a Specialty</i> Prices Reasonable</p> <p><b>Mrs. J. B. Kessler, Prop.</b> 1132 East Long Street</p>	<p>Last Call      Service First</p> <p><b>VIRGINIA LUNCH ROOM</b></p> <p>EDNA SINGFORD, Proprietress</p> <p><i>Soft Drinks and Sandwiches</i></p> <p>923 East Long Street</p>	
<p><b>Mrs. M. Burk's</b> <b>B. &amp; B. TEA ROOM</b></p> <p><i>A Good Place to Dine</i> <i>Home Cooking a Specialty</i> Meals Served at Home</p> <p>553 Boone Street</p>	<p><b>Mrs. J. M. Williams</b> <b>HOME RESTAURANT</b></p> <p><i>MEALS SERVED AT ALL HOURS</i></p> <p><i>Private Parties A Specialty</i></p> <p>652 E. Long St.      MA. 5020</p>	
<p><b>You Have Tried Others; Now</b> <b>Give Us a Trial.</b></p> <p>We Will Treat You Right <i>Home Cooking Is Our Specialty</i> COME TO</p> <p><b>The Crescent Restaurant</b> 368 West Goodale Street</p>	<p><b>THE TINY LUNCH ROOM</b></p> <p><i>The Place of Good Things to Eat</i> <i>Home Made Pies A Specialty</i></p> <p><b>Miss Lillian Harmon, Prop.</b> 709 Mt. Vernon Avenue</p>	
<p><b>The Best Place to Eat in Town</b></p> <p><i>HOME COOKING</i></p> <p>Meals Served at All Hours</p>	<p><b>VIE'S TEA ROOM</b></p> <p><i>MEALS SERVED DAILY</i></p>	

Above: An example of African-American businesses from the 1929-30 The Columbus Illustrated Negro Directory.

Right: The C. D. White Funeral Home is one of the oldest African-American businesses in Columbus.

The National Road entered Columbus by the early 1830's, connecting Columbus to the state of Maryland and places in between. However, the road was eclipsed by the railroads.

In 1850 Columbus welcomed its first railroad, a 55 mile-long connecting segment that united the existing track from Xenia to Cincinnati, providing uninterrupted service from the interior to the Ohio River. While the length and location of the railroad seems fairly insignificant today, the railroad between 1850 and 1870 formed a network of track from the east and south, met in Columbus and then continued to the north and west, carrying passengers and freight. With names that denoted their destinations (Columbus and Xenia; Columbus and Indianapolis; Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis) or their areas of service (The Panhandle, Piqua Line, Little Miami), the railroads were in competition one with another. Nevertheless, they sometimes shared resources and corporate boards.

Many local manufacturing sites had their own tracks or rail yards. Columbus was crisscrossed with sidings that served these individual sites, in addition to the major routes in and out of town. These trains had to be serviced and supplied before journeys continued. Each part of town had yards where respective railroads had their equipment serviced. On the East Side, the most common location was the PRR Yard

A and 8 with the adjacent Joyce Avenue Roundhouse and the Twentieth Street shops. Collectively this became the fourth largest roundhouse in the Pennsylvania Railroad system, and, at its height, employed close to 8000 people, many of them African-American, making it the largest employer in Columbus.<sup>9</sup>



Ohio's very first agricultural exposition or fair was held in Cincinnati because transportation, especially access to the railroad, was critical. With the success of the venture, the fair moved around over the next 24 years until it settled in what is now Franklin Park on Columbus' East Side. This land consisted of 88 acres and was located approximately two miles

from downtown. The park was initially purchased by the Franklin County Fair and over the intervening years, the state fair was held twice near the site of the current Mt. Carmel West Hospital and once near Schiller Park, both of which had easy access to the railroad.<sup>10</sup> From 1874 to 1885, the fair was located at Franklin Park

Columbus's expanding iron industry came to depend on black labor after 1890. Companies aggressively recruited blacks, offering them the chance for steady, indoor employment. Also, in the case of Ohio Malleable Iron Company, (later bought by The Jeffrey Manufacturing Co.), the firm built low cost company housing not far from the mill. Where there were only 16 blacks employed in Columbus foundries in 1890, by 1910 there were 343. At a time when blacks made up 7% or 8% of the local labor force, they made up 21% of Columbus's metalworkers.

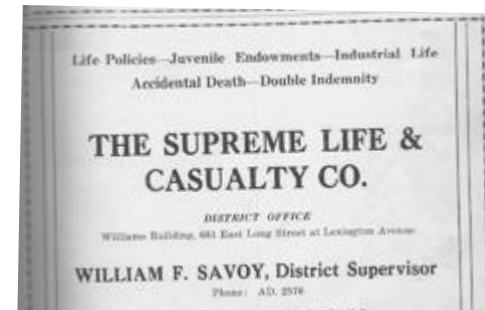
Ohio Malleable Iron Co. (colloquially called "Malibu") was located to the north of the central business district and was serviced by the budding railroad systems which contributed to the growth and movement of the black community. Movement to the northern part of Columbus created African American settlements in the area (village) of Milo Grogan, in the American Addition, and eventually into Weinland Park, along the Big Four Railroad.

The areas close to the river especially to the west were affected by a number of floods. The flood of 1898 and the later flood of 1913 would have a major impacts on the communities on both sides of the river. These floods had a domino effect upon the movement of the African American communities dispersing many families further to the east side and those on the west side of the river to higher grounds.

By 1869 streetcar service extended from downtown to Parsons Avenue and later to Franklin Park. The Long Street line was finished in 1872 with the terminus first at Garfield Avenue (where the car barns were located between Monroe and Garfield). In 1883 the Mt Vernon Avenue line was completed to Twentieth Street, making the East Side fully accessible from other areas in the city.

By the end of the nineteenth century many major roads in Columbus had been paved, either by the city, contractors or private citizens, and sewers were installed in some neighborhoods. With paved roads, farmland on the outskirts of town developed into estates with palatial homes for the city's elite. Of course, to keep them in style required a consistent supply of labor.

Much of the skilled and unskilled needs for such establishments were supplied by African



Above: Buckeye Steel Castings was a major employer of African-Americans on the South Side. Pictured here is a YMCA education class at the work site in 1919.

Middle: An African-American business from the 1929-30 Columbus Illustrated Negro Directory.

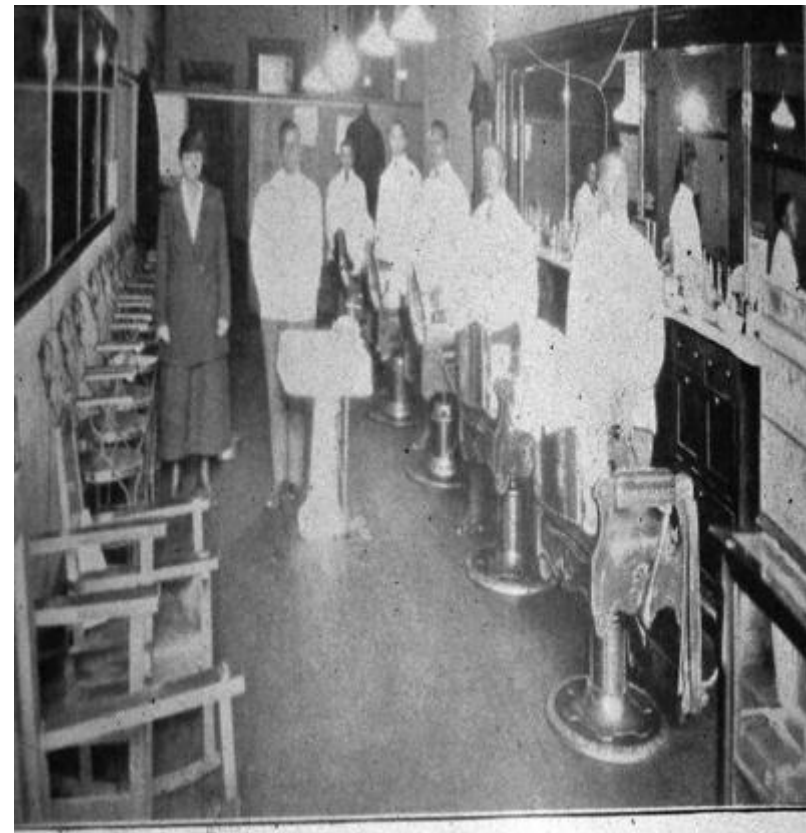
Bottom: First Union Station on High Street. Many African-Americans worked for the railroads, circa 1870.



Above: This building was home to the Columbus Urban League during World War II. Notice the "Air Raid" sign on the front.

Right: Barber shops served as a key source of employment and served as a community center for many African-Americans, circa 1919.

Americans who had developed such service skills in the South and were able to meet labor needs in these neighborhoods. This would remain the pattern until the turn of the twentieth century when recent immigrants sought domestic and household positions. Labor for the rich families of East Broad Street could be filled within walking distance by servants who lived on adjacent streets. Columbus did not fit the urban model of a Boston or New York with live-in servants when nearby servants from cleaning women to cooks, carpenters to gardeners could easily be housed nearby.



# Institutions

Prominent African American institutions either began or grew significantly during the early twentieth century. In 1912 Isabelle Ridgway, established the first successful “Old Folks Home” for the African-American aged at 155 North Twenty-First Street. This facility has grown and continues to operate at 1520 Hawthorne Avenue, under the name Isabelle Ridgway Care Center and under the direction of a board.

In 1901 the Ohio Avenue Day Nursery was established for African-American youth and was substantially enlarged in 1916, primarily through the financial contributions of the community.

In 1909 the NAACP was founded in New York and six years later opened for business in Columbus at the Spring Street Branch of the YMCA, the only “Y” facility open to African Americans in Columbus. Mamie L. Moore is considered the “Mother” of the NAACP for the strong leadership she provided during its developmental years. St. Paul’s Neighborhood House was opened in 1909, as a settlement house sponsoring activities for the local population, which at that time included a large number of Italians and eventually included African-Americans as clients.

Similarly local businesses such as the Lincoln Savings Bank (1905) and the Home Building and Loan Association (1899) opened for business on Mt. Vernon Avenue and eventually served the evolving African American population. In 1917 the Mary Price Home for Unwed Mothers was established at 164 North Twenty-Second Street. Renamed for poet Phyllis Wheatley in 1930, the mission remained the same: to provide a home for expectant and young mothers. Prenatal care, as well as, practical domestic science subjects was taught to the young women, and all were committed to finishing their education. Staff at the home consisted of professional nurses and social workers who were supported by area doctors.

Finally, an assortment of Masonic lodges and fraternal organizations, along with their female counterpart institutions, obtained properties and built structures throughout the Near East Side as the base for their personal and service commitments.

At the height of the business growth (as listed in *The Columbus Illustrated Negro Directory of 1929 -1930*), the Near East Side and other black neighborhoods counted 355 black business establishments scattered over the city, including: 8 drug stores, 3 financing institutions, 1 brokerage company, 75 churches, 27 physicians, 20 lawyers, 90 ministers 13 druggists, 17 dentists, 19 policemen, 12 grocers, 3 theaters, 2 photographers, 6 fraternal houses, 6 office buildings, 12 filling stations, 4 funeral directors, 3 newspapers, 25 teachers, 20 real estate dealers and brokers, 4 hotels, 7 life insurance companies, and many



Top: The Spring Street YMCA was home to the local NAACP and provided strong educational programming for African-American youth

Bottom : The Masonic Lodge remains a major institution in the African-American community, 2014..

## BUILDS NEGRO THEATER

*DUNBAR THEATER*  
Samuel Clark Erecting \$18,000  
Structure in Mt. Vernon Ave.

An \$18,000 theater building to be used initially for amateurs, is being built by Samuel Clark, colored, at 1287 Mt. Vernon avenue. The theater is fully equipped, with a stage 36 feet deep and 40 feet wide, and the auditorium has a seating capacity of 700. On the first floor of the building is a spacious dance hall.

Thomas Howard, manager of the People's Band and Orchestra, who will have the management of the theater, says that in time the house may get into a colored vaudeville circuit, so that the colored people of Columbus will have professional vaudeville. When the building is let to white people the management will make the right exclusive and no colored people will be permitted to enter.

restaurants, hair dressers, and other businesses.

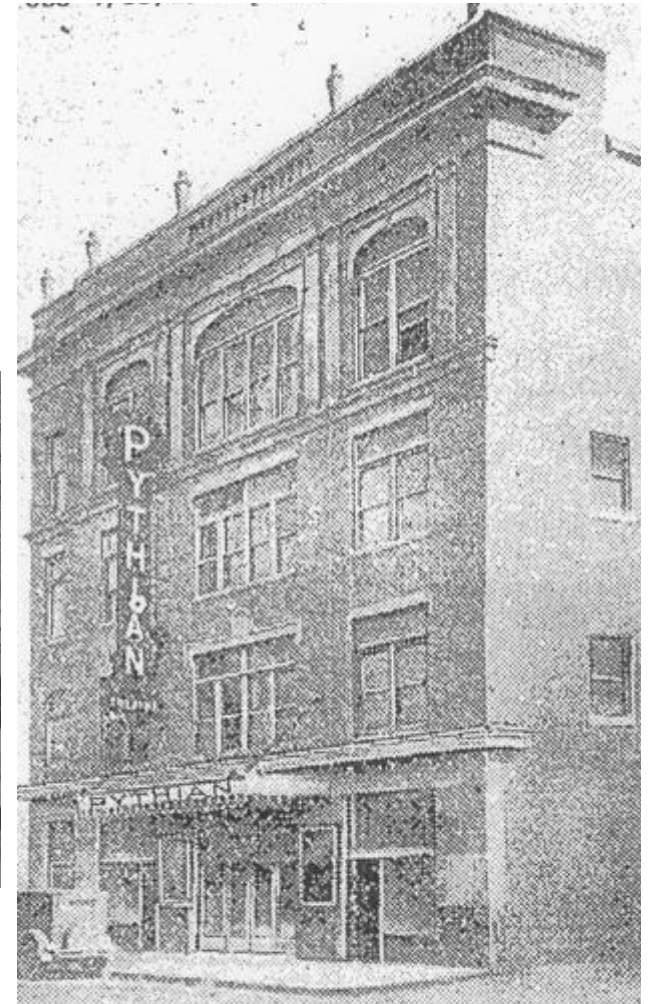
Many of these businesses were located on Mt. Vernon Avenue and Long Street. Mt Vernon Avenue was the site of the East Market between Twentieth Street and Miami Avenue. In the 1920s-1930s most businesses on Mt Vernon Avenue were owned by white men. Most businesses on East Long Street (the older street) were owned by African Americans.



Above: The Dunbar Theater, 1908, lasted almost sixty years, becoming at one point the stained glass studio and showroom for the Von Greigen Arts Studios.

Right: The Lincoln Theater opened in 1928 as the Ogden Theater.

Far Right: The Pythian Theater (motion picture) and the headquarters of the Knights of Pythias opened in 1926 on Mt. Vernon Avenue and is now the Martin Luther King Center.



# Education

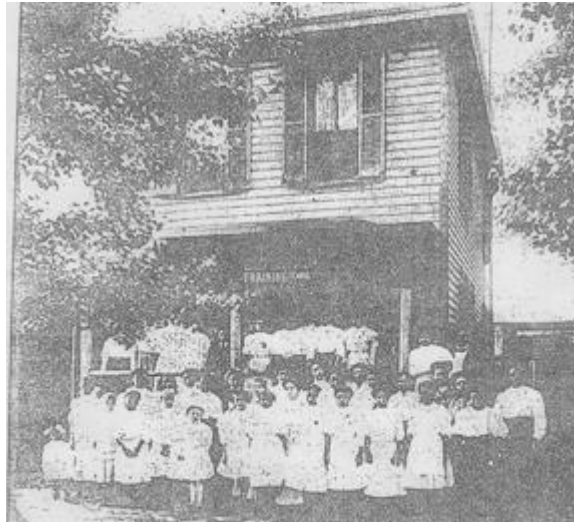
The Near East Side was the home of many so-called “silk stocking” schools because this was where the wealthy lived. Separate schools existed for the African-Americans families who were living, as well as, working in the area.

Over time the Columbus Board of Education, which could no longer afford to maintain two separate schools systems for white and black children, allowed black parents to send their children to the nearest white school. Because the percentage of African American families in the district was well below the number of white families, there was little objection from white parents. This arrangement lasted into the twentieth century; however, with a large influx of African Americans into Columbus during the Great Migration and social and political changes in the North, segregation, especially in education, housing, and public accommodations became the norm in Columbus by 1909.

Columbus had one of the early public high schools in the country. Central High School later known as Commercial High, located at the corner of Sixth and Broad Streets, was established prior to the Civil War. Two African American students were in the first graduating class. Garfield, Ohio, and Douglas schools were established in the late nineteenth century. By 1898 East and South High Schools were built. The African American community had been vocal and active about education (See section on Peter’s Run), and they were equally committed to religious institutions.

***“There were only two black schools in the Columbus Public School system – Champion Avenue, and it was both an elementary and junior high school, and Mt. Vernon Avenue Elementary School that had black students and a black principal. In those days, only single women could teach in the elementary grades and once you got married you had to quit. It was only after the war that they changed the rule where you could be a married woman and teach school. I only remember one man who ever taught elementary school and I am not sure why he was allowed to do so. Lucien Wright was the only male elementary teacher because they did not allow men to teach young kids. And there was one woman, she was married to Rev. Arnold, the minister right there at Mt. Vernon A.M.E., and I believe she could teach music because he had political connections. Fenton (school), down on Leonard Avenue, was an all white elementary school and as the neighborhood changed, it changed and then more blacks got jobs teaching.”***

***Elise and Lawrence Dodley,  
Interview, 2014***



Far Left: The Garfield School was one of several schools on the Near East Side that served integrated school populations before World War I.

Left: The Colored Industrial School in Columbus, pictured in 1909, was at 641 E. Long Street and trained young people for domestic work,



***“A meeting of colored citizens was held in the Gay Street Church, Monday evening February 25<sup>th</sup>. The object of the meeting being to hear the report of the committee appointed at the meeting of Feb. 13 to solicit names to a petition praying the present-day Legislature to submit to the people the proposition to strike the word ‘white’ out of the State Constitution. On motion, Rev. J. Poindexter was elected President and J.H. Roney, Secretary. Rev. J. Poindexter reported that the petition was signed by 548 persons...Resolved that there be a committee of nine appointed to watch the current events in reference to the elective franchise being secured to our people in this State, and that said committee shall have power to call public meetings when their judgment required, and in view to secure such general cooperation as may be necessary to consummate the above end, that is to secure to us the right of suffrage. Committee—Revs. Watt and Poindexter and Messrs. D. Jenkins, J. T. Ward, J.V. Thompson, J. H. Roney, J.S. Tyler, A. Redman, and O. Turner....”***

***Columbus Gazette, March 1, 1868***

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Right: Shiloh Baptist Church began construction in 1869 and remains largely unchanged.

## Churches

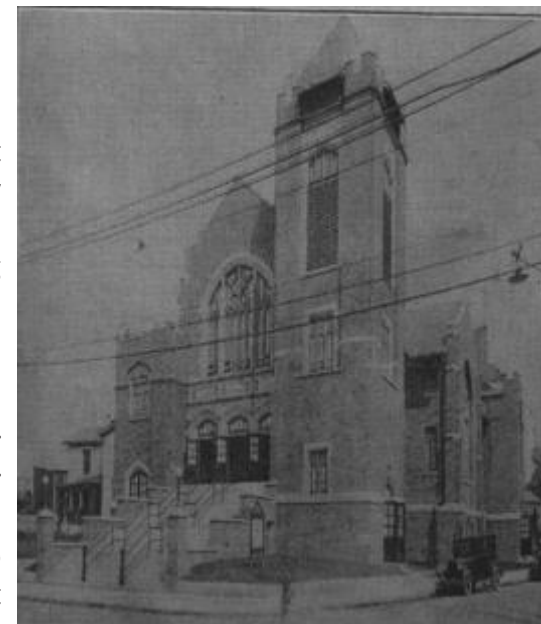
A landmark of black communities was the creation of churches within walking distance of the congregants. Churches were to become the centers of social consciousness and benevolent societies.

Among those that were first formed were: Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1823 which later became known as St Paul A.M.E.; Second Baptist formed in 1836 which broke away from First Baptist Church; and the Anti-Slavery Church, formed in 1847 which was to break away from the Second Baptist Church (however, they were later reconciled). St. Paul and Second Baptist began in humble log cabins on Lazelle Alley and Mulberry Alley. They would make a number of moves before building in their permanent current locations.

These churches were leaders in the abolitionist movement and would hold great state-wide Conferences of Colored Men to address the plight of their brethren held in bondage. The Conferences produced many documents speaking to the issue of slavery and Ohio’s stand on the rights of black people and the repeal of Ohio’s Black Laws. A number of the conference members were very active in the Underground Railroad movement because their residences and businesses were within the city’s central district. Fugitives hoping to pass through Columbus were often “hidden in plain sight” as cooks, draymen, and laborers with the help of the black community.

As early as 1817, African American congregations were documented as organized entities with their own places of worship. Located on the edges of the downtown, Baptists were on Gay Street between Third and Fourth Avenues. Anti-Slavery Baptists were on Town Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets. Many contemporary churches in the African American community began in one of two ways—they were created by the existing white elite and subsequently broke away to establish their own churches or they were created by the African American community from the beginning.

Reverend James Poindexter’s career as a civic leader began with the Anti-Slavery Baptists who, under his leadership, later combined with the Baptists in a Gay Street building. Subsequently, they moved to Seventeenth Street in 1858 as the Second Baptist



Church. Shiloh Baptist Church began as a break-away group from Second Baptist Church in 1869 and held services in a building near Fourth and Gay Streets before buying a building from an existing congregation on Cleveland Avenue. They later constructed a new building in 1884.<sup>12</sup>

Union Grove Baptist Church began under a tree with the guidance of a missionary who provided Sunday School services to youth as a way to entice their parents to church. Eventually the congregation moved first to a log cabin on Mt. Vernon Avenue and then to the present site on Champion Avenue in 1888.<sup>13</sup>

Like the Baptists, by 1887 Presbyterians also felt pressured by their congregations to address the spiritual needs of those who lived on the Near East Side. First Presbyterian Church organized a Sunday School on Long Street and Garfield Avenues. However, due to the segregation practices of the congregation which restricted African American worshippers to the loft area, a worship circle was begun at the Ogden Temple located at Garfield and Long Streets. Later Bethany Presbyterian Church was established at Garfield and Spring Streets.<sup>14</sup>

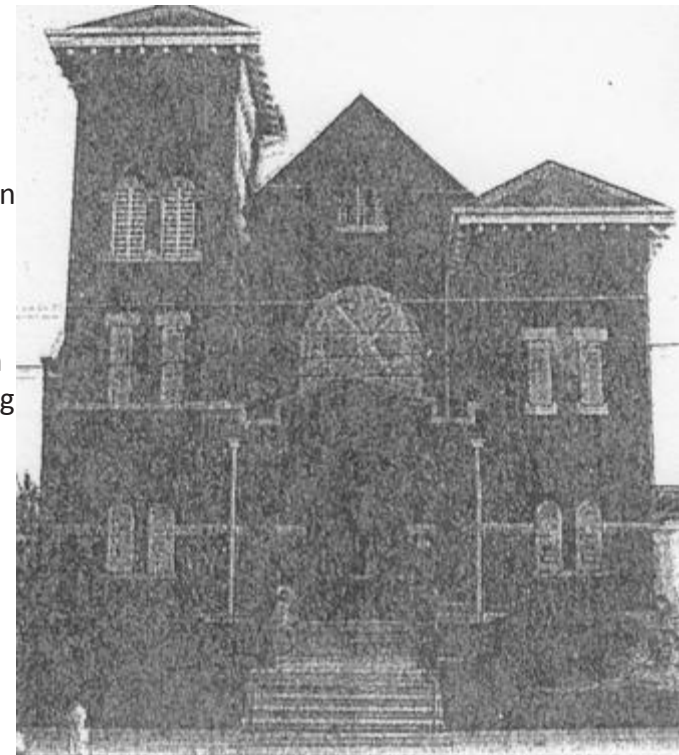
In 1888 the Donaldson Street Methodist Church was established by the African American community and eventually moved to the corner of Mt. Vernon Avenue and Twenty-First Street under the leadership of Rev. C.D. White.

St. Paul A.M.E., now recognized as the oldest African American congregation in the city and one with a very respectable social ministry, began in the homes of the congregation before establish their first building on what is now Lazelle Alley, and later moving to Long and Jefferson Streets, where it still remains.<sup>15</sup>

St. Dominic Catholic Church (453 North Twentieth Street) and school and St. Cyprian's Church and school (1399-1413 Hawthorne Street) represents the story of the Catholic African American community on the Near East Side. St. Dominic is the older parish, organized in 1899, by Bishop Watterson, who saw the need for a church to serve the needs of the Irish and Italian families who worked for the nearby railroads. The first church was on Twentieth Street and Hildreth Avenue, and within six months they also had established a school—all of which were located in one large room. By 1911 the church had purchased two acres from the old Anderson estate and within five years, St. Dominic's was dedicated and three hundred children were in school. This was also a decade of growing racial segregation across Columbus, and the Columbus diocese established a separate outreach to African Americans (and non-Catholic African Americans), purchasing a site for St. Cyprian's Church near Hawthorne Avenue and Burt Street in 1912.

***“Rev. James Poindexter will deliver a lecture on the ‘Ku Klus Klan’ this (Wednesday) evening at the Second Baptist Church, Gay Street, between Third and Fourth streets, south side. No charge at the door; all persons invited.”***

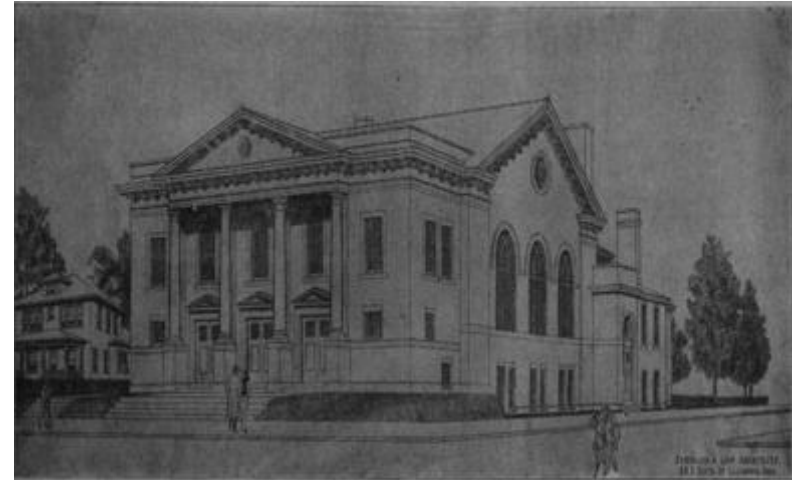
***Ohio State Journal, April 26, 1871***



Above: Established in 1823, St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church moved to this site in 1906 where it remains today..



A combination chapel and two-room school was initially built; in 1914 a second building was built at 1413 Hawthorne Avenue. By 1918 the school served over one hundred students (mostly non Catholic) and the chapel served a small African American population, most of who had come from Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. By 1943, over 650 people were baptized in that church. But the neighborhood and the Catholic Church were also changing. As Italians and Irish moved out of the area, the African American population increased, and African Americans were now accepted in all church parishes and all parish schools. St. Cyprian's closed; St. Dominic became the primary Catholic Church in the neighborhood.<sup>16</sup>



Above Top: Second Baptist Church, founded in 1836, moved to its present location in 1907.

Above Right: Union Grove Baptist Church was a major part of the Poindexter Village community.

Right: Mrs. Charlotte Cooper, wife of Rev. Henry Cooper and Superintendent of the Bethany Presbyterian Sunday School, with the full Sunday School, circa 1935, circa 1920s.



Far Right: The basketball team was the pride of St. Cyprian's Roman Catholic Church, circa 1940s..

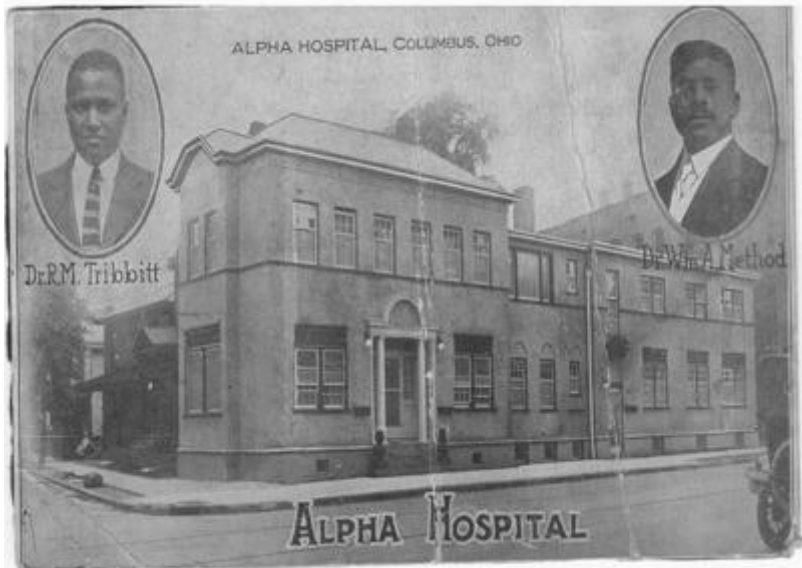


# Medical Care

Medical care was provided by individual doctors and community hospitals.<sup>17</sup>

While St. Anthony's Hospital, built in 1890, was part of the Catholic complex on Hawthorne and Taylor Avenues, there is little evidence that it served the African American community as a hospital like St. Clair Hospital. St. Clair originally opened on St. Clair Avenue as a white hospital with two operating rooms, 20 beds, and a nurses' training school. Dr. William Sloss Van Fossen designed the hospital (1911) to be a private general hospital, later expanding to 50 beds, but it did not survive the Depression, becoming a "registered" hospital, meaning it could only provide internships. By the 1940s, St. Clair Hospital became a convalescent home and transitioned into a popular hotel within eight years. As a hotel, the St. Clair catered to African American visitors and especially to the vaudeville and big band entertainers who were playing at the Pythian, Empress, and Ogden Theaters.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. W. T. Method began practice 23 August 1906 at 471 Parsons Avenue. After four and half years he built a new home and office at 663 East Livingston Avenue. Four years later, he purchased a house at 121 North Seventeenth Street, rebuilt the structure for an office with Dr. R. M. Tribbitt (dentist), and in May 1920, he built the Alpha Hospital office building at the southeast corner of East Long Street and Seventeenth Street.



Dr. Method had an enviable professional record and was kept extremely busy by his extensive practice. He became known as the "Dean of Negro Physicians." One of Dr. Method's extraordinary attributes was that from the inception of his practice, he always took time to encourage, teach, and financially assist younger physicians in establishing their practice.



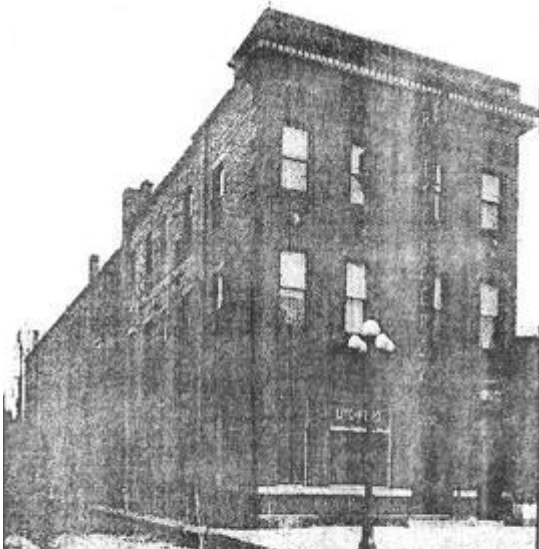
Above: Dr. George D. Boston, 2nd Lt. - U.S. Army. He was the first tenured African-American professor at The Ohio State University, School of Medicine.

Left: Alpha Hospital was so named because it was the first (alpha) hospital where African-American doctors could practice their full surgical skills.

# Labor and Segregation

***“If greatness is measured in size, the Great Migration was great indeed, Between America’s entry into the European war and the Stock Market crash in 1929, black men and women left the South at an average rate of 500 a day, or more than 15,000 a month. The evacuation of the black belt was particularly striking. In 1910, more than 300,000 black people resided in the Alabama black belt. Ten years later, their numbers had declined to 255,000 and would continue to fall...by 1930, more than 1.3 million resided outside the South, nearly triple the number from the turn of the century.”***

***Ira Berlin***



Above: The Litchford Hotel on N. 4th Street was celebrated in the newspapers as the first African-American hotel with 50 sleeping rooms, and a restaurant and cafe in the early 1900s.

Ohio, due to the wealth of the land and the skills of the ever-increasing population, has had a mixed economy, balanced among opportunities in manufacturing, agricultural products, government and business. The first documented manufacturing concern in the Columbus area was for the production of supplies for the army during the War of 1812. As the manufacturing concerns grew in the city, so did the need for labor, benefiting African Americans.

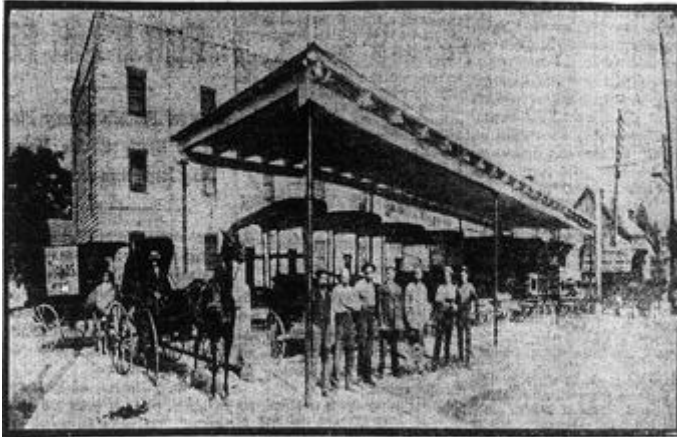
By 1914, there was a change in the labor market as more African Americans, especially men, were replaced in the hotel, restaurant, and service industries by young white women who would accept less pay. What once had been prestigious jobs for African American men in the downtown were disappearing. Opportunities were lost because of changing economic and social reasons. One effect of the Great Migration was a more pronounced segregation in housing, employment, and schools.

In 1924, a survey conducted by the Urban League identified African American male residents in Columbus in the following way: While a quarter of the respondents identified themselves as “laborer” for their occupation, others noted factory or shop work (12.3%); the building trades (12.8%); railroads (14.5%), porters/janitors (11%). Also of note were the classifications of proprietors (2.2%), clerical (3.5%), and professionals (2.6%). Women were identified as domestics (86.7%); factory/retail (8.4%); other (4.9%).<sup>19</sup>

The African American community—the Near East Side and the smaller communities-- were self-sufficient because they had to be.

*The Ohio State Journal* in the first decade of the twentieth century carried a regular column, “Afro-American News,” which provided the social calendar of the black community. It has also been suggested that the term “Afro-American” was first used in Columbus.<sup>20</sup> Church events, marriages, out-of-town visitors, recognitions of honors, classical music events, home parties, debutant daughters, fundraiser dinners, sermon topics, business and civic news, events at the “Y” or Ohio State, the new Litchford Hotel or Second Baptist Church, the professional accomplishments of the head waiter at the Hotel Hartman, lodge meetings and women’s clubs— were regular features of the African American community in Columbus. However, the majority of the events reported came from the Near East Side.

With the coming of the streetcar as public transportation in post-Civil War Columbus, the city



MR. WARD (in buggy) and view of Wagon Shed.

Ward Do It” was a slogan that everyone knew on the Near East Side. William S. and John T. Ward, a father and son team, began the Ward Transfer Line in 1881 as an outgrowth of a household and commercial moving business that included the secret transport of African-Americans out of slavery. They utilized horse teams until 1921 when they introduced trucks as a modern innovation to the business. But the high levels of professional service never changed, and the family and business retained a prominent position in the community. It is the oldest continuously operating African-American business in the United States.

Like the Wards, the Tyler family has had a large impact on the African American community in Columbus. Both families had long ties to advocating civil rights issues.

James Seneca Tyler was the first African American elected Clerk to the Ohio House of Representatives. His wife, Maria McAfee, daughter of an indentured servant, helped raise the children of a prominent family. As a leading politician, James Tyler was a friend to a Governor – Joseph B. Foraker – and a governor who became a President – William McKinley. Among his twelve children, James Tyler’s children included a classical pianist, a major athlete and the eldest, the first African-American war correspondent (World War I), Ralph Waldo Tyler (1859-1921).

Ralph W. Tyler attended elementary and high schools in Columbus before becoming a teacher at

expanded out East Long, Mt. Vernon, and Main Streets. The Near East Side became a definable wealthy white community as farmland turned into subdivisions by the 1870s. There was increasing diversity, but always definable pockets by color over time. Many streets between Long and Mt. Vernon were working class while Hamilton Park between Long and Broad Streets was a wealthy African American neighborhood.

Churches flourished; homes were well maintained; businesses were established. “Let

***“Had it only been the (Germans) colored soldiers had to fight against, they would return to the States without a single complaint, but in not a few instances, I regret to admit, they have had to fight the Hun while at the same time they were enduring an enfilading attack from those whom they had supposed were here to fight for the same thing they came oversea to fight for – world democracy.”***

**Ralph Waldo Tyler**



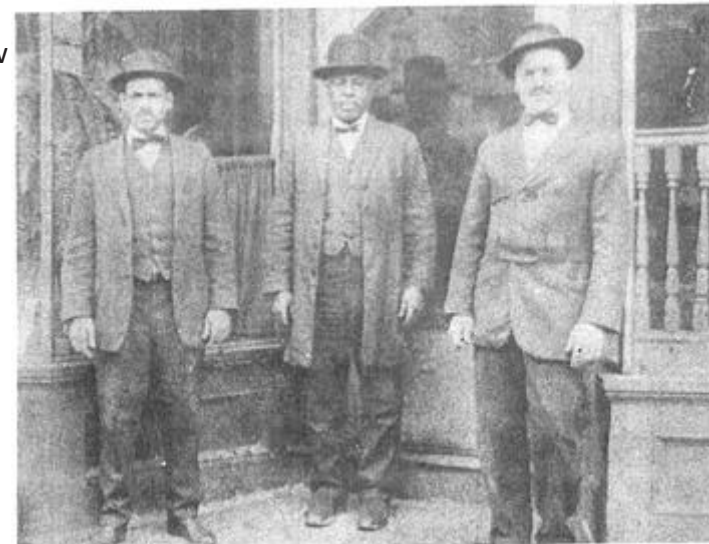
Above: Wagon yard of Ward Transfer Co., late 19th century.

Bottom: A newspaper clipping from 1917 shows Columbus’ oldest African-American “suffraget,” who was born a slave and testifies to women’s political involvement.



the age of 19. He was also a janitor for a local paper where he seems to have been inspired by the journalism profession, teaching himself shorthand in order to apply for a job. He worked his way up from circulation department to business department and then the news department. Due to his family's political connections, he was introduced to and he impressed very deeply, Emmitt J. Scott, political colleague of Booker T. Washington, a frequent visitor to Columbus, and special assistant to the Secretary of War for race relations.

The Tylers had close personal relations with Booker T. Washington and members of the Republican Party, even inviting many prominent educators and government officials to Columbus for the celebration of birthdays and anniversaries. They were not alone though—the Prillermans, especially the famous educator, Dr. Byrd Prillerman (Burnside) also invited Washington to Columbus. The late Mrs. Dorothy Goins of St. Paul's AME Church, remembered Washington staying in her mother's rooming house on West Eleventh Avenue. As a young girl, she carried his breakfast tray to him because he liked to work in bed, papers strewn around him. On one occasion, she ran to tell her mother his glasses had broken, but when her mother investigated, she realized that her daughter had never seen narrow reading glasses.



Pearl, C.D. & Norman White

Tyler was recruited to the Committee on Public Information and was sent to France as part of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. While Tyler's colleagues accepted him as a professional, they had failed to acknowledge the contributions of approximately 200,000 African Americans serving the World War I effort. His role was to ensure that the heroic efforts by the segregated divisions reached a broader audience than had existed so far in the

Above: This Columbus Dispatch cartoon from 1922 shows that the KKK was not welcomed.

Right: Undertakers, licensed by the state, were respected pillars of the black community, circa early twentieth century.

form of letters to soldiers' families. He vividly described the life of the African-American and African (primarily Senegalese fighting on behalf of France) doughboys both on and off the field. He provided more formal assessments to colleagues concerned about domestic civil rights.

Despite his historic international achievements, Ralph W. Tyler returned to Columbus to work as society editor for *The Columbus Dispatch*, cultivating as part of his sources his many acquaintances who were servants of prominent families of Columbus, and he worked as secretary to Robert F. Wolfe, publisher of *The Columbus Dispatch* and *The Ohio State Journal*.



***“The nucleus of the Negro settlement on the east side was the Champion Avenue neighborhood and the St. Clair Garfield neighborhood, causing a solid colored settlement. Most stores on Mt. Vernon Avenue were owned by White men. Most businesses on East Long Street were owned by Negroes. Mt. Vernon Avenue was the real business heart of the Negro district. Long Street was the oldest of the streets. There was an unbroken succession of business establishments on both sides of Mt. Vernon Avenue extending from the Pythian Temple on the southeast corner of Talmadge to Champion Avenue. The area included drugstore after drugstore, poolrooms in abundance, and restaurants with girls frying fish in display windows.”***

***Dr. Wm. Kenneth Allen, M.D.***

Right : African-American World War I veterans proudly wore their uniforms to fraternal banquets, circa 1919.



# African American

## Settlements and Communities of Columbus

### BLACKBERRY PATCH, BRONZEVILLE, AND POINDEXTER VILLAGE

*“It is 8:30 p.m. on the last Tuesday of the month. The meeting takes place at Mayor Scarborough’s home, 474 North Garfield Avenue. Mayor Scarborough is seated at the head of the table with members of the cabinet filling the other seats nearby and making the dining room where the meeting is held seems a bit crowded. Meeting opens with a prayer. Cabinet members rise and address Rev, Scarborough...when the executive secretary calls for ‘progress reports.’ Dr. Henry W. Dyer dentist, with offices at 828 Mt. Vernon Avenue is the present executive secretary.”*

*Jesse Jackson, The Ohio State Journal*



Above: The Cultural Wall on E. Long Street, 2014.

Columbus’ Near East Side is identified historically as Bronzeville, a national term that had originated in Chicago and referred to African-American communities in various municipalities. By 1936, the term “Bronzeville” was well recognized in the Columbus community and was a city-within-a-city. Access to the economic power of Bronzeville was supported by an annual directory published for many years by William A. McWilliams.<sup>21</sup> These directories included short biographies of key leaders as well as listings of services.

Political direction was provided by an unofficial “mayor” who was elected by the community to be a spokesperson for the community for one year. This mayor was perhaps the most democratically elected official in the history of the state, and there was also a cabinet that mirrored the departments of the city to help leverage city services or initiate projects. Anyone, man or woman aged 21 who “...has the welfare of the race at heart and not holding an elective political position” could run.

A voter could vote as often and for as many of the candidates as he or she wished during the four weeks allotted for primary elections, culminating in a nomination process where as many as 12 persons who achieved the highest number of votes moved to the general election. When a mayor was chosen, it was front-page news. In addition to studying issues of education, parks, sanitation, and citizen welfare, Bronzeville also created a sense of community, annually holding a contest for Miss Bronzeville.<sup>22</sup>

When Mayor Scarborough, pastor of Trinity Baptist church from 1927 to 1949, was elected on March 3, 1937, the news had a four-page spread in the mainstream Ohio State Journal. Scarborough appointed a cabinet who were widely representative of the black community. Each cabinet member appointed five persons to assist him or her. Cabinet members met in homes, took their agendas very seriously, published reports, and knew they were accountable to their constituents. They received no salary.

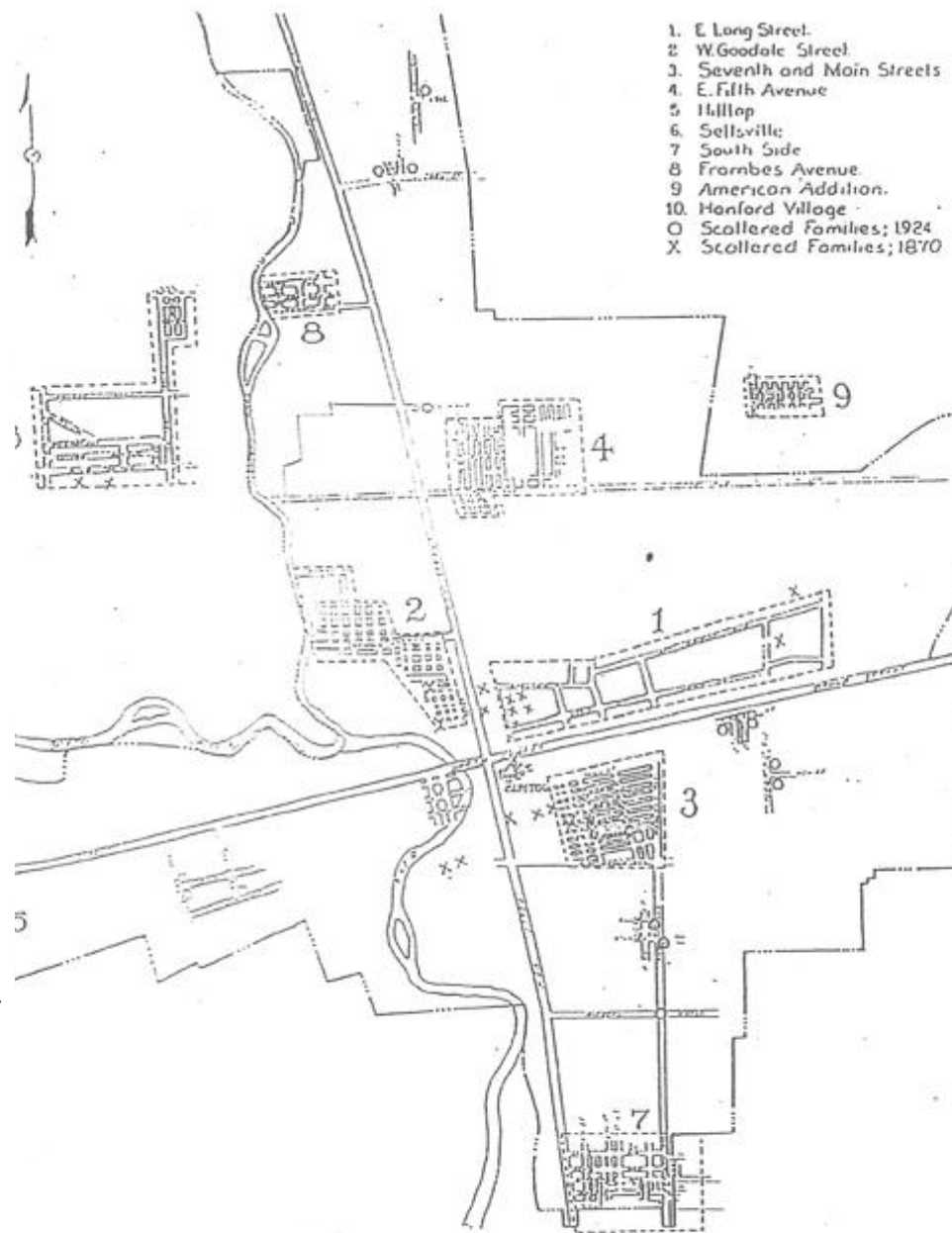
This political power built on the continued civic and economic leadership of many within the community, was dependent in large part on the contributions of Nimrod Allen.<sup>23</sup> He helped to found the Columbus Urban League in 1917, became its director in 1921, and remained at that post for thirty-three years. It was an affiliate of the National Urban League which began 1911 to promote equal and equitable access to resources throughout the country. Allen became “the most prominent leader and ‘power broker’ in the Black community for at least two decades.”

He had been trained as a humanist and social worker at Yale and Wilberforce Universities, and it was perhaps this background that influenced his approach to create positive links between the white and black communities. At the same time, the Near East Side (and segregation) facilitated the continued creation of a black professional class—in the same decades of national backlash and unrest.<sup>24</sup>

Churches continued to serve as a stabilizing influence and according to a 1924 survey most African-American residents not only walked to work but also walked to worship. Eight churches were identified between Long Street to the south, Mt. Vernon to the north, Jefferson to the west and Champion Avenue to the east that serviced the majority of the residents. Trinity Baptist and Second Baptist have been previously mentioned as home to political leaders in the area.

Second Baptist as the oldest church in Columbus was the Mother Church for ten other area churches: Russell Street Baptist, Hildreth, Memorial Tenth Avenue, Shiloh, Union Grove, Bethany, Oakley, Good Shepherd, Greater Love and offered an elementary school from 1851-1865. Bethany Presbyterian Church began in 1917 as an outgrowth of prayer sessions held at the Odd Fellows Hall (Ogden Hall) at Garfield Avenue and Long Street. Formally established a year later, the dedicated congregation opened the doors to a permanent church home in 1922 at 206 North Garfield Avenue and became an integral part of the community through a strong focus on public service (with two pastors serving as chair of the NAACP during the next 30 years).

Nimrod Allen noted that on Long Street alone, “There were ten Black physicians, seven dentists,



Above: African-American settlements in Columbus, 1928.



two pharmacists, and two morticians.”<sup>25</sup> Many community elders have clear memories of this period, and Lawrence Dodley is representative of so many thousands whose families came up from the South, settled on the East Side, and became valued members of vibrant communities throughout Ohio and the Midwest.

Between 1920 and 1930 the Ohio census established that the African-American population had doubled (from 16,637 to 32,774) in Columbus and was living in seven specific communities.

In the 1930s, however, with the country mired in the depths of the Great Depression and some 13-15 million people (or more than 20 percent of the U.S. population at the time) unemployed, the African American community suffered. At the height of the Great Depression, a survey undertaken in the mid 1930s by the Columbus Urban League, as part of a National Youth Administration Project, found a general deterioration in the housing conditions among most African-Americans as a result of a general decline in employment (almost 1/3 were unemployed at the time of the survey).

An emotional event for the entire community was the destruction of the Blackberry Patch and the construction of the first public housing project in Columbus--Poindexter Village – and the second one in the nation. The Blackberry Patch was a portion of the Near East Side located approximately



between Hawthorne Avenue and East Long Street on either side of Champion Avenue. Rows of shacks, devoid of sanitation and amenities, housed many who came to Columbus during the Great Migration. The area looked exactly like the cabin towns the people had left in the South, put together from pieces of scrap wood.<sup>26</sup>

During the Great Depression, the United States was under immense pressure to provide safe, low-cost housing to servicemen and other federal workers. Designed by Howard Dwight Smith, a Columbus architect who worked at various times for both Ohio State University and Columbus City Schools, the village consisted of rows of brick, two-story brick townhouses with courtyard spaces in-between the 325 units. Later an additional eight units were added.

With steam heat, gas stoves and other special features, Poindexter Village was a physical improvement over the former Blackberry Patch, and residents soon recovered many of the former cultural and social amenities that the Blackberry Patch had provided. Residents could not have income that exceeded \$900 to \$1400 a year, and rents were \$18.28 to \$19.25 a month. In 1941, the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority actively recruited military personnel and their

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Above: Residence of Attorney Howard Gillard is typical of successful African-Americans.

Bottom: President Franklin D. Roosevelt arrives in Columbus to dedicate Poindexter Village.

families to live there.

Poindexter Village became a rich environment of care and nurture, producing many successful individuals who became prominent in their fields at the city, state and national levels. It was the first public housing project in Columbus and the second one in the United States. Lawrence Dodley had a ringside seat and observed, "Now the reason why they built Poindexter was to upgrade the area but a lot of good houses were also torn down, especially on Ohio Avenue and next to Champion Junior High."

His family was affected by this, but "...we were fortunate in finding a house on Champion and Granville that was not going to be a part of Poindexter. When the first houses were town down, people moved on top of each other until the last house went. It took over a year to clear it out and level it out because of the squatters. We watched it being built from the open field like there is now. Then there was only Champion and Union Grove left from the community on the east side of Champion."<sup>27</sup>

Businesses and community institutions in the area were also affected by the destruction of the Blackberry Patch. The minister of Union Grove, Rev. Trier, "...fought tooth and nail to make sure that Union Grove was not torn down as that was the original plan. They wanted to pay us and relocate the church someplace else like they did elsewhere. But we said no way."<sup>28</sup>

1940, the year Poindexter Village opened, was also the year that world-renowned artist Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson, one of Poindexter's most prominent residents, was born. Aminah's life work has embodied the influence of the African traditions and culture that the village exemplified for most African American communities--respect, community responsibilities, and a relationship to one another.

If Anna Bishop captured the Blackberry Patch in literature, artist Aminah Robinson, who also lived in Poindexter Village, gave it color and movement in her mixed-media work. She captured The Crow Man, The Elephant Man, The Sock Man, and others. Her work was inspired by her mentor, Elijah Pierce. Mr. Pierce's barbershop on East Long Street was filled with his carvings, some humorous, most Bible-based stories and lessons. His folk art carvings have been recognized nationally and internationally.

Robinson's book, "Symphonic Poem", says it best, "...the stories of its residents made Poindexter Village a magical place full of traditions, legends, and history.

Poindexter Village, Apartment F on 1237 Market Street, was the crucible and epicenter of inspiration for Robinson's art and the source of the profound sense of community and

Below: The central business district historically also included art and photography studios. William Rickman shown in his masonic uniform was photographed by Mr Wells, an African-American photographer of Lyman & Wells studio.





Above: International recognized artists Aminah Robinson and Kojo Kamau, both residents of the near east side, have documented through visual and photographic mediums the evolution of African-American life.

Aminah Robinson's work 'Life Along Water Street' that captures the life of her ancestor 'Uncle Bill Taylor' and his bait store on Water Street. Water Street was renamed to Marconi Boulevard after the flood of 1913.

"'Along Water Street,' is a cosmology or "creation story that Columbus artist Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson has pieced together based upon the stories she lovingly absorbed from her Uncle Alvin over a period of almost fifty years, from the time she was three years old in 1943 until her uncle's death in 1990."

Columbus Museum of Art booklet -Along Water Street- new work by Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson July 6, 2007 - February 24, 2008

history she embodies in her work. "I have been nourished by my community" and "I owe everything to my community," she has stated repeatedly. Robinson's sense of community began with her extended family and the people of Market Street and Poindexter Village, moving outward to encompass Mt. Vernon Avenue, the culture and commercial hub of the African -American community. The legacy of the Blackberry Patch, Bronzeville, and Poindexter Village are woven together in the fabric of the Near East Side.

The prominence of the Near East Side was known outside of the city. In 1949 a New York publisher continued to produce "The Negro Motorist Green Book" designed to "... give the Negro traveler information that will keep him from running into difficulties, embarrassments and to make his trips more enjoyable." Begun in 1936, this was the primary source, other than word of mouth, for African-Americans who ventured beyond their own communities. It listed nine hotels, one tourist home, one restaurant, one tavern and two night clubs for Columbus's Near East Side.

The African American settlements and communities of the previous 150 years in Columbus were changing. With the end of the Great Depression and World War II, Columbus, like most cities in the United States, experienced economic booms in housing, growth of the suburbs, and a consumer demand for material goods. However, Columbus also suffered from years of deferred city maintenance. Within five years, a baby boom necessitated schools, and housing demands for returning service men and women put pressure on existing housing and neighborhoods. Zoning classifications changed almost overnight, allowed for rooming houses and apartments within single-family houses.

Elegant, large old homes in many neighborhoods—now blighted from changing demographics and deferred maintenance—were left behind in the rush to suburban tracts and the need for, not one, but two automobiles. With the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, freeways—once planned to empty cities in case of an atomic attack—became the boundaries between poor and affluent neighborhoods as land was purchased to cut through downtowns. By the 1960s "urban renewal" was promoted as the solution to slum replacement.

However, slum clearance with federal funds going to city coffers meant cities could redesign and redefine which communities lived or died, where political favors could be called in, and where there were inadequate resources for relocating those people who could not afford to move from the inner city. With slum clearance and federal funds (and matching state monies)-- cheap land encouraged land grabbing and property values dropped. People were red-lined to specific neighborhoods by race and the politics of segregation led to government- assisted programs and limited housing choices.

## AMERICAN ADDITION (ORIGIN, 1898)

The American Addition has a history of intense commitment and loyalty by the community, and yet the area has suffered many years of disregard and neglect.

Located outside the Columbus city limits in the nineteenth century, the area provided an attractive alternative for African American families who wanted space to farm large plots and live outside the confines of segregated urban living.

The Addition was platted in 1898 with alleys and streets “dedicated to public use forever.” Land was available for purchase. The Kelton family bought plots for Arthur Lawrence, their carpenter, and his bride, Martha, whom they had sheltered when she was arrived at their Town Street house as a child on the Underground Railroad. Their son, Arthur Kelton Lawrence became a prominent doctor.

The land was rapidly graded, and South Carolina poplars planted in front of each of the 237 lots. Principal Avenues—Dewey, Key West, Puritan, Sampson and Sigsbee—were named in honor of distinguished naval officers and installations during the Spanish American War. At its birth, the American Addition was an attractive community. It was only three and half miles from the central business district of the city and the nearby railroads offered employment.

The typical lot size in the Addition was 35 by 130 feet, adequate for a decent dwelling. On the northern boundary thirty-three acres were reserved for the education of local youth. The community had land enough for play and gardening but the polluted air from the railroads on the south and the two large chemical plants approximately 400 yards west of Joyce Avenue made the community undesirable as a residential area. The streets were not paved, nor was there electricity, gas, street lights, or sanitary systems.<sup>29</sup>



Initially the Addition had mostly white residents. For a time both blacks and whites lived in harmony but with the influx of blacks after World War I and during the Great Migration, most of the whites left the community. By 1925, 91.2 percent of population in the Addition was black. Migrants who could not afford even the shanties lived in the

***“Samuel Patterson arrived in East Orange in 1824 and, within a few years, began to hide runaway slaves in his home. He also invited anti-slavery speakers to the pulpit of the East Orange Methodist Church, which brought Patterson and his neighbors into conflict with the bishop. Following their consciences, they became the Wesleyan Methodists and built a new church. A pro-slavery neighbor mocked them by calling their community Africa, and so East Orange was renamed. The village has disappeared but several homes owned by Patterson and his neighbors still stand in the vicinity. In 1859 slaves from a North Carolina plantation owned by the Alston family were sent north. The plantation’s mistress had disapproved of slavery and made arrangements for the slaves to travel to Ohio and freedom. These slaves moved to the community of Africa, lived in log homes, were employed by anti-slavery farmers and joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church. After the Civil War the freed slaves left Africa and settled in the communities of Delaware and Westerville and Van Wert and Paulding counties.”***

***Historical Marker***

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Left: A street in American Addition in 1979 shows the rural nature of the settlement even though it was annexed into the City of Columbus in 1959.

nearby abandoned railroad box cars.

Many who moved to the Addition were looking for a community that was rural in nature, where gardens and live stock could create an environment much like the areas they had left in rural Ohio and the South. The poverty of new arrivals did not allow the new dwellings to be of the same standard as the early structures; new buildings were built from combinations of scraps and boxcars. There were no building codes in townships.



The American Addition began to change; the environment, economic status, and overcrowding, compounded by the lack of basic services from both the Clinton Township and Franklin County, made conditions undesirable. But residents remained loyal to the community. For years, residents have sought to have services added to the Addition but they were denied. Despite the fact residents had been the subject to many surveys and studies, no real change happened.

American Addition continued to struggle even after it was finally annexed into the City of Columbus in 1959. The City of Columbus eventually installed the proper sanitary system in 1969 and subsequently installed electrical and natural gas

services to the area. The American Addition has had a colorful history and through it all, residents continue to be very proud of their community.

### AFRICA (ORIGIN, C. 1850s)

Generally associated only as the name of a road north of Columbus and Westerville, Africa was an unincorporated community on the northern edge of Franklin County. Its location was established as part of the Underground Railroad. The community began as Orange Station (located in Orange Township) with a post office (known as the East Orange Station), general store, and saloons. The local Methodist church split over the issue of slavery in the 1840s.

In addition, the community was significant because of its connections to two nineteenth-century composers: Dan Emmett and Benjamin Hanby. Emmett wrote "Dixie," used by both sides in

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Above: The gateway to American Addition, 2014.

the Civil War. Emmett was not pleased when it was adopted as the unofficial anthem of the Confederacy. Benjamin Hanby, as a Westerville Otterbein student, created “Darling Nelly Gray,” based on a slave story he heard as a young man.

The Alston family slaves, many of whom adopted Alston as their surname or used a variation of Austin, were associated with Africa. They also married into the African American community located in Worthington. Mrs. Mabel Austin, long-lived widow (see Oak Wood, Worthington) married Anthony Austin.

Today the settlement of Africa has changed by the erection of the Alum Creek Reservoir and the construction of I-71. Cemeteries and churches were relocated, and homes torn down. Many of the records of Africa are found at Otterbein University in the Otterbein Room in the college archives.<sup>30</sup>



### BADLANDS (ORIGIN, C. 1890s)

In the 1890s a predominately African American neighborhood near North High and East Long Streets was being pushed north and east by an expanding downtown. Known as “the Badlands” until past World War I, the area shifted and grew larger depending on key personalities, immigration patterns, law enforcement, industrialization, and the social circumstances inflicted on the poor and the marginalized. It was an escape valve for some; a slum for most.

In the Badland, one could pick up odd jobs--like loading and unloading produce from the trains. The Sellsville Circus also needed workers when the cars carried animals, tents, and a myriad of objects necessary for setting up. The nexus of new immigrants, the railroad workers, and the poor who had been pushed out of other areas created the colorful community of the Badlands. Alexander “Smokey” Hobbs dominated the area and made headlines whenever he appeared in court. He made his money in the Badlands, but he also spoke for the poor who had few options for housing—widows, the unemployable, or those who crossed the color lines in personal relationships or marriage.

The Badlands was the border of the nineteenth-century central business district, and it expanded

***“Ramshackle Buildings in Old Bad Lands District That Have Been Condemned and Ordered Torn Down by State Fire Marshall.....Sweeping Orders to Raze Unsafe Shacks to be Issued Nest Week... Orders Take in Territory Bounded by High, Fourth, Gay, and Union Station.....When we finish cleaning up this district, we will turn attention to other parts of the city where there are shacks, especially on Mound, and Main Streets near Seventh and on both sides of the river in the vicinity of the city prison...”***

***Columbus Evening Dispatch,  
August 18, 1910***



Left: As late as 1895, early African-American settlements were located at Main and Mound Streets close to the Scioto River and the canal.

Above: David Jenkins- politician, editor, writer, craftsman- lived on LaFayette Ally forty years before the area became known as the Badlands.





Above: A typical home in the Badlands district, 1910.

***“On November 9, 1907, the roads and alleys of this neighborhood were dedicated to public use and accepted as such for Franklin County....Burnside has grown gradually over the years...in the early years there were just a few houses and the area roads were always muddy...Many of the long-term black residents came directly from the south.”***

***Calvin Jennings***

to include parts of the old Harbor Road (Cleveland Avenue), the Arsenal (Fort Hayes), the Neil Baseball Park, and the shops of the Panhandle Railroad, stretching to Milo-Grogan—all outside the city limits.

The area grew behind the Union Station and into an old Irish neighborhood. In the mid nineteenth-century, Harbor Road was used by Underground Railroad conductors to take their passengers to stations in Clintonville, Westerville, or Worthington.

In 1906 the Badlands was considered to be that portion of the city lying between North High and Fourth Streets and between Gay and Naghten Streets. Third Street was the center. Ruled over by Alexander “Smoky” Hobbs, the area had opium dens often frequented by wealthy young white men; prostitutes whose customers lived nearby at the army base; and thriving bars and numbers houses found throughout the north side and around Union Station. It was described as “squatty, squalid buildings, for the most part, one or two stories in height...looking down the long row of lowly hovels grimy and greasy in appearance, the beholder would shrink back and hesitate to enter lest he become contaminated that in passing through he might drink the poisonous air which might smirch the being and life to lust.”<sup>31</sup>

A newly-formed Central Business Men’s Association did not want to see their investments to the area become contaminated. New businesses on Third and Fourth Streets—the Amicon building, the Bergin Brandy Distillery, and Citizens’ Telephone Company and the Troy Laundry began to clear out one of the oldest African American communities in Columbus. Forty years before Mulberry and Lafayette Alleys and parts of North Fourth and Third Avenues had been home to Rev. James Poindexter and David Jenkins.

However, there had been announcements in the newspapers like these before, generally followed by municipal elections. These declarations were part of the bargaining chip each political party thought they could use. Just two years before, in 1908, there had been ambitious plans to radically alter and clean up the Scioto riverfront. Nothing happened until the 1913 flood devastated the center city and necessitated improvements. The Badlands remained past World War I.

### BURNSIDE HEIGHTS (ORIGIN, C. 1907)

Burnside Heights was originally part of the Virginia Military District, created in 1790 by the United States government as land set aside for officers and soldiers as payment for duty in the American Revolution located on the far west side of Columbus today, this section of land saw several owners before being purchased by Michael Sullivant, one of Lucas and Sarah Sullivant’s three sons.

Burnside grew from the late nineteenth-century rural community into Burnside Heights, a small village, throughout the early to mid-twentieth century.

According to Calvin Jennings's history of Burnside Heights, done for the community's centennial (1907-2007), Captain Griffin Fauntleroy acquired title to 394 acres of land in Franklin Township for his three years of service in the Continental Army. In 1818, Congress amended the act and "reissued the tract of land containing the 394 acres to John Harrison. Shortly after Harrison's death, his heirs proceeded to divide his estate and soon discovered that 200 acres apparently had been sold to James Paul (who) instituted a suit against the Harrison heirs and eventually received the title to his portion land."<sup>32</sup>

In 1851, Michael Sullivant, son of pioneer Lucas Sullivant, purchased the land, forming M.L. Sullivant Subdivision of Farming Lands. Eventually, New County Road was renamed Sullivant Avenue.

The land was farmed for many years, and in 1907, Thomas E. Burnside and Charles Druggan purchased more than 27 acres to form the Burnside Heights Addition, now bounded by Sullivant Avenue, Eakin Road, Athens Avenue, and Demorest Road. Contrary to popular belief, Burnside Heights does not take its name from Union General Ambrose Burnside, although the Union's Camp Chase mobilization center and Confederate prison camp was located less than two miles to the northeast of this land.

There has been much speculation about the first residents of Burnside Heights. By the early twentieth century, Camp Chase federal land, located between Sullivant Avenue and West Broad Street, was being sold, many of the lots to members of the Friends (Quaker) church. The city was expanding west, street car lines would soon serve the area, and housing lots would be developed. However, it is believed that Burnside Heights may have housed earlier residents—families and descendants of former slaves brought north by Confederate soldiers who were captured in the Civil War. There was a tremendous loss of life at the Camp Chase Confederate prison camp because of overcrowding and disease. The Camp Chase Confederate cemetery holds both the bodies of the soldiers and sometimes their slaves.

At a time when blacks were already settling into areas around the city, specifically on township lands, the residents of Burnside Heights may have already been farming there for more than a generation. The closest neighbors of the rural community would have been members of the Friends church. By the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans were moving from traditional areas of



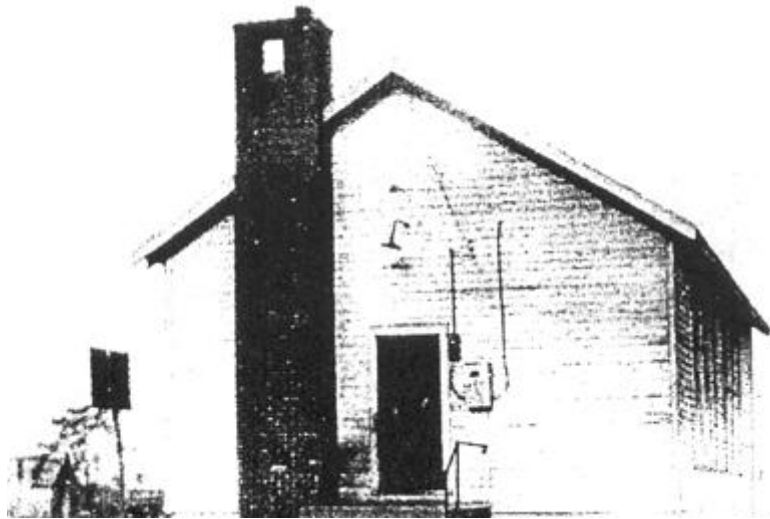
Above: Dr. Booker T. Washington, (left), Dr. Byrd Prillerman (seated), and Prof. Kelley Miller. Dr. Washington was a close friend of Dr. Prillerman and a frequent visitor to Burnside.

Below: In 1895 the settlement of Burnside will be carved out of the lands owned by Demorest, Briggs, and Sullivant families along the Free Pike (Sullivant Avenue).



***“Arnella’s grandmother told ghost stories of a possible murder of a missing wife at Mrs. Good’s house. Mrs. Sparks, who knew the story, had a dream that the missing wife was in the well. Investigation showed that deep in the well was human hair. The husband was put in prison, Mrs. Sparks also had an encounter with her dead husband who appeared one night asking for a pair of pants to put on. When she returned with the pants, he was gone.”***

Burnside Resident



Top Right: “Lift as we climb” served as a major theme for women’s clubs that were responsible for the continuity of values and the stability of institutions.

Above: The original Burnside School as seen from the rear on Burnside Alley (known as Mound Street).

settlement in the city and creating new communities in American Addition and on the North side.

The first residents after 1907 may have been Ms. May Toler and William Pleasant on Demorest Road, and later the Andrew Jackson family and the Mack and Viola Ford family.

Resident Carolyn Johnson related, “My grandparents moved to Columbus in search of job opportunities. Great-great-grandma Conley was born in Cartersville, Georgia in 1887 and moved here in 1924; Great-grandma Sparks moved here in 1929 and then Grandma and Grandpa Barnes moved

here in 1934. Grandpa Barnes said he was never so shocked in all his life as he was when he arrived here in Columbus and found conditions worse for him than they were in Georgia.” Because he didn’t have the money to return home, “Grandpa Barnes began to organize the community and seek improvements such as sewer lines, paved streets, and fire and police services.”

Affectionately known as “the Pumpkin Center” by some of its residents in the early Depression years, Burnside Heights was a tight-knit community, with running water and paved streets arriving later. Resident Kathy Prillerman remembers, “When I was young every house in Burnside had to have a foul smelling ditch that led to who knows where. We all had outside toilets. I remember when I had to go to the bathroom, I opened the door to outside toilet, and there was a beautiful, huge black and yellow spider...I ran away.”

Frequently Burnside residents built their own homes. When the city took up bricks on Sullivant Avenue, Broad and Mound Streets, prior to paving with asphalt, the city offered the bricks to the public. Beverly Cunningham Carroll’s home at 657 Athens Avenue was built from those bricks. Andrew and Eva Jackson’s home, 690 Demorest, was built in 1925 from city paving bricks.



The Burnside Women's Club

First Row, Left to Right: Angie Gaffney, Ann Wilson, Elizabeth Holt, Marie Barnes, Alma Saunders, Jane Williams, Bea Wilson; Second Row, Left to Right: Lily Dawkins, Mrs. Russo, Mrs. Jackson, Mary R. Nell, Anna Scott, Mrs. Maddie Jackson, Mrs. Viola Ford, Sophonia Hines, Addie Williams, and Mae Toler

Internationally-known singer Nancy Wilson grew up in Burnside at 659 Dexter; her family also owned the lot at 683 Dexter. Residents also remember the weekend her father bought the materials for a pre-fab home. Men in the neighborhood built a new home on the lot while women cooked and fed the workers.

Early schools played a large part in the cohesiveness of the community. Pleasant Hill was the first school, two rooms on Clime Road just west of Demorest Road. Because of the distance students had to walk, parents worked to have another two-room school within the neighborhood. In 1930 Burnside School was built on the corner of Athens Avenue and Burnside Alley, and later when the population swelled, the addition of a portable classroom was added. The original school building is gone, but the portable is in use as a church. Burnside School closed in the 1950s in wake of changing laws, and students attended West Franklin Elementary, Franklin Heights, and West High School.

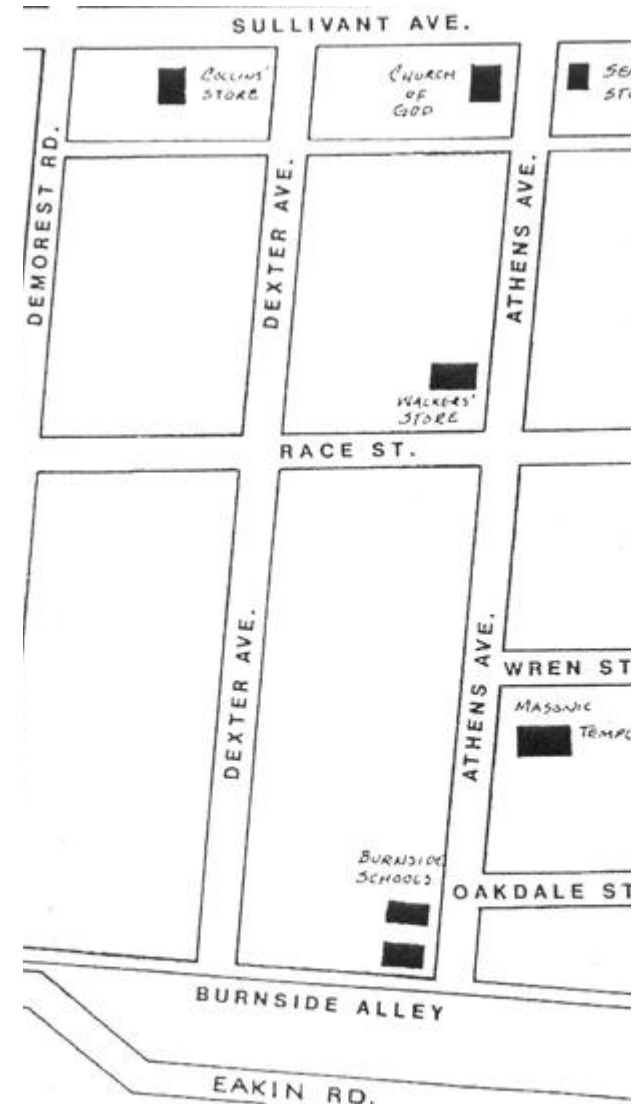
One of the first churches in Burnside Heights was the Church of God located at the corner of Athens and Sullivant Avenues. Sold in 1949, the building was demolished. Burnside Community Mennonite Church purchased the Burnside School in 1964, and Martha and Rev. Paul Yutzy became major forces in the neighborhood for activities for children, Sunday schools, Vacation Bible School, birthday parties, and community occasions. In 1966,

The Pride of the Hilltop Lodge #110 Free Order of African American Masons, was chartered in 1947, but began work on a new building in June, 1966. Workers labored on weekends and evenings to complete the Masonic lodge at 700 Athens Avenue. In 1970 the temple was completed without a mortgage. The lodge moved in from their previous location at the Jamison Building, 226 South Highland. The lodge space also housed the Winona #86 Order of the Eastern Star, hosting numerous and varied activities from pancake breakfasts to voter registration. In 2012 their website posted a plea for donations to meet rising costs, but currently the building stands but is unoccupied.

Residents of Burnside Heights have a variety of passed-down stories and memories that reveal the personal side of life in a small African American community:

Internationally-known singer Nancy Wilson attended Burnside School and West High School. She began singing at an early age and was offered her own local television show, "Skyline Melody," as the result of a talent show. She left college to tour with musician Rusty Bryant.

In New York, she was discovered by Capital Records. Another Burnside neighbor was Anita Berry, who attended Ohio State, and won the Chicago Opera Studio Competition in her senior year and the Pavarotti Competition. She sings in New York; family members still reside in the Hilltop.



Above: Map of Burnside Heights as captured in 2004 in a centennial remembrance.



On the Jones family farm, the men of Burnside would help butcher hogs and cows in the fall, Meat was cured in a smokehouse, sausage was made, and neighbors shared the meat. In addition, fat was rendered to make lye soap for the laundry.

Burnside resident, Mr. Wick, trained animals for the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus on his property in the 1940s. Animals were kept in the field across from Fire Station #12 on Sullivant Avenue. Mr. Wicks trained elephants, monkeys, lions, ponies, and python snakes, using a chain to secure an elephant to an oak tree at night. An escaped python ate one of Mr. Wick's pigs. Mr. Wicks paid Kenny Redmen and friends to track down the python that now had a pig in its belly.

In the 1930s through the 1950s, open land around the community made it possible for children to play ball across from a newer Westgate subdivision. Several confectionaries and small groceries were located on Sullivant Avenue, including the popular Walker's Store (corner of Athens Avenue and Race Streets) and the Seagraves Store (Athens and Sullivant Avenues). Both are now gone.

### FLYTOWN (ORIGIN: C. 1870S)/ GOODALE



Flytown existed between Spruce and Buttles Avenues, west of Goodale Park and east of the Olentangy River once the area was annexed to the city in 1880. The first use of the term "Flytown" appeared in Columbus newspapers in 1879.<sup>33</sup> After the Civil War, it was a point of entry for immigrant Italians and Irish.

The annexation helped to secure light and water for the neighborhood. A community of numerous nationalities, most of the men worked in local industries and factories—the railroads, buggy factories, the water works, brick factories, and others. The existence and growth of Flytown occurred because of the rapid growth of railroads and industries during the Civil War. After the war, Columbus was poised to establish companies and industries that took advantage of southern Ohio's lumber, coal, and other natural resources.

In the 1890s, the first African-American families arrived in "Flytown" and settled on Harrison Avenue and Dennison Avenue. Eventually, Flytown became predominantly Italian, Irish and African-American. The census reveals the living conditions were poor and that many persons (blacks and whites) were boarders in Flytown. The area retained a strong Italian and Irish presence and also accommodated Greeks and white Appalachians near the end of the nineteenth century.

It is said by former residents that the Flytown neighborhood had a small town feel and was a place where people of all races and nationalities got along. Several theories are given for the strange

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Top: Noted Mezzo-Soprano Anita Berry, Burnside resident, is one of the professional musicians from Columbus.

Bottom: Flytown ceased to exist with urban renewal, circa 1950s.

name- because the homes and industries seemed to “fly up” over night; because the workers in the factories felt free to leave a job whenever they found a better one and turnover was high; or because the area was filled with shanties and lacked both basic sanitary outlets and city services, a lot of flies bred in the trashcans and outhouses.

Both High Street and side streets were congested as first horse-drawn carriages and streetcars, then drays, trucks, and even bicycles carried goods and people to and from the railroad station located near Flytown. Industries and manufacturing, woolen factories and shoe factories called for men who were unskilled or semi-skilled to support others in production. With African Americans at the lowest rungs of the economic ladder and because of the transitory nature of the labor force, little regard was given to providing, or maintaining, housing.



Flytown was a community of shared economic distress but also a place where races and nationalities had a sense of community. Many successful African American families had their start in Flytown.

Flytown also showed a pattern that was to be repeated in other parts of the North end—along Fifth Avenue from Milo-Grogan to Grandview and along Cleveland Avenue (once known as Harbor Road) toward present-day Linden—Italian settlement, African American settlement,

Italian settlement, African American settlement. Along Fifth Avenue, the Refugee Tract that set aside land for pro-American Canadians who had lost homes to the British in the American Revolution, deed restrictions kept Italians and African Americans from buying houses. By early United States immigration law, Italians and other Southern immigrants were not considered “white.” Both groups used the Fifth Avenue streetcar to travel from home to work in the Marble Cliff quarries or at Ohio State University. They could pass through but were not desired neighbors.

Godman Guild Settlement House, started by a local industrialist and shoe manufacturer, H. C. Godman, was established in



Top: Children from Flytown enjoy an outing because of the work of the Urban League and Godman Guild, circa 1940.

Left: Located along Cleveland Avenue, Milo’s African-American population has a similar settlement pattern to Flytown/Goodale.

Below: A map of Flytown from 1895. The Flytown community was north of the Ohio Penitentiary on the east side of the Olentangy River.:





Above: Early land divisions stimulated settlement in central Ohio.

***“Nothing was more central to public conversation in early Ohio than deciding who constituted ‘the people.’ Judging by the constitution, the founders of the state saw ‘the people’ as adult white males....The absence of references to women and the frequent use of the pronoun ‘he’ indicates that women were not members of the body politic....The same was true of African Americans. ‘The people’ was a brotherhood of equal white men. The constitution’s ban on slavery did not equate with a warm welcome to blacks.”***

**Andrew Cayton**

1898 as a settlement house, to provide social services, employment advice, youth activities, a library, public baths, English language classes, and classes on “Americanization,” a public gym, and kindergarten. Activities were segregated, and summer camps were also segregated.

Flytown was sacrificed to urban renewal in the 1950s-1960s. Cities stood to make money if they took advantage of federal urban renewal funds. It was estimated that 85% of the 805 structures in a study area had six or more serious code violations. City officials saw public housing as part of the answer to a perplexing problem since they had a long list of waiting applicants. The fear that public housing in the Goodale area might spread to other parts of the city caused the Shepard-St. Mary’s Property Owners Association to push court action seeking a restraining order against housing projects in their neighborhood.<sup>34</sup>

Today Flytown is part of the Short North (Italian Village/Victorian Village) community—and the neighborhood that became the Thurber Village apartments, the Goodale Expressway, and the I-670 interchange. In all over 500 families were displaced. Columbus saw it as slum clearance, and it was an example of the “planned” destruction of an African American community in Columbus. The Near East Side central business district (Long and Mt. Vernon), Badlands, Peter’s Run, and others were lost to the gradual expansion of the downtown. Historic Poindexter Village is the most recent loss to this recurring redevelopment tendency.

### FRANKLINTON (ORIGIN, C. 1797)

There is little doubt that Ohio’s statehood (1803) was connected to the creation of early African American communities. Ohio was the first state created by the terms of the Northwest Ordinance that forbade slavery in the territory. But when the thirty-five delegates met on November 1, 1802, to write an Ohio state constitution, their Jeffersonian democratic ideals were tested concerning their support of blacks into the state. By one vote, blacks were denied voting rights.

The migration patterns of white settlers cut Ohio into thirds, each segment reflecting religious and social values that would affect their views on race. Ohio contained a number of districts and land set-asides—the majority of which came together in the center of the state where Columbus would be formed.

Ohio’s constitution would reflect the ambiguity of the delegates’ views on race. The document forbade slavery but the language later provided a basis for some to argue for legal indentured servitude in the state and the right of visiting slaveholders to bring slaves into Ohio.<sup>35</sup>

What is significant about early African Americans communities in Franklinton and Columbus is,

on the one hand, that they existed from the very beginning, less than 20 years after the American Revolution. On the other hand and more importantly, they grew despite extraordinary and difficult circumstances.

From the late nineteenth century, African Americans were part of Ohio's population, even before the state was established (1803). Franklinton, the village on the west side of the Scioto River and the precursor to Columbus, was settled in 1797 by Lucas Sullivant. Sullivant was a surveyor with Kentucky and Virginia roots. He and his wife, Sarah, came from families which held slaves.

Who these early African Americans were or how many resided in the little community is not known, Most may have been employed by the Sullivant family, and as household servants, most likely lived in the family's quarters. Others, like the gristmill workers employed by Samuel McElvain, would have needed to construct or rent their cabins. Abraham Depp moved to Franklinton from Virginia and worked as a blacksmith, only one of two in Franklinton at the time, until he amassed enough money to go back for his wife and children. It is recorded that Humphrey was a worker for the Sullivants, and he rescued Sarah Sullivant from a drunken trader. Mrs. Sullivant also "gave" (loaned) a young girl in her household to a new neighbor in Franklinton who had not brought any servants with her from Kentucky.<sup>36</sup>



Sarah Sullivant also took in a child, the infant son of Arthur Boke, Sr. a surveyor who worked with her husband, and an unknown mother who may have left the child as she fled on the Underground Railroad. Arthur Boke, Jr. was raised with the Sullivant sons. He is buried in Green Lawn Cemetery in the Sullivant plot and listed as "colored servant" in the records. His tombstone, obscured for years, was found by local historian, Bea Murphy, who has studied his life and was instrumental in having sculptor, Alfred Tibor, tell the Boke story in a sculpture near the Scioto River.<sup>37</sup>

In the late eighteenth century, Franklinton was a predominately white settlement where an unknown number of African Americans resided. Slave, hireling, servant, indentured, free? Seemingly interchangeable terms reveal contradictory attitudes about the African American settlers.

### HANFORD VILLAGE (ORIGIN: C.1890s/ 1907)

Motorists and cyclists going from Main Street to Livingston Avenue via Nelson Road seldom notice the backs of rows of single-family houses on the east side of the street. Located between the railroad tracks and the highway, the area appears abandoned and neglected until the neighborhood

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Above: African-Americans in Franklinton often worked at grist mills, blacksmith shops, and in households.



***“Between 1945 and 1947, 146 houses were built on land identified as The Carver Addition subdivision plat. All of the houses were in a similar style, being Cape Cod one-and-a-half story, gable roofed, wood-framed with brick facades homes are located in a post-war curvilinear subdivision that overall had a traditional and architecturally conservative look. Designed as family homes, each house had a living room, eat-in kitchen, bathroom, two bedrooms, a full basement and an upstairs space that could also provide for two more rooms. A small public recreational space and a church, St. Mark’s Missionary Baptist Church, completed the original community. This uniformity of the houses was deliberate and in keeping with national standards of the times – the post-World War II era when the large numbers of returning servicemen and women necessitated immediate access to housing and education. Another sense of uniformity was the subdivision’s layout which reflected the many suburban subdivisions that were being developed in outlying areas of many cities of America. There was a spacing, setback, scale and street layout (for instance there are only two street entrances) that provided for a sense of dignity, privacy and quiet.”***

***Nomination for Hanford Village to the National Register of Historic Places, 2013***

appears. A block before Livingston Avenue, a historic marker shares in a few words the rich legacy of this community. This is the Hanford Village George Washington Carver Addition Historic District.

Hanford Village has military connections, a history of transition from a white rural village to post World War II housing for African Americans and annexation by the City of Columbus.

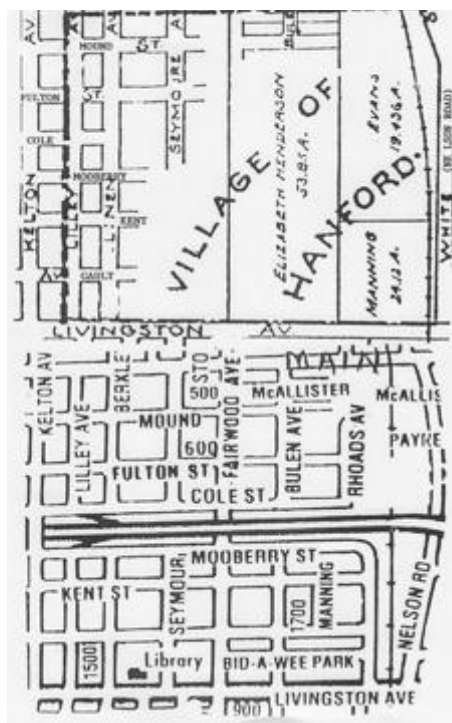
Originally located within the Refugee Tract, this was land set aside in 1785 for British subjects residing in Canada who supported the American Revolution and whose land and possessions had been seized by the British during this period. By the 1890s a village site was identified; and Hanford Village was incorporated December 31, 1909, having surpassed the required population mark of 250 people. The original village limits were Main Street to the north and Livingston Avenue to the south, with the center of Alum Creek as the eastern boundary and the western boundary was Lilley Avenue (and the eastern incorporation limits for the City of Columbus). Within five years Columbus annexed the portion of

the village containing the industrial base and the village was left with the most flood-prone areas.

During this period the population of Hanford Village was becoming increasingly African-American as more people moved north after the war looking for jobs. In 1913 the first African-American mayor for the village was elected. In 1921 Hanford Village was mapped as an African-American enclave.

In 1932 St. Mark’s Missionary Baptist Church was established. During this period a major housing boom occurred in the village but compared to other areas of the city, it remained sparsely settled with a population of 220 residents. A majority of the African-American population also lived adjacent to the few remaining industries, lacked indoor plumbing, and generally lived in homes in poor repair. Due to these conditions the federal government declined to provide home mortgages, effectively redlining the area.

However, a strong sense of community prevailed with residents helping each other and through the positive role of social service agencies from Columbus, such as the Urban League and Works



Progress Administration, which provided assistance wherever possible. Cultural activities became the norm with music lessons and concerts, athletics and sewing lessons provided through the Hanford Community Club, begun in 1930 as a membership organization. Socialization at all levels was promoted in the interest of overall community betterment.

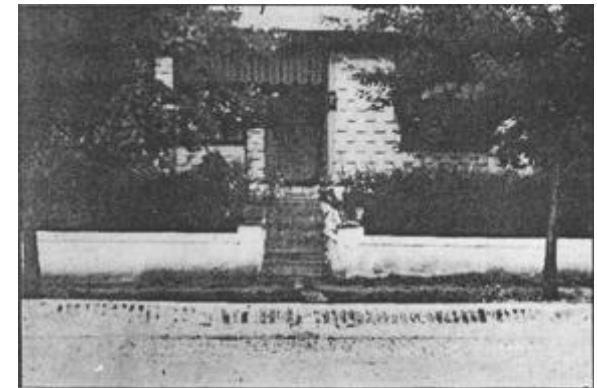
This African-American community was the site for a major housing post World War II housing initiative. In 1942 the National Housing Agency was created to coordinate wartime housing production but in Columbus fewer than 300 new houses were built for African-Americans since 1920, and that included specific wartime allocation that were promised but never came to fruition. General public opposition was based the selected locations, often in urban areas near existing communities. As stated earlier the physical conditions reflected in Hanford Village were indicative of African-American communities throughout the city and the federal government was reluctant to provide financing in such areas. (New housing on Taylor, Fifth Avenue, Woodland, and Leonard Avenue resulted from a compromise.)

Originally, the creation of the subdivision was protested by both white developers in the nearby Berwick subdivision across Alum Creek and by the Vanguard League, a local civil rights organization, who protested that the Carver Addition continued to enforce segregated housing patterns. Meanwhile, at the insistence of the Columbus Urban League, 400 homes were allocated for African Americans but two years passed before the land (an orchard formerly used as a dump site) could be prepared. The Carver Addition was completed by Columbus developer Ivan H. Gore and his two partners, Jack Friedman and Herman Epstein of New York.<sup>38</sup>

In the mid-1960s the State of Ohio chose this location as part of the path for Interstate 70 and the Alum Creek Drive Interchange. This created a physical barrier between the new and old parts of the community, separated the church from Carver Addition, destroyed key streets, numerous homes, and a sense of



One of the outstanding business enterprises in Hanford is Bolender's Food Market, located on Bowman Avenue.



The lovely home of Fred Clay, present Hanford mayor, is shown here. Mr. Clay was also mayor from 1937 to 1939.

Above: Photos from a neighborhood history, circa 1940.

Opposite Top: Parts of Hanford Village will disappear with the interstate highways (c. 1960s-1970s) dividing the village in two.

Opposite Left: Hanford Village, circa 1910.

Left: A Map of Hanford Village from 1895. Hanford started as a small white agricultural center on the west side of Alum Creek.

***“Mrs. Millie Austin, colored, of Worthington, is 65 years of age, and one of the pioneer residents of Franklin county, having come to this vicinity from Wyandot county something near 60 years ago. Her parents, Henry Carter and his wife, settled in what was then termed the Oak Woods, but which has in later years been known as Grove City. At the date of their arrival all of that section was dense forest, with not to exceed a dozen families in the area of as many square miles. The paths through the forest were blazed upon the trunks of giant trees and wagon roads were unknown. The country was well supplied with game and deer, bear, panther and the myriad other animals native to this section....Mr. Carter secured an area of 250 acres and immediately erected a log house and set about clearing his possessions.”***

***Ohio State Journal, August 8, 1897***

***“Because black children were excluded from the public school system, black residents supported a school for their children in south Columbus...the trustees... wrote in their advertisement that they felt ‘compelled by our indigent circumstances to appeal to white citizens’ and emphasized the importance of education to improve their children’s condition.”***

***Charles Cole***

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Opposite Right: The Palladium of Liberty was an important African-American newspaper, 1884.

history—an historic marker in the neighborhood references “the highway that divided them.”

Despite court battles within the neighborhood about annexation to Columbus, the community has remained and has been recognized as the home for many of the decorated veterans who lived there. Currently, it has seen the beginnings of a renewal as former residents return to downsize as empty nesters. In 2013, Hanford was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### OAK WOODS, WORTHINGTON (ORIGIN, C. 1830s)

Oak Woods and Worthington are not the same community; however, they represent the outlying African American settlements that developed independently from white settlements and had connections to each other. The memories of Mrs. Millie Austin connect the very early African American communities that could be found in Grove City, Franklinton, and Worthington—and include the Native Americans who still lived in the area.

Mrs. Austin, related her parents’ hard earned labor went up in smoke after they purchased a stove in Franklinton. Unfamiliar with how to put it into use, they accidentally burned down the house and lost their possessions. Homeless, they moved to Worthington, choosing a home along the right bank of the Olentangy. Mrs. Austin married her husband, Anthony Austin, in Worthington in 1869, residing in that community ever since. (The Austins were connected to the community of Africa)

She remembered seeing only log houses in Franklinton, “scattered and far between,” a grist mill and a saw mill, and an old bridge. She saw her first brick house in Columbus (c. 1840). She also recalled her earlier days when the family lived among the Indians in Wyandot County. The Carters never “...had any difficulty with the red men and in fact were really upon fairly intimate terms with the tribe.” As of 1897, Mrs. Austin lived on an acre of land, a portion of which she donated for the erection of an A.M.E. church in Worthington.

Worthington was a village committed to building schools in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The records of the Worthington Academy noted the subscriptions needed to help secure bricks could be made by donating bricks or donating money for bricks. Records indicate that on Tuesday, November 7, 1807 a payment was made in order for Black Daniel to begin to make bricks—the first recorded notation that African Americans were working in the community. There may have been several brick yards in the community on the east side of the village where African Americans lived. Other records indicate that white members of the community loaned money to African Americans to buy homes in the area.<sup>39</sup> James Birkhead helped to found St. John’s AME Church by selling fruit and vegetables in the community. He and his family farmed the area now

known as Fox Lane.<sup>40</sup>

Native Americans were another marginalized people in Ohio. Sometimes the African Americans and Native Americans lived together in the same community. Mrs. Austin also reported that her father's good relations with the tribe was only tested on one occasion when an Indian rode through her father's corn crop, smashing much of it, but he exercised restraint at the urging of his wife.

There were points of contact among early communities, but as one group grew, another was disappearing. By the 1820s, there were 4,723 "free Negroes" in Ohio; approximately 2300 Native Americans remained.

### PETER'S RUN (ORIGIN, C. 1820s)

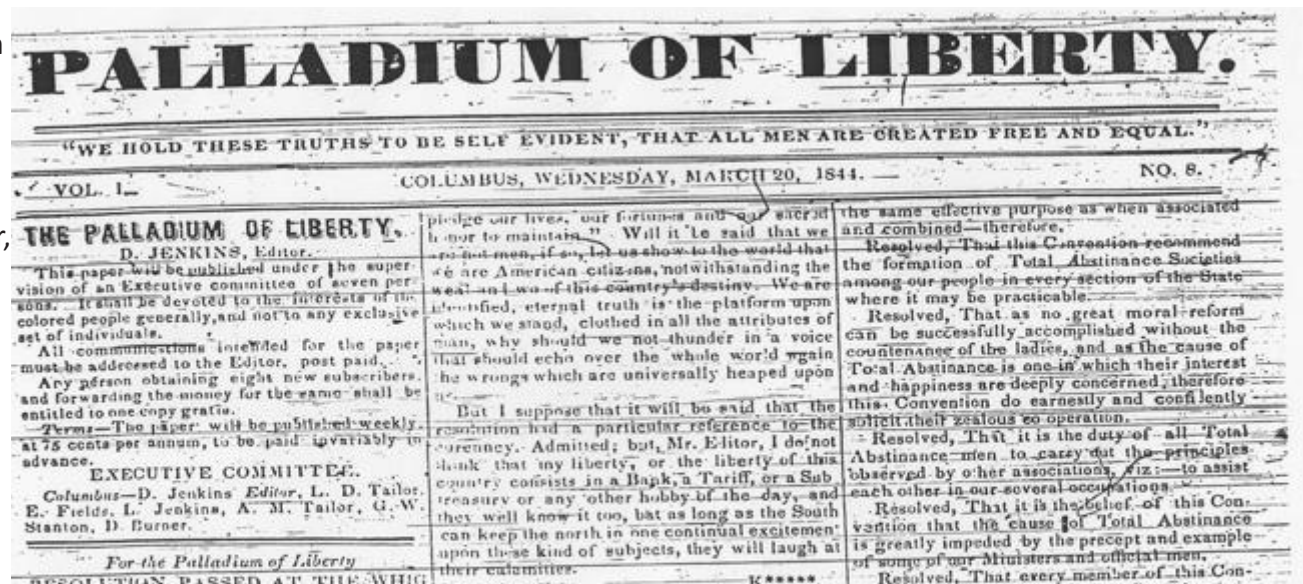
African American families settled on outskirts, crossroads, and near places of employment. A census in Columbus revealed 1008 males and 1006 females (age 4 and up). Of the 2014 residents, 160 were "of African descent."<sup>41</sup>

In the 1820s/1830s, High Street and Long Street contained numerous tree stumps, a sulphur spring and a swamp was near the present Convention Center, and the present Topiary Park, like much of the once swampy East side, was filled with wild blackberry bushes. Early Columbus also had numerous springs, brooks, ponds, bogs, and bodies of water—generally with descriptive and curious names. Crooked Wood Pond, Frog Pond, Lizard Creek, Cattail Swamp, and Doe Run were north of the Statehouse. The last three crisscrossed Spring Street (a large and free-flowing creek) from present-day St. Patrick's Church to St. Joseph's Cathedral and crossed again at High Street to flow into the Scioto River, rushing down a gully 25 feet deep.

Wherever there was a source of fresh water, people might settle. Wherever there was a marsh or swamp area that others did not want, marginalized people might settle. Some lots went for as little as \$5 in the 1820s/1830s, and there were no takers. Nineteenth-century historian, Alfred Lee, observed that from 1828

*"On September 7, 1840, the School Fund Association of the colored people of Ohio met in the Methodist Church, and received the cooperation of citizens of Columbus in promoting its objects (sic). In spite of many discouragements the colored people secured fair school privileges for their children so far as possible to do so by their own efforts, and by prudent management prepared the way for the final withdrawal of the color line from the schools. In 1841 Alfred Kelley, John L. Gill, and Peter Hayden, as a company, erected a building on the northeast corner of Oak and Fifth Streets, and established a school therein which was successful conducted for several years by Robert Barrett. The building is now a residence."*

*Alfred Lee*



***“Ohio daily newspaper reporting about blacks contributed to the growth of white intolerance during the 1920s, Across the state daily newspapers exhibited disrespect for African Americans through the use of racial identification terms that were degrading or offensive to black people. The Ohio daily press rarely mentioned African Americans except in news about social problems...crime stories with racially inflammatory headlines....A scholarly survey done in 1920 showed that coverage of African Americans in Columbus’s three major newspapers neglected commendable conduct and gave undue publicity to anti-social behavior, usually under ‘glaring headlines.’ A scholarly study done in 1924 revealed that vice and crime was the theme of 55.7 percent of the items about African Americans in The Columbus Evening Dispatch, The Ohio State Journal, and the Columbus Citizen. It classified some articles in these dailies as ‘flippant and ridicule of Negroes.’ Such reporting surely elevated color awareness in Ohio,”***

***William Griffin***

on, the majority of African Americans coming to Columbus were newly emancipated slaves. Most had meager resources.

South of the Statehouse were Dick’s Pond, Hoskins’ Pond, and several brooks “...which descended from Fourth and Main streets, poured unitedly into Peter’s Run, and turned the wheels of Conger’s Flouring Mill, which in 1825, stood in the ravine back of the Hoster Brewery. The Fourth Street brook drained a portion of the marshy territory east of High Street, and was a living stream the year round.”<sup>42</sup> But Peter’s Run was no idyllic stream.

Peter’s Run took its name from Tunis Peters, Jr. who had come to Columbus from Pickaway County to establish a large tannery. His business thrived and later family members made leather goods, trunks, and buggies.<sup>43</sup> While his own home was in the location of Beck and South High Streets and he generously built a brick Baptist church on Mound Street (now gone), his tannery polluted the stream.

Tanning was a malodorous, noxious, and stomach-turning industry that required an alkaline lime mixture or urine (collected in “piss pots” on street corners); animal feces (often from horses, dogs, pigeons) sometimes collected by children; and lime, alum, and salts. From soaking skins and defleshing the hide, brining and soaking, boiling and degreasing to creating the by-product of glue—the work was an economic mainstay for the African American families who inhabited the ravine of Peter’s Run.

Though the Northwest Ordinance emphasized education, there was no mechanism to create public schools and the set aside of 1/16 of a township’s land for education was quickly gobbled up by the legislature itself to pay for the creation of state government. Oberlin College admitted black students regularly by mid-nineteenth century, but African American children in Columbus and Ohio, were forbidden to attend school. Later, African American parents were allowed to form a separate school system but with their own money. Restrictions were meant to discourage settlement or encourage recolonization.

The success of the fight for the Peter’s Run school is remarkable in that it preceded real change for African American communities at a time when the Ohio Legislature made only modest attempts to create a common public school system for white students only. There were no attempts to train teachers, create a system for supervisors, provide free education, or require student attendance. Any progress in providing mechanisms whereby a community could set up a public school system (by parent subscription to pay for it) happened because legislature abuses for leasing and selling school lands had been exposed.<sup>44</sup>

## HILLTOP (ORIGIN, C. 1870S)

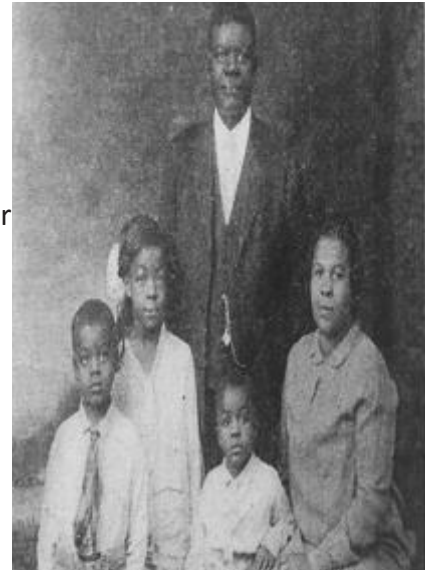
Two old scrap books, found in an antique shop, chronicle African American life in Columbus from c. 1918 to the 1990s. They raise more questions than they answer. The more recent album is filled with photos of black vaudeville players, autographed icons of nationally-known African American celebrities, mother's day cards, photos of newborns and family reunions, and even White House correspondence from the Nixon family or pictures of some sort of employer-employee outing at a fancy restaurant. The old scrapbook chronicles family life, children, sweethearts, and vacations—from a variety of places, including Ohio. The photos date from c. 1918 to 1930s and are carefully glued on pages. Some artifacts of the older album surround the life of Mrs. Harriet Harold who lived in Franklinton on McDowell Street and others seem to point to Hilltop resident, David Cunningham.



***“After the final school bells ring for the day, lots of children in the Hilltop area flock to the home of ‘Uncle Candy or, as some call, ‘Brother Dave.’ They come to the basic \$55-a-month rented home of David Cunningham at 2146 ½ Hope Place for a piece of candy and a lot of good conversation and stories. Brother Dave is 88—but don’t let that fool you. He says the Lord called him to teach children when he became a Christian in 1921—and he has done that enthusiastically ever since and loved every minute of it...Cunningham had worked as a janitor at the old Loews Theater downtown until he retired in 1955.”***

Employment opportunities at the state’s institutions for mentally ill and “imbecilic” and “feeble-minded” may have pulled others to the area by the late 1880s. The hospital for the mentally ill, referred to as “the lunatic asylum,” drew African Americans, as well as, newly-arrived Germans with no English skills. The main building was, until the building of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., the largest building under one roof in the United States. It is now gone. These smaller African American neighborhoods sometimes are only a few streets wide and are immediately west of the institution that needed orderlies, menial help, and gardening experience.

According to Dr. Anna Bishop, “The pride of Black people in the East End, as the community was known, was not comparable to that of the Hilltop section, occupying an area of approximately six blocks, with (a) white population of about 600 people, developed around 1892.” A two-street section of the Hilltop, Wheatland and Oakley Avenues had its own post office as early as 1862. Later the neighborhood was centered on Wheatland Avenue Methodist Church.



***Melanie Croker, Columbus Dispatch Religion editor***

Anecdotally, there are stories that the African American population increased in 1904-1906 because of the Springfield race riots. African Americans literally ran for their lives in the middle

Top: A page from a scrapbook in the Hilltop neighborhood.

Bottom: The family of Rev. Jacob Ashburn of Oakley Avenue Baptist Church, early 20th century.

of the night, following mob violence. Reportedly started by drunkenness and shootings in an undesirable part of Springfield's African American community, the race riot flared with the appearance of law enforcement. However, other sources indicate the race riot may have been orchestrated; the railroads throughout Ohio wanted to replace the African American workers with white workers. Other Ohio towns also experienced racial unrest.



Above: The 1920s saw an increase in restrictions on where African-Americans could buy property in newly opened subdivisions. This ad from Baby Farm on the north side of Columbus clearly shows that only whites would be welcomed. Ads for some parts of the Hilltop were similar to this.

"In 1913, more blacks moved into the area after the Springfield riots and the Columbus flood...this black neighborhood was one of the most respectable and progressive Black areas in the city," according to the late local historian, Dr. Anna Bishop.<sup>45</sup>

By the 1920s, the Hilltop was expanding as new lots opened because of extended street car lines on Sullivant Avenue and West Broad Street. The new area of "Hilltonia" was located by driving west on Sullivant Avenue or a taking a street car ride on the Camp Chase car, just west of the Baby Camp. It boasted it was like no other area in Columbus—soil rich for gardening, no industries "to shower (away) dirt and soot," and the lots were priced from \$295 to \$650, with as little as \$10 down and \$1.25 a week, and no payments if "you are sick or out of work." The area was on the newly-acquired farm of Nancy Doren, the last large plat of undeveloped ground east of Hague Avenue. However, the 1920s was the height of segregation, and lots were for white people only. All of the lots were sold on the first day. On the other side of town, in Linden, an old farm village, lots were sold under the same conditions.

### LANEVIEW (ORIGIN, C. 1870S)

The community of Laneview (or Lanevu) was located on the east side of the Olentangy River near the north side of the campus of The Ohio State University. It had a post office for about one year in the late nineteenth century until the post office was combined with the community of Seagrave, located at the intersection of Kenny Road and West Lane Avenue where Route 315 crosses overhead).

Several buildings remain in this area of Clinton Township, though most of the land has been purchased by Ohio State University. Its most recent building loss was the Laneview or Lane School, built before 1922 in township area.

The settlement is associated with a small Italian and African American neighborhood formed by workers and their families who helped to build the university, specializing in stone work and carpentry. This neighborhood was subject to frequent flooding. Prior to the stadium's building, a massive engineering problem needed to be solved—the relocation of the Olentangy River behind

***"Poverty also placed the Negro masses in the poorest housing in locations often both unsafe and unhealthy. The poor in the countryside lived in crude huts in the crossroad settlements; in the small villages they often resided in shanties on the edge of towns....In the nineteenth century...for the most part, Ohio's black population was too small for blacks to occupy exclusively the central cities and towns."***

***David Gerber***

a large earthen wall and the elimination of a swamp and some small islands. The community, like others near the river—small African American enclaves on West Frambes and West Eleventh Avenues—was built on an undesirable flood plain.

While Laneview appears to have been predominately black and Italian (and is designated as such on early maps), the town of Seagrave was white. The area is across from St. John Arena and on the site of the old Holiday Inn, the new Panera, and the former site of the polo stables/Crystal Palace nightclub/roller-skating rink/Big Bear grocery). The neighborhood was documented in newspaper cartoons when the Ohio Stadium opened in the 1920s, showing the dichotomy between the rich football fans who came in roadsters and fur coats and the families and children who lived in two and three-story frame “tenements.”

### LUCY DEPP (ORIGIN, C. 1830s/1926)

The Lucy Depp Park and neighborhood, established in 1926, was advertised in the Columbus Illustrated Record as the “ideal summer and permanent home sites for people who care by the beautiful waters of O’Shaughnessy Reservoir and Eversole Lake.” It was owned by Robert Goode, 143 North Eighteenth Street, an African American.

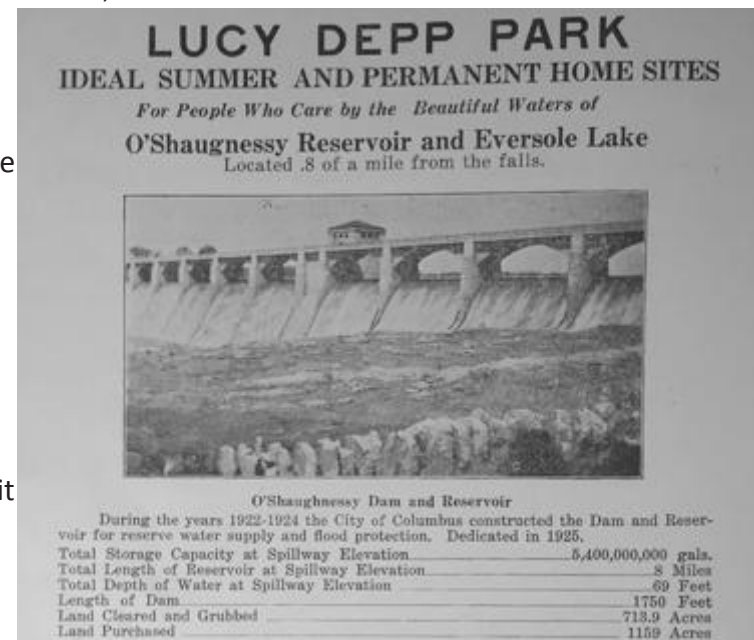
The community had deep roots in the Underground Railroad. Abraham Depp, a blacksmith from Virginia, bought 400 acres in 1835 after working for 40 years as a blacksmith (starting when he was nine years old). He moved to Franklinton to work in the trade and saved money to return to Virginia for his family. His wife died before reaching their destination. He began farming in Delaware County, it was the first black-owned farm in the county, and at the time of his death, his property was worth \$30,000.

The property stayed in the family until 1926 when Depp’s daughter sold it to Robert Goode, when it became a summer home for Columbus’s African American community. Goode, Lucy Depp’s nephew, added a 102-acre subdivision to the original 23 acres Depp sold to Goode. Boxer Joe Louis stayed there. Doctors, musicians, artists, and others who could afford a car, brought their families to an area where childhood memories recalled it as “a fantasy land” of tree houses and wooded lots.

There is a private small cemetery c. 1800s. Many of the gravestones were removed for cleaning and repair in the 1930s but were never returned. The gravestone of Aurelius Depp, a Civil War veteran, remains. Aurelius Depp, the son of Abraham, attended Oberlin College and was a successful farmer and stock-raiser. The Depp property stayed in the family, more land was acquired and the community grew to be known as Lucy Depp Park.

***“Black population gains in Columbus were more widely distributed than in other in other Ohio cities...migrants to Columbus tended to locate in several African American neighborhoods in that city instead of congregating only in East Long Street’s old black neighborhoods. By 1914 small black enclaves existed in each quadrant of an area encompassing downtown Columbus....In Columbus, blacks were only a little more than a quarter of the population in Ward 7, which was the Columbus ward where African Americans were most populous.”***

**William Griffin**



**LUCY DEPP PARK**  
IDEAL SUMMER AND PERMANENT HOME SITES  
For People Who Care by the Beautiful Waters of  
O’Shaughnessy Reservoir and Eversole Lake  
Located .8 of a mile from the falls.

O’Shaughnessy Dam and Reservoir  
During the years 1922-1924 the City of Columbus constructed the Dam and Reservoir for reserve water supply and flood protection. Dedicated in 1925.

Total Storage Capacity at Spillway Elevation	5,400,000,000 gals.
Total Length of Reservoir at Spillway Elevation	.8 Miles
Total Depth of Water at Spillway Elevation	.69 Feet
Length of Dam	1750 Feet
Land Cleared and Grubbed	713.9 Acres
Land Purchased	1159 Acres

Above: Advertisement from Columbus Illustrated Record, 1919-1920.



In the 1920s, the area became a summer resort park for black families from Columbus. The park provided African American children the opportunity to swim, fish, ride horses and enjoy boating on the O'Shaughnessy reservoir.

### MUDSOCK (ORIGIN, C. 1850s)

In 1906, Columbus resident, Mrs. Matilda Gales, who lived at 154 ½ West Long Street, was perhaps the oldest person in the United States at 117 years of age. She had been born a slave in 1789 near Culpepper County Courthouse in Virginia, and was freed along with more than 20 other slaves in 1823 upon the death of her owner. She was given a wagon, four horses, 200 acres in Scioto County, and 100 dollars. Mrs. Gale moved to Pittsburgh where she met her future husband, married in 1825, and came to Columbus. Though several former slaves stayed in southern Ohio, others came to the Hilliard area (sometimes calling the settlement "Scioto"). There they settled and several descendants were still residing in 1906.<sup>46</sup>



The Hilliard location mentioned might have been part of an older community with the curious name of Mudsock which would have been close to the farm village of Hilliards (Hilliard will drop the "s" much later). Stories abound about horses and people who were stuck in the muddy stretches of road, leaving tell-tale "muddy" sock-like rings around their ankles. However, this would describe virtually all of the wet and bog-like roads of Franklin County.

Mudsock was only a mile wide and was located near the present intersection of Roberts Road and Alton Darby Creek Road. Corn fields and a few farms in the 1830s grew into a small village within twenty years. With 681 people in 1850, there was a school for African American children, though it is unclear if this was the only school, as separate from schools available in nearby-Hilliard, or a predominately African American community. The nearest post office was Darby. Though most of the village has disappeared, there were still a few building left in the 1980—a house, grocery, antique shop, garage.

It was reported by newspaper columnist Ben Hayes, that in the 1930s, a taxi driver took a passenger from downtown Columbus to Mudsock for a charge of \$25 and picked him back up a few days later to deposit him at Union Station. In the 1930s when gangs of safe crackers routinely roamed the Midwest, locals assumed that anyone with that sort of money must have been involved in illegal activities.

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Above: A map of Mudsock from 1895:

## SELLSVILLE (ORIGIN, 1870s)

Around 1871, Sellsville was an unincorporated area west of Olentangy (Whetstone ) River and east of Virginia (Queen) Ave. It ran south from Flennekin Pike (William Chambers Road) through King Avenue to West Fifth Avenue. East and northeast of Sellsville was the river and flood lands, this was also true beyond its southeast boundary. To the west of Sellsville lay the vast Neil Woods and the north, large farms and woodlands. The Columbus Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad cut through the eastern end of Sellsville serving its all important industry, the circus.

The community was contained within about 1000 acres of riverfront land, and included living quarters and dining hall for 50 workers, a large building to house the animals, a train shed for railroad cars and a wagon shed. The residents could share many stories of encounters with the animals where they were there during winter.

Small service shops and a few mid-sized manufacturing firms were located along the railroad. At this early date, farming and truck gardening was a livelihood for many Sellsville residents. Slaughter houses, saloons, blacksmith shops, and greenhouses thrived in that order.

The town was most identified by its primary tenant--The Sell Brothers Circus had winter quarters on part of the Flennekin Farm, hence, the name of this area "Sellsville'. Formerly, they had been located in present-day downtown and even on Mt. Veron Avenue.

African Americans who lived in Sellsville had a unique relationship within that community. Many were part of the circus family. Some would travel with the circus fulfilling many supportive jobs. Others lived and worked in the Sellsville community throughout the year. Many blacks had businesses that were independent of the circus and were integrated in most aspects of their lives.

Contrary to many Columbus schools where segregated housing policies meant segregated classrooms, equal numbers of black children and white children attended the local school. Later, it was called the Polkadot School. Children from that school came across the river to attend junior high at Indianola Junior High, only one of two Columbus schools on "perfect" racial balance prior to desegregation.

A monograph of Sellsville, done by Carl Weisheimer (of the Weisheimer Mills located in the area),



Above: A map of Sellsville from 1895.:



**ANTIOCH FIRST SERVICES  
HELD HERE IN  
OLD POLKADOT SCHOOL**



**NEW ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH  
ERECTED 1969**

captured some of the early stories.<sup>47</sup> The older residents have fond memories. Some had been former slaves. Minnie Bowen remembered going to the Polkadot School. She remembered her mother saying that they paid a toll to cross the bridge at the Olentangy River. Her father built his own wagons, and he provided services to the Sells Circus. Ezekiel Fields had land on North Star Rd and Northwest Blvd. The long list of families includes the Bowen, Hughes, and Fields and so many others.

Some of the older black residents came to the area by way of the Underground Railroad. The community also had a black 21-piece band called the Clippers, and a black baseball team called the Sellsville Sluggers. The Polkadot School was the building where the New Antioch Baptist Church had its first official Sunday School meeting. Later in Oct. 1894, a cornerstone was laid for the original frame building. At the corner of North Star Road and Clifton Road, William Askins would build the The Lane Askins Ballroom. It was to be the place for many special moments for people in the neighborhood and would feature entertainers from near and far.

The Antioch Baptist Church, which was integrated, held baptisms in the Olentangy River near the Fifth Avenue bridge. There were sometimes rivalries between the children from Sellsville and the children from Franklinton, and children who came from the east side of the river were considered “townies.” Animal escapes were not necessarily frequent but always memorable—and included escaped monkeys invading porches and open doors; elephants tearing off porches by their sheer size; and a motorcycle rider who met an elephant late at night on the Fifth Avenue bridge.

The area is associated now with the Lennox Shopping Center, though parts of the housing and the old cook house remain. When the area was annexed to Columbus in 1923, it came in under the name “Gypsyland,” and one might suppose the reference was because circus people traveled like gypsies. However, in the summer months, the area was used for several weeks by a large Roma extended family who had roots into the county since the mid-nineteenth century.

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Above: The original Antioch Church was replaced in the 1960s.

# Conclusion

The values of family, hard work, and neighborhood have continued for over two hundred years in the African-American communities of Columbus.

Many African American settlements may have remnants of their history—tangible reminders that can be documented, listed on historic preservation registers, and marked. In compiling this report, earlier communities—some appearing in the late eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth century, also have surfaced. It might be possible to share and mark their stories—Franklinton, Mudsock, Laneview, Africa, Peter’s Run, Sellsville, Badlands, Bronzeville, and others have a geographic presence and can be given a historic name. Artists, authors, poets, historians, and others are just beginning to be memorialized in a creative fashion on the Near East Side by using the figures from Aminah Robinson’s books. Perhaps this can be a model for others.

The African American settlement patterns are in some ways similar to those in other cities. However, because the growth of Columbus was very dependent on early crossroads for trade and state politics, and because Columbus was deeply affected by the canals, the National Road, and the railroads, the pattern is also very different. To identify, preserve, and mark the many African American communities and settlements, the process that may emerge will also be richer, more

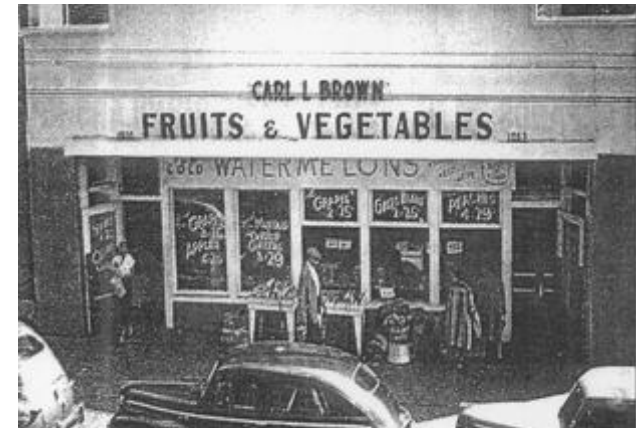
comprehensive, and very creative.



Above Top: Attorney Napoleon and Mrs. Dorothy Bell on their wedding day in 1956. Mr. Bell was a prominent civil rights attorney for many years during the 1960s.

Left: Entrance to Near East Side neighborhood, 2014.

Below: The Carl L. Brown Grocery Store, pictured here in the 1940s, was a central part of the African-American community.



# Research Topics

The purpose of the African American Preservation Initiative was to identify and note the historical context of African American settlements and communities for documentation, research, preservation, and/or marker identification. In addition to the settlements and communities associated with the African American experience in Columbus, the following should be noted:

## **B&T Metals 425/435 W.Town Street**



The former site of B&T Metals Company is significant for two reasons. First, it was an early and major African-American-owned business of the city. Second, from 1943-1944, it was the site of the extrusion of uranium rods as part of the top-secret Manhattan Project to develop the first atomic bomb. At the time, the danger of radioactivity was not well understood and extra safety precautions were not taken. However, in the 1990s, the site was cleaned and declared safe by the EPA. Today, B&T Metals has moved to another location and the Town Street property is owned by Manhattan Project LLC.

The founder of the business, Lyman Beecher Kilgour, was born in 1888 in Hillsboro, Ohio, where his family had lived at least since the 1830s. He, his wife Mabel, and their two daughters, Virginia and Sarah, moved to the Mt. Vernon neighborhood around 1923. Kilgour purchased the company, initially called B&T Floor Company, in 1930. At first, it was located at the corner of N. Front St. and Long but moved to Franklinton in 1940, becoming B&T Metals as the company switched from retail to manufacturing. The business was so successful that it eventually had plants in both Toronto and Los Angeles.

Kilgour died in 1948, passing on control of the business to Virginia's husband, Lawrence Tolbert, who was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity at Ohio State, the Columbus Rotary, and a founding member of the Merrymakers Club. He passed the business on to their son, David Tolbert, who still owns it today.

Laura Herron

## **David Jenkins**

David was born in Lynchburg, Campbell County, Virginia, in 1811 to parents William Jenkins and his wife. He was tutored privately and taught his younger brothers and sisters. In 1830, David lived in Campbell County Virginia as a free person of color and was listed in 1830 in the Lynchburg, Virginia, Hustling Court, Chancery and Law Order Book. David married Lucy Mina James a free person of color, on February 3, 1835 in Lynchburg Virginia.

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Above: B & T Metals was an important African-American manufacturing company especially during World War II.

He moved to Columbus in 1837 with his wife, Lucy Ann Mina James. He attended and organized along with other prominent African American men in Columbus—James Poindexter, John Ward, George Williams—the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio; participated with the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons for the State of Ohio; and recruited for the 127<sup>th</sup> USCT Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. He was a delegate to the First Annual Meeting of the National Equal Rights League in Cleveland, and he was one of the members of the Second Baptist Church who withdrew to form the Anti-Slavery Baptist Church. After he died, his widow moved back to Columbus (1880) and lived at 1275 Mann Street and later at 1189 Mt. Vernon Avenue. She died in 1899 and is buried in Green Lawn Cemetery.

David Jenkins was listed as “painter” in the Columbus’s city directories 1848, 1862-1872 and in the 1850, 1860 and 1870 Census. In 1848 he had a quarter page ad; “D. Jenkins House Painter, glazier, Grainer and Paper Hanger. Shop North-west corner of High and Friend Streets.”

For thirty years, David Jenkins was an extraordinary presence in Columbus, galvanizing activism in civil rights, anti-slavery, educational reform, and women’s rights. In the years he lived in Columbus, he resided at 59 East Long Street, 123 North Third Street, 40 Mulberry Alley, 44 East Mulberry Alley, and 44 East Lafayette Alley (Mulberry was changed to Lafayette in 1872). His tobacco shop was at 59 East Long and later at 89 Friend (Main) Street where he also resided with Lewis Jenkins.

In 1836, David Jenkins, B. Roberts, C. Lewis organized a “school society” and became trustees of the first school for African American children. In the fall of 1839, they had \$60 in the treasury and a building fund of \$225 towards the estimated cost of \$700 for the purchase of a lot and school house. The school, like other schools started in Columbus, was dependent on subscriptions; the Ohio Legislature had no funding for schools. However, by August, 1840, 63 children were enrolled and the school was maintained for six months.

“In 1843 David established the “Palladium of Liberty” a weekly newspaper devoted to the advancement of his race and the abolition of slavery.” His colleagues included Anthony Barrett, William McAfee, L. D. Taylor, A.M. Taylor, John Booker and later M.M. Clark, Charles H. and John M. Langston. The “Palladium of Liberty” had the subheading “We Hold These Truths To Be Self Evident, That All Men Are Created Free and Equal.”

Netti Ferguson

### Underground Railroad Activities by Colored People 1843-1863

On October 12, 1851 the Ohio State Journal published the Colored Citizens’ Resistance to the

**THE PALLADIUM OF LIBERTY.**

It is in eighteen hundred and forty three,  
When we present the Palladium of Liberty;  
It was not got up on speculation,  
But to 'meliorate the colored peoples condition.

This paper has been presented to us  
By the colored people of Columbus,  
We hope to delineate the chains of slavery  
By the force of the Palladium of Liberty.

Then we will praise Jehovah's name,  
That we the Africans are proclaiming,  
That we will not be held enslaved  
By barbarous minds of men enraged.

We'll not see the enslav'd mother mourn—  
Her children from her bosom torne.  
We will not see them dragg'd into slavery,  
In all the scenes of agony.

G. W. Roots.

Fugitive Slave Law; mentioned in the article were: John T. Ward, President, C.H. Langston, secretary, L.D. Taylor and John Booker. David Jenkins along with John T. Ward, Rev. James Poindexter, W. B. Ferguson, William Ferguson, Shepherd Alexander, John Fidler, Jesse Fidler and Andrew Redmond from Franklin County and Richard Chancellor, Robert Chancellor, from Ross County, helped runaway slaves escape on the Underground Railroad. According to Professor Wilbur Siebert's work on the Underground Railroad, one route was out East Friend (now Main) ten miles to Reynoldsburg and twenty miles northeast to Granville, Dennison University. This line was created as a substitute for one from Cincinnati northeast to Delaware and on to Oberlin which had been traced by a spy.

David Jenkins's residence and shop was Friend and High Streets. The Langston Family had an Underground Railroad station on West Main Street near High in Chillicothe in Ross County.

### **State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio 1849**

In 1849 David Jenkins attended the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio held at the Bethel Church in Columbus, Ohio. Delegates from Franklin County included: Wm Copeland, Lorenzo Dow Taylor, J. Monroe Cardozo, Rev. John M. Brown, John Booker, Frank Boyd, T. Jefferson Goode, Robert B. Goode, James Poindexter, Emanuel Butler, Moses Redman, J. William Lyons, Wm. Lyles and Peyton Shelton. Delegates from Ross County were John T. Ward, Dr. C. Henry Langston, J. Mercer Langston and George R. Williams. In 1850, Charles Langston and John Langston resided in David Jenkins household in Columbus.

In 1865 David Jenkins was a delegate at the First Annual Meeting of the National Equal Rights League "assembled in be operative in such matters" at the Garrett's Hall, Cleveland, Ohio, on September 19<sup>th</sup>. David Jenkins addressed the meeting, "social intercourse was subject entirely to the people's instincts, and no laws could or would be operative in such matters".

#### *Sons of Protection (colored)*

James Poindexter, President; James Hall, Vice President, John Barker, Secretary; President, J. T. Ward Treasurer. Meets in basement of Colored Baptist Church; Southside Gay, between Third and Fourth; Rev Allen Brown, Pastor.

Netti Ferguson

## The Franklin Park Medical Center

Franklin Park Medical Center was built in 1962 at 1829 E. Long Street to serve a primarily African American clientele. At the time medical services were often still segregated and African American and minority doctors were almost never given “full staff” rights at Columbus-area hospitals. Recognizing the lack of specialized medical services for the city’s African American population – and the lack of career advancement potential at area hospitals – five African American medical professionals joined together to open the Franklin Park Medical Center. The founding members were:

- Dr. Arthur L. Clark, Pediatrician
- Dr. Harold McDaniel, Dentist
- Dr. Richard Ruffin, Urologist
- Dr. Jaime Smith-e-Incas, Psychiatrist
- Dr. Walter Thomas, Obstetrician/Gynecologist

Inspired by the success of similar African American medical centers in Cleveland and Cincinnati, the five men began meeting to discuss a business plan, but quickly ran into racial barriers on two fronts. First, the group initially looked for property at Long Street and Champion Avenue, as well as, on East Broad Street but found that landowners were unwilling to sell to African Americans. The group persevered and eventually got in contact with Charles Bryant Jr. of CW Bryant Movers, a wealthy African American-owned company known for both building and physically moving buildings. CW Bryant Movers sold the group a plot of land at Monypenny and East Long Street for \$20,000. Though the site was not their first choice, its proximity to bus lines, ample space for parking, and location within the heavily African American Near East Side community made it an excellent location. Financing was the second major barrier to their plan. While their white classmates from medical school had no trouble securing financing to build and supply equipment for their medical practices, the founders of Franklin Park Medical Center couldn’t find a bank in all of Columbus and even Ohio to finance their business. They contacted John W.E. Bowen, a prominent Columbus attorney, who was able to secure financing through a Cincinnati-based Insurance company. They were finally ready to build.



The Columbus Call & Post newspaper heralded the building at its August opening for its state-of-the-art design and modern features. According to founding member Dr. McDaniel, local architect Harold Scofield designed the building, incorporating many design motifs of Frank Lloyd Wright

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Above: Pictured (L to R): Drs. A. Clark; J. Smith-e-Incas; H. McDaniel; R. Ruffin; W. Thomas



including a low horizontal form, contrasting natural materials like stone and wood, and a flat overhanging roof. Inside the building featured a comfortable waiting room, a downstairs pharmacy and an internal phone system used by the doctors to place orders.

Since 1962 many generations of patients benefited from the Franklin Park Medical Center and many of the doctors were known for their charitable works. As the founders neared retirement

they decided to donate the building to the Columbus Foundation in order to set up a scholarship fund for young medical students. In 1995 the building was sold to Charles Brown who later sold it to Adam Porter in 2005 who continued the rental as medical offices until 2008 when the last tenant moved to a new location. Sadly, by 2014 the building had become vacant and the current owner is in receivership. The Franklin Park Medical Center is an important physical reminder of the racial barriers faced by African American doctors and patients in the recent past, as well as the strength and perseverance it took that overcome such barriers. Without recognition this building's story may be lost like so many of Columbus's other African American landmarks.



Biographical information has been compiled the founding members of the Franklin Park Medical Center, but the authors would also like to acknowledge the other medical professionals who served in the building. These included: Dr. William Brunson, M.D, Internist,

Waldo Tyler, Pharmacist, Dr. Alfred Jefferson, Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Dr. Allen Tucker, M.D., General Practitioner, Dr. Earl Walker, Dermatologist, Dr. Kenneth Woodruff, M.D., Pediatrician, and Dr. Jacquinto Beard, D.D.S. Anyone with biographical or historical information on the Center are encouraged to contact the African American Landmarks Initiative.

The founders at the Grand Opening:

**Dr. Arthur L. Clark, Pediatrician** – Bio provided by his son, Lloyd Clark

**Dr. Jaime Smith-e-Incas, Psychiatrist** – Bio provided by his daughter, Bianca Allen

**Dr. Harold McDaniel, Dentist** – Bio provided by Dr. McDaniel

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Above: The Franklin Park Medical Center was designed by Herald Scofield in the mid-century modern style. The building is endangered in 2014.

**Dr. Richard Ruffin, Urologist** – 2003 obituary provided.

**Dr. Walter Thomas, Obstetrician/Gynecologist** – Bio provided by his daughter, Lenore Thomas

Biographies are available through Columbus Landmarks Foundation.

### **Spring Street YMCA and the Columbus Urban League**

By the beginning of the twentieth century, African Americans began settling farther east of downtown on Long Street and Mt Vernon Avenue. As the African American community moved east on East Spring Street, one organization exemplified the benevolent societies within the African American community. It was the Spring Street Y.M.C.A. In 1915 under the leadership of Nimrod Booker Allen, it was there that many young African Americans would find programs advancing the mission of the Y.M.C.A. It was an organization which was to play a large part in the lives of the African American residents of Columbus. This same mission of community service was continued in 1917, when Allen and others created the Columbus Urban League on Monroe Avenue. In part, the charge for the Urban League organization was to provide assistance to those who were coming from the south in greater numbers and who needed various social and human services. To further address the needs of community and the needs of African Americans, Allen also organized the Frontiers Club of Columbus in 1936. It later became an International organization.



Lloyd Clark, Andrew Neutzling, Lenore Thomas

### **The Walnut Country Club**

The Walnut Country Club was a recreational facility for African American families. It was located along the banks of the Walnut Creek east of the Columbus city limits. Nimrod Allen was its founder in 1927. It was formed for the purpose of encouraging and promoting interest in aquatic and athletic sports by providing means and facilities for the accommodation, recreation, physical culture, pleasure, amusement and social communication of its members and their guests and to have a club-house, club room.

These recreational facilities provided families in the black community the ability to provide

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Above: Dr. Nimrod Allen of the Columbus Urban League with his family on Lexington Avenue circa 1950.



These members of Semper Fidelis Guild will be hostesses to their sponsors and friends Saturday evening, March 28, at Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, where their fine arts and class festival will be held. From left sitting: Misses and Mesdames Emma Taylor, Carrie Cooper, Benjamin Hughes, general chairman of festival; Margaret Jacobs, Lottie Mitchell, Willa Henry, Bessie Banks, Estella Tyler. Standing: Mesdames Gladys Peyton, Dorothy Madison, Helen Paxton, Mary Chandler, Thelma Pruitt, Velma Henderson, Beulah Woolfolk, Mae Finney, Creta Thompson, Rosetta Duren, Myra Williams. Not present when photo was taken are Mesdames Helen Banks, Belle Gray, Ollie Chapman, Estella Giles. George A. Moore, producer-director of TV Station WEWS, Cleveland, will be the speaker for the evening. Program also includes music, interpretative dancing and drama. Mrs. H. D. Giles is hostess committee chairman.

recreational activities that were not available to them because of the racial segregation. Because of segregated policies there were important events held at these parks that could not be held in other parts of the city.  
 Reita Smith

### **The Christopher Inn and Leon A. Ransom**

A prominent example of mid-century modern architecture, the Christopher Inn was designed by Leon Ransom and built in 1963. Simplicity of style, ample windows to let in light, and open interior spaces, are some of the characteristics of the mid-century modern period (1940-1970). The Christopher Inn, located at 300 E. Broad Street, displayed these elements in a memorable

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Above: Members of Semper Fidelis Guild in 1953.

circular motor inn featuring 140 rooms, heated swimming pool, and nightly entertainment. Demolished in 1988, the Christopher Inn had the shortest lifespan of any Columbus high-rise. Fortunately, other examples of Ransom's distinctive style still exist in the OSU Hospital East tower and Mechanical Building, Columbus Fire Station #8, St. Paul AME Annex, Martin Luther King, Jr. Branch public library, and the Franklin Park Medical Center.

Leon Ransom was the first African American architect of prominence in Columbus. He worked on major projects including public libraries and congregate housing. Ransom was born in Columbus on April 29, 1929. Studying at the American Catholic University of America, Ransom received a bachelor's degree in geography in 1950 and a master's degree in architecture in 1953. Ransom obtained his requisite three years of work under the supervision of a registered architect at Louis Karlsberger & Associates of Columbus beginning in 1954. In 1957, Ransom passed the state licensing exam to become a registered architect. He was one of the first African Americans to work on major projects like fire stations, libraries and hospitals. In 1963 Ransom formed a partnership with Sylvester C. Angel, another black architect in Columbus, and the firm of Angel & Ransom was created. In 1966 Ransom started a solo practice: Leon A. Ransom & Associates, Architects-Planners-Designers. Unfortunately, due to failing health he gave up the practice in 1970. Following a long illness, Leon Ransom died at the young age of 42 in 1971. Leon Ransom, his wife Delores, and their four children lived in the Eastgate neighborhood.

For more information about Leon Ransom and other African American Architects, see Dreck Spurlock Wilson's book [African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary](#).



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Above: The Christopher Inn was a unique cylindrical hotel designed by African-American Leon Ransom.

# Appendix

Elise and Lawrence Dodley Interview (September, 2014)

## Lawrence Dodley

My family was from Macon, Georgia and we came to Columbus about 1909. My brothers William and Gilbert were born in Columbus. And there was Lewis and then me, Lawrence, who was born in 1924. My sisters were Ruth and Jean. My mother had a brother who came up with us but who went to live in Gallipolis. Another sister of hers went on to Chicago. My father also had a brother who came to Ohio but he then went on to Pennsylvania, somewhere near Allentown and he died without any offspring.

We first stayed at 212 Throne Street, between Ohio and Champion and we went to Long Street to shop because they had more shops before Mt. Vernon.

## Community

The Blackberry Patch was a small section between Hawthorne on the north, Antheop Place (behind the current fire station) on the south, Mink on the east and Champion on the west. We lived bad but they lived worse. There was substandard housing, no indoor plumbing, pipes outside to get your water and lots of bootlegging, numbers and prostitution. There was Prohibition until Roosevelt came in so that's where you went to get your liquor. But although there were lots of fights, there was little killing like today. And Champion acted as a natural barrier on that side. But I didn't visit there mainly because I was not that old.

Then over on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, that's where the mucky-mucks lived. They had nice, well-built houses, all brick, with indoor plumbing and front and back yards. This is where the people with decent jobs lived, people like our teachers and men on the railroad. But a continuing problem in the area was that there were rental houses next to owner-occupied and that sometimes kept a street down.

I spent my time playing basketball. I was friends with the Boston's who had four boys: George, Harvey, John and Loring. We played basketball all day at Beatty Center whenever we weren't in school and then we went through their backyard to get something to eat. There was always something to eat from the fruit trees in the backyard to sandwiches. And I was never refused because I was not one of theirs; in fact sometimes I got fed extra!

Beatty had programs that they taught inside, like crafts, in addition to the sports fields for baseball, basketball and tennis that we could use whenever we wanted. So we stayed busy all day whether

or not we had any supervision from an adult. Jimmy Madison was the supervisor at Beatty, after Alfred Keyes who went to the Fire Department. Mr. Keyes was a graduate of North High School, came from an area off Detroit in the North End similar to our area and a down to earth man who we could talk to unlike Mr. Madison, whose family had a little money. There was a horseshoes pitch but the old men wanted to play there all day and we couldn't get a chance to play. So Mr. Madison got two sets and kept one for us. Mr. Hucklebee who also lived on 22<sup>nd</sup>, was one of the first Black firemen and he took care of the tennis courts as an extra job for the Recreation Department. Mr. Madison had a master's degree so when Poindexter Village opened up later on he got that position. Later he went on to a job in Washington, D.C.

But I remember that Mr. Madison told me the same thing that my school principal later said – get it up here (gesturing to his head) and nobody can take it from you. It's yours. He really tried to keep us in school.

On Mt. Vernon there were street cars and the street was brick, not paved. There were no supermarkets like now but there were stores where clerks helped once you chose your food. And there was two ten-cent stores, Woolworth's and Kresge's, the old Cameo Theater was a big gathering place, Olympic Ice Cream parlor and tailor shops. Just off Mt. Vernon at 20th Street was a George Byers car dealership. East Market was at the corner of Miami and Mt. Vernon and it was a nice market, just like the one downtown on Fourth where the bus station is now. You could buy anything in that area. But the only nice restaurants were the Novelty Bar and the Chesapeake, which was our favorite when we were dating. And there was the Southern Tea Room near Jefferson. But we had other places to go like Jitney Roy's Cafeteria on North 20<sup>th</sup> where you could get pig ears with onion on bread for a dime before the war and a quarter after.

### Elise Dodley

When I look back I don't know how we made it. We had no washing machine and the laundry was done by hand and hung outside to dry. In the winter we hung it in the kitchen. Then we got a machine with a windup handle that you ran the clothes through. With three girls none of us had jobs unlike with boys who could always sell papers and do things like that but we had to stay close to home. So one day my mother said a woman at work needed somebody to iron and I agreed to do it although I was only 12 years old. A basket was \$10 and it took me all day to iron those clothes. But I was ecstatic - \$10 whole dollars! It went to the house but mama gave me a dollar and that was ok.

Throughout my youth all I ever wanted to do was to pay off the grocery bill. Every week my mother paid as much as she could but the next week the balance was always \$100 or more. I

couldn't understand why the bill stayed so high when we paid so much every week. So that was my goal because my mother worked so hard to keep us together.

My mother worked at the Deshler Hotel as a maid and was responsible for 25 rooms. Then she had a few private homes that she went to before she came home for the night. She would bring us supper from the private homes.

My first experience going downtown to the Palace the ushers said to go upstairs because the place was full. But then we could look down and see plenty of empty seats.

At Central High School I studied bookkeeping, shorthand and typing and really enjoyed the courses. One of my mother's private home clients owned a business called the Railroad Retirement System. I did well in my courses so my mother went to her and asked if I could be employed in her business. After a week she informed my mother that the other white women in the office would be uncomfortable with me in their office. My mother was really hurt because this woman had always asked about me and spoken approvingly of my academic gains.

But for me this was my introduction to the real world. At Central I was the only Black in the shorthand class and was told the first year to "take something else because it will be hard for you to find employment in this area." I still liked my classes and did well in them so I stayed. But they were right. They did not encourage Blacks to go to college and I felt well prepared to work. When I graduated I sent out hundreds of applications but no one would hire me for an office position. I even went out to the Defense Supply Center and took the tests which I passed. I was so happy but I heard nothing from them for three years. Eventually I got a job at a hotel as an elevator operator and a maid.

And I often said that if there had not been a war, I would still be at that hotel. In 1952 I was contacted by the Defense Supply Center to come out for a 90 day temporary job. Many of the men had gone off to Korea and the women were being called to fill these positions. But from the beginning the women were disadvantaged, even with the Federal Government. But it was twice my hotel salary and my supervisor said that I could come back afterwards. So I went for 90 days and stayed for 30 years.

Interviewed and transcribed by Julialynne Walker

# Endnotes

- 1 Robinson, Yolanda. S., *There is Magic in the Blackberry Patch*, Columbus: Xlibris, 2011. Although a children's book, the work contains an extensive appendix of former residents of Poindexter Village.
- 2 McKenzie, Roderick D., *The Neighborhood: A Study of Local Life in the City of Columbus*, Ohio. Chicago: Rise of Urban America Series, 1928
- 3 Curtin, Michael. "Step by Step Two Centuries in Columbus Blacks have focused on Progress," *The Columbus Dispatch*. January 29, 1993, p. 1H
- 4 Blankenship, Leslie. "The Meaning of Arthur Boke," excerpt from unpublished book, 1998
- 5 Neighborhood Design Center, *The Caroline Brown House and the History of the Streetcar District*, Columbus, Ohio, Hopkins Printing Company, 2013
- 6 Jenkins, David. *Palladium of Liberty* (Masthead). Columbus, Wednesday, March 20, 1844, Vol. 1.
- 7 Gerber, David. *Black Ohio and the Color Line, 1860-1915*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976, p. 10
- 8 Hooper, Osman Castle. *History of the City of Columbus from the Founding of Franklinton in 1797 through the World War Period to 1920*. Columbus and Cleveland: Memorial Printing Company, 1920, p, 53
- 9 <http://columbusrailroads.com/prr%fe,htm>, May 16, 2014
- 10 <http://www.fpconservatory.org/About-Us/history>. May 26, 2014
- 11 Mark, Mary Louise, *Negroes in Columbus*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1928,pp. 17-18
- 12 Martin, C. Sunny. *Columbus Black Heritage: The Bicentennial Edition*, Columbus, Ohio, 2012, p. 21
- 13 Hooper, p. 199
- 14 "History of Bethany." n.d.
- 15 Martin, C. Sunny, pp. 18-23



- 16 Betti, Tom, Ed Lentz, Doreen Uhas Sauer, eds. *Columbus Neighborhoods*. Charleston, South Carolina: History Press, 2013, pp. 177-178
- 17 Dr. William Allen's book, *Historical Reflections: The Community and the Afro-American Pioneer Physicians of Columbus, Ohio*, (Columbus: self-published, 1988) provides comprehensive biographies, hospital locations, and doctors' office locations.
- 18 Betti, pp. 144-145
- 19 Mark, p. 41
- 20 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, March 8, 1897. "Waring's Disappearance" p. 5. E.J. Waring, came to Columbus as a child..."his father, James Waring, for many years principal of the colored schools of the this city at the time when separate schools were in vogue...young Waring became a teacher...he was elected principal...he then founded a paper called The Afro American...he was the coiner of the term "Afro American," coining the term when he was a student at the Columbus High School and publishing the logical reasons why 'Afro American' should succeed the term 'colored' as applied to his race. Since then the word has come into general use." (Waring had disappeared from his job in Baltimore, Maryland working at Lexington Saving Bank, and at the time of this article, his whereabouts was unknown)
- 21 Williams, William. *Columbus Illustrated Negro Directory, 1929-1920*. Columbus Shield Printing, 1930 and *Columbus Illustrated Record*, Columbus, Ohio, 1919-1920
- 22 Jackson, Jesse. "Bronzeville Elects a Mayor," *The Ohio State Journal*, October 4, 1938
- 23 Moreland, Curtina Malissia Breta. *The Black Community of Columbus: A Study of the Structure and Pattern of Power in a Midwestern City*. Urbana: University of Illinois at Urbana, Champaign, Ph.D. thesis, 1977, p. 72
- 24 Note: The rise of a professional class in the black community was during the same era as the Red Summer (so-called because of the major race riots across the country in 1919); the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in Ohio and the Midwest; the Garvey Movement; and the growth of socialism/communism. While the Garvey Movement and the "isms" of the left did not draw many supporters in Columbus, and white downtown powers helped to take credibility from the KKK, Columbus did have unrest that could have led to a riot (1918) because black strikebreakers were used in the Pennsylvania Railroad strike. Twenty years later (1937) African Americans on the Near East Side conducted a strike against the Kroger chain because they opened stores in the community but would not hire an African American above the status of carry-out boy.

- 25 Moreland, pp. 73-74
- 26 Bishop, Dr. Anna. *The Blackberry Patch and Beyond the Blackberry Patch*, self-published.
- 27 Interview with Lawrence Dodley, 2014
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Felix,, James. *The American Addition: A History of a Black Community*. Washington, D.C., University Press of America, Inc., 1979 traces the beginnings of the community, its key role providing shelter during the Great Migration, and its struggles to provide adequate services to an independent township community.
- 30 Gilprin, Melinda, "The Forgotten Road to Africa," *Otterbein College Towers*, Spring, 1992, p. 10
- 31 "Improvements Tell Their Story of the Passing of the Badlands," *Columbus Sunday Dispatch*, September 24, 1906
- 32 Jennings, Calvin. *Burnside Heights Centennial, 1907-2007*. Columbus: self published, 2007, p. 1
- 33 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, April 3, 1879, Classified section
- 34 *Columbus Citizen Journal*, January 25, 1953, p. 23
- 35 Kern, Kevin and Gregory S. Wilson. *Ohio: A History of the Buckeye State*. Wiley Blackwell, 2014, p. 122
- 36 Ruth White's *We Too Built Columbus*. Columbus, Ohio: Stoneman Press, 1936 (section on Pioneers) and Andrew Denny Rodgers III, "Noble Fellow—William Starling Sullivant." New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940 contain stories of the Sullivants' relationship with slaves, hired help, and servants.
- 37 Sullivant, Joseph. *Genealogy and Family Memorial*, Columbus, Ohio, 1874
- 38 Gariety, Jennifer L., *Mid-Century Modern: Columbus, Ohio*. Columbus Landmarks Foundation, 2011. pp. 1-22.
- 39 McCormick, Virginia and Robert McCormick. *New Englanders on the Ohio Frontier: Migration and Settlement of Worthington, Ohio*. Kent State University Press, 1998, p. 172 and p. 369

- 40 Hauyselsen, John. *Worthington Ohio—From Before the Civil War and More*. Worthington: self-published, 2007
- 41 Lee, Alfred E. *History of the City of Columbus, Capital of Ohio*. Vol.1. New York and Chicago: Munsell & Co., 1892, p. 279
- 42 Ibid, p, 275
- 43 Lentz, Ed. "Early Columbus Factories struggled, later flourished," *This Week*, November 11, 1999
- 44 Cole, Charles. *A Fragile Capital: Identity and the Early Years of Columbus, Ohio*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003, p.547
- 45 Bishop, Anna. *Black Studies Community Based Seminar Syllabus*, p. 39
- 46 *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, June 17, 1906
- 47 The Weisheimer family is long associated with Sellsville, having a major business, the flour mill, near King Avenue. The Excelsior Seat Company was on the site later occupied by the Lennox Company for much of the twentieth century. The land was developed later into the Lennox Shopping Center. Mr. Weisheimer's interviews and remembrances are also supplemented for this narrative by oral histories from Elizabeth Bernhard Roehl, a friend of the Weisheimer family and a resident of the area and the Weisheimer grandsons who gave permission to use their grandfather's book. Doreen Uhas Sauer, August, 2013



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Above: The Pleasant Hill School was located in Burnside Heights.

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# NOTES

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A black and white portrait of Mrs. Bertha Guthrie, a woman with short, wavy hair, wearing a light-colored, high-collared blouse.