

# THROUGH THE YEARS

AFRICAN - AMERICAN HISTORY IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

SPRING/SUMMER 1999

## Maudie Edwards, The Teacher: My Story



Maudie Edwards, standing far right, with her class at Ullin, IL, 1953-54

By Maudie Edwards

I was born in Palaski, a small village in Southern Illinois. There I attended elementary school from the first through the eighth grades in a small, all Negro two room school house. I was bussed ten miles to the Douglass High School, in Mounds, and after graduation, enrolled in the Southern Illinois Teacher's College (now called Southern Illinois University) at Carbondale. At the completion of two years, I was awarded a Teacher's Certificate and began my teaching career in small country schools in the villages of Olmstead, Mounds City and Ullin, Illinois. Meanwhile, I attended summer school and night classes at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, until I completed my Bachelor's and Master's Degrees. Also during the summers, I attended night classes at Wayne University in Detroit, Michigan, and two summers at the University of Denver. I was still teaching in Ullin, Illinois at the time the

desegregation of schools was pending and decided it was time to move on, so I came to Champaign, Illinois in 1959 and was hired as a first grade teacher at the Booker T. Washington Elementary School working with children who needed special help.

Four years later, Project Promise came into being, which involved children with high potential, but who were working below average. The classes were made up of children, both Negro and White, selected from most of the elementary schools in Unit 4. I spent four years with that program.

After Project Promise I was asked to return to work with the Lab School at the Booker T. Washington Elementary School. This program was under the supervision of the University of Illinois College of Education, Department of Elementary Education with emphasis on math and science.

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## Champaign-Urbana Education Firsts

By Doris Hoskins

On August 3, 1934, the *News-Gazette* reported that Miss Mae R. Hawkins was to be the first Colored teacher hired in the Champaign public school system. Miss Hawkins was employed to teach at Lawhead School at a salary of \$90 per month and she would be teaching Colored pupils exclusively. Miss Hawkins graduated from Illinois State Normal University and attended the National Kindergarten School of Evanston. She did her practice teaching at Normal and Decatur.

In 1956, Taylor Thomas was the first Black teacher and later administrator employed in the Urbana school system. He taught history and sociology in the junior and senior high schools and the students dedicated their yearbook to him in 1961. Thomas was named Assistant Principal of Urbana High School in 1968, and four years later became Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, a position he held until his retirement in 1977.

Thomas was the first in his younger years as well; he was the only Black student at Columbia School in Champaign when he entered the first grade. He continued

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## Reaching Out To Teach Our Children

*The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is a source of true art and science.*

*Albert Einstein*

*By Barbara Gillespie-Washington*

Being a science educator, I love the mysteriousness of science. For some years I've desired to make some valuable contribution to my community. With great interest in scientific study, I thought this could be an avenue to teach and share with the Black children I love so dearly, and hopefully make a difference.

Science is not the preferred subject of choice among our Black children. I have taught many summer science classes in the Urbana School District. Many times there were no Black children in my classes. In time, the number of Blacks increased slightly. This concerned me, I discussed this with some of the children. Listening to their experiences, I could better understand why they shied away from a subject that could prove to be academically lethal, complex and overpowering. "Read the book, and overpower the facts." This was the expressed method of science instruction for so many. Science should be so much more.

In my studies, top authorities in child psychology and learning, had much to say about how children learn best. Piaget's work emphasized the idea that children need concrete hands-on experiences. Bruner also taught that concrete experiences should be heavily emphasized in childhood learning. Efforts such as Project 2061 and the National Science Education Standard call for a major reformation of science educa-

tion in America. That reformation moves text book orientation to more hands-on activity based instruction.

As a science educator, I strive to facilitate science experiences using a hands-on approach that sparks children's interest. For the past seven years, Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club has been the major site for sharing my science teaching skills in the community. My approach is to involve children in science that capitalizes on expressions of wonder to encourage learning.

Each summer, I coordinate and teach an intense six week science camp. The program is supported by Project S.E.A.R.C.H., University of Illinois. This past summer, Covenant Medical Center provided additional support. During this science camp, children are involved in hands-on, minds-on experiences that draw profound reactions of pleasure, powerfully encouraging science learning and language development. Children are anxious to be involved. I also serve as a Board Member of the Orpheum Children's Science Museum and volunteer in providing science experiences for children there. Just a few weeks ago while on duty, I had the privilege of interacting with some of the children from Bethel A.M.E. Church Sunday School and their very

fine leaders and teachers. It was quite exhilarating to observe them and listen to their exchange of observations. I was thrilled they chose to come and explore.

It's a joy to involve children in meaningful concrete experiences to enrich their background, and provide new understanding. Children are scientists at play. They develop their ideas about the world based on experiences with real things. Many some of these shared experiences provide inspiration enough to encourage more young Black boys and girls to pursue careers in the intriguing world of science.

MAUDIE

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Teaching first grade was for me, the greatest enjoyment and I learned to develop many ways to teach, for to me each child was important. Listen to the child, look for something he or she can do well and try not to put them in an embarrassing situation so that they enjoy coming to school. In addition, planning extracurricular activities, i.e. art, drama with participation of each child in writing plays and/or acting, story telling and field trips, all of which helped to spark his or her imagination and allow him or her to freely express themselves, thus inspiring them to want to learn.

Following my tenure at the Booker T. Washington Elementary School, I was transferred to Robeson Elementary School to teach first grade where I remained until my retirement in 1985.

After retirement, and because of my love for children and teaching, I began tutoring at the Douglass Annex and later moved to the Douglass Branch Library and the Stratton Elementary School.



*Barbara Gillespie-Washington*



EDUCATION FIRSTS

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his education at Gregory School through the seventh grade, attended the old Champaign High School for eighth grade, and entered high school in what is now Edison Junior High School. He earned his Bachelor's Degree from Tennessee State Teachers College, studied in the extension programs of Indiana State and Illinois State Normal Universities, and received his Master's Degree and an Advanced Certificate in Educational Administration from the University of Illinois.

*See the special insert on African-American educators in the Champaign County public school system. We realize this is not a complete listing. Please contact us with any additions or changes. Thank you.*



*Taylor Thomas*



*Mae Hawkins*



*Lawhead School*



*Willard School*

*Attendance at these two schools became predominantly black over the years.*



*Urbana High School, opened 1915*

Through the years collections of papers, photographs, documents of individuals, families and organizations of the African American community have been discarded or lost because there were no local programs to seek out and preserve such materials. Recognizing this fact, the Champaign County African American History Committee, a volunteer committee under the sponsorship of the Early American Museum and the Champaign Park District, was organized in 1992. The mission of this committee is to work with local individuals and organizations from Champaign County and the surrounding area to help organize and preserve historical records dealing with the African American experience in Champaign County.

*Through the Years* is a biannual newsletter featuring individuals, families, community groups and institutions. Join us in preserving this heritage and keeping African American history alive all year. If you are interested in receiving this newsletter, joining the Committee, loaning materials or sharing information, please call the Early American Museum at 217/586-2612.

Visit our website at: <http://www.prairienet.org/years>

*The Champaign County African American History Committee gratefully acknowledges both the Champaign-Urbana Convention & Visitors Bureau and National City Bank for sponsoring the printing of Through the Years.*



*Please help us spread the word! Feel free to xerox this newsletter and share it with your friends.*

# AFRICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATORS THROUGH THE YEARS IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

**A** Rose Adkisson \*  
Gloria Avant  
Bruce Allen

**B** Sandra Banks  
James Barnes  
Della Beck  
Karen Lee Beckrum  
Carolyn Blackwell  
Cynthia Blakely  
Yvonne Blandin  
Melissa Bolden  
Blandon Bondurant \*  
Murial Bondurant  
Jill Bonwell  
Cassandra Bovia  
Wilburn Bowles  
Janice Bradley \*  
Rozeater Brunion  
Carolyn Brown  
Christina Brown  
Dionne Brown  
Monya Brown  
Nina Brown  
Pattie Barnes Brown  
Melissandra Browning

**C** Sheila D. Capers  
Johnny Carey \*  
J.C. Caroline  
Benson Carradine  
Coleman Carradine  
Glenn Carter  
Marguerete Carter \*  
Hennine Casey  
James Casey \*  
Darrellyn Childress  
John Christopher  
Joe Clark  
Marcia Clark  
Doris Clements  
Arinda B. Coleman  
Beverly Coleman  
Bernadine Conner  
Lucille Covington  
Ben E. Cox, Sr.  
Iona Crim  
Vickie Cromwell  
JoAnn Crosky

**D**

Louis Dalton \*  
Dyanne Dandridge  
U.S. Davidson \*  
Beulah Davis  
Lizzie Davis (Johnson) \*  
Lenora DeBoe  
Rita Disroe  
Gloria Dixon  
Lisa Gaye Dixon  
Christina E. Donaldson  
Esther Turley Donaldson  
Jessie Donaldson  
Chuck Douglas  
Gladys Downing  
Bennie Drake  
Bennie Drake, Jr.  
Charles Drake  
Sharon Dunlap

**E**

Maudie Edwards  
Ruthie Edwards  
Vanessa Elam  
Crystal El Jamal  
Angela English  
Ollie Evans

**F**

Brenda Foster  
Maxine Foster  
Barbara Francis  
Miriam Fuller

**G**

Getrude Garth  
Benita A. Gay  
Barbara G. Gillespie (Washington)  
Vernessa Gipson  
Sennie Goines  
Michelle Grant  
Dorothy Green  
Alvin Griggs \*  
Temetra Gronmeier  
Mary E. Gwinn

**H**

Gregory T. Hall  
Japheth Hail  
Eula Hamilton  
Dr. Cleveland Hammonds \*  
Cliff Harden  
Elaine Harmon  
Levette Harmon  
Anthony Harris

Jake Harris

Ludella Harris  
James Hayes, Jr.  
Michael Heaven  
Lafonna M. Helm  
Anna Henderson  
Beverly Hendricks  
Gloria Hendricks  
Deloris Henry \*  
George Herts \*  
Marthell C. Hicks  
Brenda Hill  
Stacey T. Hill  
Carol P. Hines  
Karen Hite  
Alexandria Holloway  
Valerie Holmes  
Caretta Hughes  
Sylvia Hughes  
Bobby Hunt  
Carol Dixon-Hunt  
Roslyn Hunt  
Carolyn Hunter  
Wilma Hunter  
Betty J. Hursey  
Mary Louise Hursey (Sullivan)

**I**

Basil Ince  
Lauren Ince  
Jennifer J. Ivory

**J**

Carolyn Jackson  
Henry Jackson  
Kelvin T. Jackson  
Lisa D. Jackson  
Mary Esther Jackson  
Edward Jenkins  
Emily Jenkins  
Gayle M. Jeffries \*  
Carolyn A. Jenkins  
Carlyle Johnson  
Emma Johnson  
John Johnson  
Marguerite Johnson  
Nechele R. Johnson  
Teretha R. Johnson  
Betty Jones  
Betty R. Jones  
Cecelia Jones

Geraldine Jones  
Harbert Jones  
Marion Jones  
Michael Jones  
Shirlene C. Jones \*  
Thomas A. Jones

## K

Ren'ee Karnett  
Ozella Kelker  
Bertha Kent  
Charlie Kent  
Jessie Knight

## L

Don Langston  
Geraldine Lee \*  
Heysette Leigh  
Benita Lewis  
Patricia Lewis \*  
Mae Hawkins-Lombard  
Yvette Long  
Donald R. Love \*  
Judith Lyles

## M

Kevin Malone \*  
Rhoda Malone  
Kim Manka  
Phyllis Mann  
Gloria Mapson  
Jacqueline A. Matthews  
Geraldine Mayfield  
Rae Mazych  
Henry O. Meares \*  
Trudi C. Melvin  
Carolyn Martinez-Miller  
Grace E. Mitchell  
Yvonne Mock \*  
Magdelaine Mayfield-Moore  
Charles Morris, Jr.  
Joan Murphy

## Mc

Bessie McKinney  
Murphy McKinney  
Lonnice McKnight  
Ruth Calimese McMurray \*  
Wilbert McMurray  
Federick McNary

## N

Patricia L. Nettles

## O

Sylvia Oden  
Jo Ouso Osagie  
Leonard Osborne  
Wilma Osborne  
Daphne Oster

Linda Page  
Bernice Palmer  
Eddie Palmer  
Priscilla M. Palmer \*  
Gloria Parrish  
Eleudella Patterson  
Erica L. Patterson  
Madge Paul  
Magnolia Paul  
Hattie Paulk \*  
Minnie Pearson  
Phyllis A. Peete  
Robert Peete  
Mary Peppers  
John Pickens  
Alice Pirtle  
Kelvin Pollard, Jr.  
McLenda Pollard  
Bernice Pope  
Gladys I. Pope  
Gwenette Posey  
Delores K. Powell  
Sylvia Powell  
Eynth D. Preacely  
Mary Preston  
Shirley Price  
Demetria Purchase

## Q R

Casinda J. Queen  
Mildred Ranson \*  
Ren'ee L. Renfro  
Eunice Rivers  
Doris Robinson  
Marian Robinson  
Betty Nesbitt-Rowell  
Arnetta Rodgers \*  
Yvette Lane-Rose

## S

Janie C. Saxton  
Halestine Sessions  
Barbara Shores  
Mark Sikora  
Doretha Simmons \*  
Larry Simmons  
Brenda Smith  
Charlene Smith  
Dean Davis-Smith  
Joyce Smith \*  
Lillian Smith  
Sam Smith  
Sharecka Somers  
Donald Stewart

Sharon Stewart  
Stephanie Stewart  
Nomita Stiggers  
Claudine Stovall  
Kenneth Stratton \*  
Hester Suggs \*  
Howard Sumbler, Jr.  
Valerian Summerville  
Willie T. Summerville  
Charlotte Sydnor

## T

Angela Owens-Taylor  
Willie A. Taylor  
Henry Tenneyson  
Elirine Terry  
James Terry  
Marsha Terry  
Rayco L. Terry  
Carolyn M. Theard  
Carmelita Thomas \*  
Taylor Thomas \*  
David Tilghman  
Pat Tillman  
U'Lyna M. Trice

## U

Evelyn B. Underwood  
Peggy Usher

## V

Dorothy Vickers-Shelley

## W

Mary Francis Walden  
Ben Walton  
Evelyn F. Walton  
Brandon T. Washington  
Polly W. Washington \*  
Patricia Welch  
Odella Wesley \*  
Brenda Wiggins  
Bertha Williams  
Dun Williams  
Ivy Williams \*  
Mary Hailey-Williams  
Mary L. Williams  
Preston Williams, Jr. \*  
Rebecca Williams  
Winnie Wilson \*  
Janice Winfrey

## Y

Ann T. Yarber  
Bessie Young

## Z

Judy Zachary

\* Indicates administration