



*A legacy of community Art in and
around
Douglass Park*

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*Go to the people. Live among them. Learn from them.
Love them. Start with what you know. Build on what they
have. But of the best of leaders when their task is done,
the people will remark:*

"We have done it ourselves"

Chinese poem

Taking seriously the need to do work which benefits the local area, we engaged in discussion with professionals servicing clients in the North end of Champaign. These individuals armed us with a short list of community needs which included: teen center, grocery store, more youth activities, and a community center sponsored and run by those living in the surrounding neighborhood. We initiated this project during the fall 2007 semester. During this short time, with the help of with representatives from the City of Champaign, we identified two possible locations to carry out these needs. We were constrained by resources; hence we chose to produce this document which identifies art murals in public spaces. The following booklet illuminates the creative impulse that has shaped this area through the years, as well as outlines the key moments in Champaign's North End.

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

In making this pamphlet, we spoke with many individuals who live and/or work in the North end. Overwhelmingly individuals referenced the important life events they experienced at Douglass Park and within the facilities that are at the border of the park. To this end, an art walk would fail to be significant without acknowledging the various forms of art and social activities that have occurred in this space.



Douglass Recreation Center ,1975



Douglass Recreation Center 1977

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

The Douglass Community Center or Neighborhood House

“Blacks in Champaign County not only suffered economic restriction, but experienced social segregation as well. In response to having separate and inadequate communal facilities for Champaign-Urbana Blacks, the Douglass Community Center was founded in the early 1930s.”
(<http://www.prairienet.org/years/douglass.htm>)

The center named for the scholar and activist Frederick Douglass, was rebuilt in 1945.

DOUGLASS CENTER MARKS 7th ANNIVERSARY Sep 19th, 1946



Several hundred persons gathered in Douglass Park Community Center, 510-12 E. Grove St., Sunday afternoon to commemorate the seventh anniversary

of its founding. Reading from the left, seated, are Mrs. Helen Hite, director of adult activities, State Rep. Corneal Davis of Chicago, the speaker, and Mrs. L. T.

Gregory of the advisory board. Standing are R. M. Scott, chairman of the advisory board, and James E. Jones, director of the center.

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1965.



News-Gazette Photo by Ron Beckley

HONOR DOUGLASS FOUNDERS. Several of the original committee and staff of Douglass Community Center were honored Sunday at a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the center. Pictured at the celebra-

tion, left to right, are Mrs. Raymond Scott, wife of one of the founders; Mrs. Edna Diffay, past secretary; Richard R. Edwards, past board chairman; Taylor Thomas, first director; and Odelia Wesley, past secretary.

Park Douglass Center show a success

Douglass Center, 512 N. Grove, held their Style and Talent Show from 3 to 6 p.m. Sunday, to raise money to buy sewing machines and other equipment such as cheerleading suits for the girls and drum corps outfits. Douglass Center is the only recreation center in Champaign - Urbana for Black youth. Above, several of the models were, left to right, Barbara Adams, Linda Jackson and John Smith. Below, singing group the Four D's,

rear, left to right, Diana Abram and Darlene Kelly, and front, left to right, Nancy Buchanan and Dorothy Abram, entertained. Mrs. Mammie Jackson directed the show.

Nov 20, No year given

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

For nearly eight decades, the Douglass Park area (which includes the park, center, and annex) has been an indispensable to residents in Champaign's north end. Residents have participated in various artistic and recreational activities which include, but are certainly not limited to, African and modern dance, football, vocal and instrument lessons, karate, basketball, roller skating, reading activities, computer skills, and various other games. Additionally, the lives and hard work of school children and adults alike have been celebrated in this space. In the meeting rooms, during activities, and during the annual Champaign Urbana Days reunion, people recall feeling connected to the area and speak of this area with great pride.

DAY CAMP TO START AT DOUGLASS CENTER

~~WEDNESDAY~~ Douglass Center Summer
Day Camp will be held from
Monday until Aug. 8 for children
ages 5 to 13.

The purpose of the camp is to supply a complete and extensive recreational experience at no cost for the youth of the community. Activities will include arts and crafts, music, swimming, sports, skating, and one trip a week to places such as Lake of the Woods and the St. Louis Zoo. Booker T. Ford is the director of the camp.

June 11, 1969

Project Skates Launched

SUN MAR 23 1969

Douglass Center Youth to Benefit

A newly launched campaign is seeking funds to provide indoor roller skates for Douglass Center.

O. F. Bartholow, owner of the Chances R restaurant in Champaign, said, "A few weeks ago, Booker Ford, director of the Douglass Center; Bruce Nesbitt, a Champaign patrolman, and I met to discuss what could be done to help the youth in the northeast neighborhood of Champaign," he said.

Bartholow said Ford indicated Douglass Center has an indoor basketball court which is ideal for roller skating, but that funds weren't available to purchase skates. The skates cost \$14.50 per pair.

"Northeast neighborhood groups, campus organizations, business clubs and local businesses agreed to work together to do something about the situation," Bartholow said.

The Chances R has offered to pay for two soul bands to play at the restaurant Monday night he said, and to donate all receipts from the dance to the Douglass Center Roller

Skate Fund. Tickets will be \$1 apiece.

The Volunteer Illini Project, a campus organization, has agreed to donate \$500 to the fund and to sell tickets to the dance. Ford will distribute tickets to be sold in the northeast neighborhood and various campus groups will also sell tickets, Bartholow said. Tickets will also be distributed to various service groups.

Two local bands, The Nickel Bag and Eddie and The Sensations, have agreed to play for one-half of their usual fee. Eddie and The Sensations will also provide three dancers.

Dec 1, 1972

Programs

SCHEDULED 1972

The Champaign Park District's Douglass Center will begin programs for persons of elementary, junior high and senior high school age at the old OIC building located at 802 N. Fifth St., Champaign.

Arts and crafts, drama, swimming, stunts and tumbling are a few of the activities for children.

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Friday, grade schoolers may use the facilities from 3 to 5 p.m.; junior high schoolers from 5 to 7 p.m.; and senior high schoolers from 7 to 9 p.m.

Thursdays will be for "old folks," those 18 and over. A basketball league will be organized.

Programs are scheduled in the

Mar 23, 1969



Jul 19, 1972

BOOK TURTLE

Six "street librarians" who dance and distribute books throughout the community, are a new service at the Douglass Library. Three of them,

WED JUL 19 1972

from left, Yolande Dorsey, Audrey Keaton and Patrick Sterling, wear these colorful costumes and pull the "Rolling Turtle Library" full of

books and materials for young children. The six are in the Neighborhood Youth Corps program.

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

This recreation space was hard won and those supplying activities in the space have had to be constantly vigilant to ensure that resources and activities remain present. Community groups have (and still do) debate tirelessly with the Park District, other city agencies, and the university over the growth, development, and use of the park area. During the sixties and seventies, coalitions between University of Illinois programs and the center provided students free visual arts and music classes, a day camp program, and funds for the purchase of skates. These connections were often short, for a summer or semester. In the late sixties, many serving in leadership positions wanted what current university professionals are still arguing for: a long term collaboration between current U of I professors, staff, students, and residents. Long term collaborations may alleviate needs such as space, understaffing, different activities, and monetary resources. In addition to collaboration with university affiliated individuals, as early as 1973 there has been a call for coalitions between other agencies serving north end residents such as the Urban League and local ministers. Quoting former center leader Nate Dixon "If all of us in the community knows exactly what the other is doing, I think we can reach a lot more people."

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

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Douglass Park and Recreation Center

Douglass Center director

Dixon: 'I'm satisfied when the kids are happy'

Parks - Douglass Center

By Les Somogyi
Of The Courier

When Nate Dixon accomplishes his goal of getting the community "involved," he won't sit back and relax.

"I'm always getting into changes. I believe in making improvements for everyone. There is always room for changes," he said.

Dixon, 34, new director of the Champaign Park District Douglass Center, said the only time he is really satisfied is when he sees that "the kids are happy."

Keeping kids at Douglass Center happy is not an easy task for Dixon.

"The secret behind programming for these kids is to find what interests them and keep them interested in those activities," he said.

"But there are always some loose ends. One time you get

the right program, but not enough money. Or, how are you going to teach music, for example, to kids who can't afford to pay the entry fee to the course. How are you going to hire a teacher or other staff members?"

"It's really hard to program for these kids," he said.

Mental health specialist

Dixon recently was appointed director of the center. He has been director since January. He returned to the Adler Zone Center to complete a training session as mental health specialist, and now he can devote full time to the community.

"I'm trying to get the entire community involved in recreation and other activities," Dixon said. "That's one of my goals. But when I accomplish that goal, I'm not going to sit back and relax. There is a lot to be done."

Dixon said he is trying to communicate with other social services agencies in the community like the Urban League and the ministers' association.

"If all of us in the community know exactly what everyone else is doing, I think we can reach a lot more people. And, reaching people is very important here.

"You see, this is a very high risk area. At least as far as programming is concerned. If these kids don't have anything to do, they'll go out on the streets and will most likely get into trouble. So we've got to find the right kind of programming for each age group. From the smallest to the senior citizens," he said.

Shaping up

Dixon also said he is interested in shaping up the community.

"Starting with this center,"

he said.

"I know that the only thing that keeps the park district from getting on the way with the Douglass Center Addition is the lack of recreation tax funds," he said.

The park district last year recommended a hike in the recreation tax but voters defeated the measure by a narrow margin. The park district conceivably could build recreational facilities but would not have the money to staff them.

"Some of the kids who participate in our programs have problems. And, unless someone takes interest in these kids, those problems will get worse," Dixon said. "I'm willing to make the best of it and take that interest in the kids."

Affirmative action

Dixon is also affirmative action officer for the park district.

"Now that's going to be a tough job to do. But I wanted to do it, because I wanted to know exactly what is going on. Making sure that contractors comply with the affirmative action ordinance of the park district is very important to the community."

Dixon said that the park district has received several grants that could be attributed to compliance with the affirmative action clause of the requirements.

Several federal grants are approved only if the park district complies with those requirements.

"The federal government is keeping tabs on moneys, nowadays," Dixon said. And they would rather keep spending that money where minority is involved."

Douglass Center is a focal point for black youth in the Champaign Park District area.

"This is where they find their identity," Dixon said. "We have so many people in our programs that we can hardly take care of them. There must be something people like around here."

Dixon, his wife, Cora, and three children live at 108 E. Bellfontaine, Champaign.

Jun 2, 1973

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

Protest Douglass Center plans

FRI JUN 27 1975

Park board audience walks out

June 27, 1975

Harbo
By The Staff
Of The Courier

About 25 members of Champaign's black community staged a silent walkout Thursday night at the Champaign park board meeting.

Led by Elsie Easley, a leader of the group protesting the construction plans for a new Douglass Center, the members of the audience silently walked by board President William J. Helms' desk and dropped small pieces of paper on it.

The papers said: "Build Douglass Center Now."

Then they all walked out.

It was the only activity related to the controversial project at the park board meeting.

The board approved a month-to-month lease agreement with Albert Rezits, owner of the downtown Senior Citizens Center building.

The current lease terminates Monday. Commissioners said that since the future of the center is "less than stable," a month-to-month lease was

necessary. Either the park district or Rezits can give two-week notices to terminate the new lease.

Park board General Manager Robert Tolson and Champaign City Manager Gene Miller are expected to ask Rezits to lower the \$900-per-month rent.

But Commissioner Morgan Powell, who said he had talked with Rezits, said Rezits is reluctant to lower the rent.

The high rent was one of the reasons the city council did not favor continuation of funding the center. The council awarded \$15,000 to the center for six months. During that time a new center will be sought.

About a dozen senior citizens came to Thursday's meeting in support of the downtown location.

A center volunteer, a senior citizen herself, presented a petition to the board with 130 signatures asking to "keep the center" at the downtown location.

Another woman argued that the downtown center is in a "better location" than C Center on West Church Street. She said people are "much happier" at the downtown center. She asked why the park district would continue operation of the C Center but not the downtown center.

Commissioner Powell told her the downtown center is funded by the city while the C Center location is already owned by the park district.

Commissioner Donald F. Bresnan commended the senior citizens for having spoken out Tuesday night before the council, which changed its vote to fund the center. Last week the council voted to award no funds to the center. It would have meant closing the center by the end of July.

Commissioner Richard Davis Jr. took the opportunity to remind the park board that members of the black community also has been trying to speak out on the Douglass Center con-

trovery "but have been running into stone walls."

The appointment of Stanley G. Motley as the park district's new superintendent of parks was approved Thursday night. Motley will begin work in Champaign July 28. He will receive a \$13,500 salary. He is coming from Lemont Township Park District, near Joliet, where he had been working for about three months. He is the first director of the Lemont unit. Before that he was director of parks and recreation of the Streamwood Park District.



Sep 25, 1975

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

Resident's stories of interaction in the park area provide us with hope. Individuals working in this area provide us with knowledge and strategy. We are called to action, to build the alliances so many working in the agencies have proposed we do. Hope because we understand the function this area has served and hope because we come to realize that this historic landmark will continue to supply future generations with community based and supported activities.

Aug 5, 1973

THE JUL 24 1973

STYLE SHOW *Parla*

Trudy Overstreet was one of four Douglass Senior Citizens who modeled clothing in a style show Sunday at Douglass Center. Members of the senior citizens group organized the tea and show, with Dona McKinzie as director of the style show and Sara Scott in charge of the tea.

Jul 24, 1973

Many activities set at Douglass Center

Douglass Center of the Champaign *Park* District, 512 E. Grove St., Champaign, will have its own recreational activities this fall and winter.

Sports - related activities will include flag football, "powder puff" football, roller skating hockey, basketball, karate, mixed and women's volleyball leagues and swimming.

Cultural activities will include African and modern dance classes and arts and crafts courses.

WED SEP 11 1974

Douglass Park
Tab's grid clinic
SUN AUG 5 1973
starts this week

The "Start For Stardom Camp With Tab," a free football camp for Twin City youths aged nine through 15, will conduct its second annual clinic Wednesday through Saturday at the Douglass Community Center in Champaign.

Morning sessions will be held from 10-11:30 each day. Former University of Illinois football star Tab Bennett originated the camp last summer and will again be managing the sessions. More than 300 youngsters participated last year.

Persons interested in registering for the camp should contact Nate Dixon at the Center at 512 E. Grove (356-6122) or Bruce Nesbitt (333-7060) at the U of I Student Services Building for further information.

Ed Jenkins, former Champaign Centennial standout and a current member of the Fighting Illini will be head instructor. He will be assisted by Illini co-captain Ken Braid, tight end Tom Mullen and other team members.

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

Jan 1, 1977

Mar 27, 1974

Martin Luther King fete SATURDAY JAN 1, 1977 Saturday at Douglass

A day-long celebration in honor of Martin Luther King's birthday is planned for Saturday at Douglass Center in Champaign.

The program is being sponsored by Douglass Center in cooperation with the Shackelford Afro - American Culture Center in Champaign.

An 8 a.m. service will begin the day. The service will be highlighted by several recordings of Dr. King's speeches. A continental breakfast also will be offered.

A special children's program is scheduled for 2 p.m. Saturday afternoon. The program will feature two films, "I Have a Dream" and "From Mont-

gomery to Memphis." A dramatic presentation and community art display also are scheduled.

The evening celebration will begin at 7:30 and will feature speakers, a dramatic presentation and the Combined Community Choir directed by Willie Summerville. Speakers will be the Rev. Ed Reddick, assistant director of Operation PUSH and Prof. John Higginson, from the history department at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. There also will be a dramatic reading by Ernest Height.

Martin Luther King Day has been proclaimed by officials of both Champaign and Urbana.

Douglass Center WED. MAR. 27, 1974 library approved

The Champaign City Council Tuesday informally approved a library for Douglass Center. The city apparently will turn over deeds for Douglass Center Beardsley Center and the C Center to the Champaign Park District.

The decisions were reached in separate study sessions with members of the Burnham City Library Board, which operates the Champaign Public Library, and the Champaign Park District.

The council, the City Manager Warren B. Browning's recommendation, agreed it would turn over \$435,000 in federal revenue-sharing funds which has been designated for use in building a new library facility. The in-

terest on the money, which would go to the library rather than the city, could pay the estimated \$25,000 to \$35,000 construction cost for a proposed 1,500-square-foot library in the Douglass Center, which would be doubled in size.

John Lee Johnson objected to turning over the Beardsley Center deed.

Council members also argued briefly about whether to conduct public interviews of Champaign Mayor Virgil C. Wikoff's two nominees for the Champaign Human Relations Commission.

April 4, 1969

Improved Culture Project FRI APR 4 1969 For North End Children

By Darlene Napady

Plans for a permanent committee to oversee cultural enrichment activities in Champaign-Urbana's North End were revealed Thursday night in a meeting between area residents and the University of Illinois Division of University Extension.

"Our major problem in the past has been that there has been no carry-over," explained Booker Ford, director of Douglass Center.

"People come here and set up activities, such as music lessons, for a certain period of time, then leave. The kids naturally feel disappointed, especially those who have developed an interest, so someone must see to it that these things don't end with summer."

University Extension members seemed somewhat skeptical about their relations to such a committee, and many details apparently will have to be worked out.

But all agreed to a second meeting of the committee, extension representatives, and instructors in last summer's programs to determine what kind of activities interest children in the area.

Extension representatives said they tentatively had considered music, visual arts, dramatics, and dance as components of a summer project of the area.

Last summer's program included instrumental and vocal music as well as visual arts. But only the visual arts program was successful because it was continued through the year, Ford said.

"The area needs this kind of committee to make sure that such programs are brought in on a sporadic basis and that they relate to needs and heritage of the black community," said John Lee Johnson, a community organizer for the Community Service Center.

"Right now most people in this area do not know what

culture is, not even black culture."

"Blacks need to understand musical instrument and how to read and stage a play before they can develop a genuine knowledge of black music or theater."

A major problem in providing such activities evidently will be facilities.

Douglass Center does not have room to accommodate such programs as music lessons, and noise from recreational activities would be distracting.

Schools in the area probably will be available in summer but, Ford said, many children do not like the idea of going back to school for such activities.

University facilities also are available, but they are too far for children to walk and transportation always has been a problem.

A multi-purpose facility to accommodate all such activities is still in the discussion stage.

Park
Douglass Center Program

OCT. 6 1968

Oct 6, 1968

Classes in Arts, Music Started During Summer

By William S. Becker

In an all-out effort to show that culture and the arts are not activities reserved only for some communities, residents of the North End organized over the summer and held comprehensive classes in visual arts and music for black youths of Urbana-Champaign.

Details of the summertime program, held at Douglass Community Center in Champaign, were disclosed Friday.

According to Douglass Center director, Booker Ford, North End residents were notified of the program by fliers distributed in the community. All of the art and music classes were free of charge and required no equipment.

Forty-four elementary school children responded for classes in painting, drawing and ceramics, and a large number of North End pre-teens and teen-agers participated in lessons for voice, piano, chorus, brass instruments, woodwinds, percussion instruments and guitar.

Extension Artists Taught

Instructed by a six-member team of artists from the University of Illinois Division of University Extension in Art, and assisted by university students in the Volunteer Illini Projects program, children in the Douglass Center classes took field trips to area farms and reproduced what they saw in drawings and ceramic sculpture.

Their projects, including water colors, tempera colors, masks and ceramic piggy banks, were displayed over the summer at the Illini Union and

are now being shown in a Lincoln Square Shopping Plaza display.

North End youths studying musical instruments took advantage of a \$15,000 experimental guitar laboratory loaned indefinitely by the Baldwin Co. of Cincinnati, and the local Baldwin distributor in Champaign.

The lab, first in the country, was designed for class guitar instruction by Dr. Herman Slayman of the U. of I. medical campus in Chicago. It consists of 24 electric guitars, amplifiers, earphones, junction boxes and a control unit, so that teachers can listen to one or all of the guitars.

According to Dan Perrino, dean of student programs and services at the U. of I. and formerly head of the Division of Extension in Music, the equipment will remain in the North End to be used during the day in one of the community's elementary or junior high schools.

Perrino said a North End committee is setting up a program in which neighborhood teens and pre-teens will use the equipment afternoons, and adults in the evenings.

Instructors for the guitar equipment will come from the black community, Perrino said.

For the summertime program, music teaching in the North End, which had been going on a minimal basis with funds from the Urbana Park District, was co-ordinated by local jazz musician Tony Zamora.

Members of Zamora's jazz band, all experts on their respective instruments, instructed

the North End youths. All of the musicians are black and residents of the North End.

Other instructors were Mrs. Mary Burton, local piano teacher from the community; Joe Fobb, a voice major at the U. of I.; Michael Bates, a graduate student in piano; and Preston Jackson, a local guitar player studying at Southern Illinois University.

Forty more North End youngsters between the ages of 10 and 18 joined the North End Community Chorus, organized and run by Willie Summerville.

Summerville, a music teacher for Champaign schools and church choir director in the North End, rehearsed the youths at the Washington Elementary School, and arranged a performance for the choir at the Illini Union Building.

The North End hopes to continue the chorus on a year-round basis.

The music phase of the Douglass Center program also sent 20 North End youngsters to the Illinois Summer Youth Music Program at the U. of I. campus.

"This is the first program like this the kids have been able to do," said Ford. "Especially where they've been able to show off what they've done."

"I was very pleased with the program. It has opened many avenues and many doors to kids who would never have had the chance to do this kind of thing because of lack of money or opportunity."

Now at Douglass Center, Ford said, arts and crafts classes fr

children up to junior high have begun and will get under full swing next week. The classes, taught by Virginia Essex, art instructor at Franklin Junior High School in Champaign, are being held from 4 to 6 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. They, like their counterparts last summer, are free of charge and require no equipment.

OCT. 6 1968

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

New Douglass rec center will be opened Saturday

By Michael Murphy
Of The Courier

The Champaign park district expects to open its new Douglass Park recreation center this week.

Following months of stormy debate and a year of reconstruction work, the center in northeast Champaign will be reopened Saturday.

Robert Tonison, general manager of the park district, said his weekly report that an open

house has been set for 1 to 3 p.m. that day.

The new building replaces a 30-year-old cinder-block structure that was a community as well as a recreation center for black residents of northeast Champaign.

Community residents strongly opposed reconstruction plans for the center, saying the \$900,000 allocated would replace gymnasium space in the old building but would not allow

enough space for other neighborhood activities.

Demolition of the old building and English Bros. construction work on the new center were delayed for several weeks by the protest. The project was finally moved off dead center a year ago, when the park board voted an additional \$100,000 to the project.

The money was to be used to add a senior citizens wing on the building at 6th and

Grove Streets. It became available when bids on the park district's Bicentennial Center project came in well under estimates.

Both recreation centers were financed with funds from a successful 1972 bond referendum.

When inflation forced the park board to scale down its Douglass Center plans, a long-running feud was touched off between park board President

William Helms and Richard Davis, who was the board's only black member until he moved from Champaign earlier this year.

In addition, a group of area residents organized to demand a more complete recreation center. Its leader, activist Roy Williams, was jailed on one occasion, when he allegedly interfered with workman at the construction site.

Pickets also roamed the site

during demolition work.

A building permit for the 14,000-square-foot was issued by city officials Oct. 8, 1975.

Meanwhile, plans for the senior citizens' wing were amended to apply the extra \$100,000 toward remodeling the Douglass Annex, a nearby building that formerly housed a grocery store.

Plans for continued operation of a library branch in the building also created some controversy.

However, the Champaign Public Library board decided last November to move the branch, at least temporarily, into a donated building north of the park that previously served as the office of the Champaign Asphalt Co.

Dec 8, 1976

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

In their film, "And the Beat Goes On: the Spirit and the Legacy of the Douglass Center Drum Corps" (2006), authors Nick Green, Brian Mitchell, Jay Walker, as well as Coreyawn Donald, Kwan Cobbs and Mike Jones document the profound impact music had on creating a feeling of "community pride".

(<http://www.will.uiuc.edu/pr essroom/drumcorps.htm>)

Douglass Teams Won Honors AUG. 29 1960
Drummers Return Home

The national-winning Douglass Center Drum Corps and Girls Drill team will be welcomed home at noon Friday at Douglass Center.

A luncheon is planned in their honor at the center when the bus unloads there.

Everyone is invited, according to Mrs. Minnie Tillman, 69 Burch Village, who is arranging the potluck. She asks that persons planning to attend call her at 356-9688 to specify the food they will bring.

The Boys Drum Corps won first place as best drummers in the Elks Club National competition in New York City. The Girls Drill Team won first place as best-dressed.

Their appearance in New York City, climaxing appearances at which they have won honors throughout Illinois, was made possible by a \$3,300 fund drive in the community.

The 36-member teams won the honors Wednesday. They were to spend Thursday sightseeing in New York City, leaving for home at 6 p.m.

Funds Sought For Trip JUL 19 1968

Some \$3,000 is needed by the Douglass Community Center Drum Corps and the All-girls Drill Team to go to New York City to appear at the National Elks Convention Aug. 26-30.

The 22 girls and 16 boys that make up the two organizations are seeking funds through door-to-door solicitations, car washes, bake sales, talent shows all at the center and through a small concessions stand in Douglass Park.

Douglass Center leaders announced the drive Thursday. Persons wishing to make donations may send a check, payable to the Douglass Center Drum Corps to Douglass Community Center, 801 N. 6th St. in care of Bookcer T. Ford, director.

Members of the organizations range in age from 8 to 26. John Johnson is leader of the drum corps. Miss Barbara Boswell leads the drill team.

Both the drum corps and all girls drill team, organized nearly 16 years ago, have won first place awards on many occasions in state-wide and 3-state events, in Indiana, Wisconsin and Illinois.

The team won first place in Peoria as the Girls Drill Team at an Elks convention. The drum corps won first place in the Pals Day Parade in Chicago with other organizations from out-of-state competing. The drill team won second in the competition.

Aug 29, 1960

Jul 19, 1968

CAPTURING THE 'SPIRIT OF THE MUSIC'

Documentary recalls award-winning organization, drive for its return

By MELISSA MERLI
mmerli@news-gazette.com

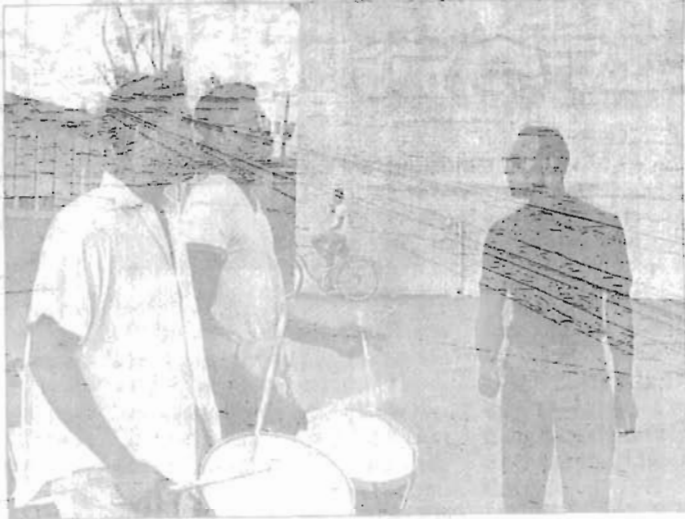
CHAMPAIGN — Like many other members of the black community in Champaign-Urbana, Will Patterson remembers being galvanized as a youth by the Douglass Center Drum Corps.

In the late 1970s, he hung around the team and became a "stick boy," retrieving members' drumsticks whenever they were dropped or flew out of energized hands. By the time he was a teenager, the Douglass Center Drum Corps — which had won a national contest in 1968 — had disbanded.

Now Patterson hopes that a new documentary by the Youth Media Workshop will drum up interest in restarting the corps. "And the Beat Goes On: The Spirit in the Legacy of the Douglass Center Drums Corps," will be shown at noon Saturday at Boardman's Art Theatre. The public is invited.

It was Patterson's idea to make the documentary. He and Kimberlie Kranich, outreach coordinator at WILL AM-FM-TV, are the executive producers of "And the Beat Goes On," the third project of the Youth Media Workshop. The two direct the workshop, which teaches media production techniques to economically diverse African-American students from Champaign-Urbana public, middle and high schools.

For the 25-minute documentary, the youths inter-



Bud Johnson, right, led the Douglass Center Drum Corps when it won a national drum corps contest in 1968. Johnson appears in "And the Beat Goes On: The Spirit of the Legacy of the Douglass Center Drum Corps."

Early American Museum/Doris Hopkins collection

If you go ...

What: Youth Media Workshop presents "And the Beat Goes On: The Spirit in the Legacy of the Douglass Center Drum Corps," with support from WILL-TV, Innovative Ed Consulting Inc. and funded in part by a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council.

When: Noon Saturday.

Where: Boardman's Art Theatre, 126 W. Church St., C.

Tickets: Free.

A question-and-answer session will follow, and people appearing in the documentary and the student producers, among them Brian Mitchell, Nick Green and Jay Walker, will attend.

viewed three former members of the Drum Corps, a former drill team member and a young man who many hope will rejuvenate the Drum Corps. The youths also helped put together and edit the documentary.

The all-male Douglass Center Drum Corps and all-female drill team started in

the early '50s. Over the years the team had various leaders, among them Milton "Butterball" Norwood, described as a real showman.

"He was a big, heavyset guy who could move like he weighed 10 to 15 pounds," recalls Bud Johnson, a former Drum Corps leader

himself.

Also appearing in the documentary besides Johnson are former Drum Corps leader Jesse Ratcliffe, former member Terry Townsend and former majorette Linda Turnbull. She remembers that their going to the 1968 competition in New York was "like going to Hollywood." She had never left Champaign before.

In New York, the drum corps competed against 346 other groups from throughout the United States. "Not only were we intimidated by them, but we were impressed by them," Johnson recalls. Townsend, who describes their win as unbelievable, recalls CBS News

Please see DRUM CORPS, D-6

DRUM CORPS

Continued from D-1

anchorman Walter CronkHITE talking about them on the evening news and a state-police escort from Indiana back to Champaign.

"It was like we had won the NCAA Final Four," he says.

The documentary ends with Lee Duncan, a charismatic young man who many hope will revive the Drum Corps. A former Chicago resident, Duncan recently graduated from Urbana High School. He had begun playing the drums when he was 5; he was a leader on the instrument at his Chicago middle school. In "And the Beat Goes On," Duncan says people have to support the Drum Corps and the children who want to be part of it.

"Support is everything," he says.

Patterson, now associate director of the African-American Studies and Research Program at the University of Illinois, would agree. "It's a dream to get it going again," Patterson said. He said Ratcliffe is perhaps the only consistent aspect of the Drum Corps.

The documentary shows him outside Douglass Center, pounding away and blowing a whistle in his mouth.

Around him youngsters drum,



The Douglass Center Drum Corps under the direction of Bud Johnson wore military-style uniforms as a result of his experience in the U.S. military.

Early American Museum/Doris Hoskins collection

too.

"The main thing is the drums are in horrible shape," Patterson said. "They have a lot of them, but, again, they're not all usable.

"The quads has a screw that pokes Lee in the gut, and they don't even have bass drumsticks. Some drums are too big for some of the kids who want to get involved. The equipment is outdated, but the spirit of the music is there so people will do it anyway."

As a scholar, Patterson, who has a doctoral degree from the UI in educational policy, said he is interested in Douglass Park and Douglass Center and the many activities that once existed there in addition to the Drum Corps.

He and Kranich plan to have the Youth Media Workshop make a more extensive documentary on those. Toward that goal, they are applying for a \$250,000 grant.



Jesse Ratcliffe, center with white hat, teaches drumming to youngsters at the Douglass Center in Champaign. Ratcliffe appears in the Youth Media Workshop documentary 'And the Beat Goes On.'

Mike Thomas/WILL-TV

DOUGLASS CENTER DRUM CORPS

Douglass Park

The annual Champaign-Urbana Days occurs the second Saturday of each August in this park (<http://www.prairienet.org/years/calendar.htm>). This celebration is earmarked as a homecoming event in which families reunite, eat, and engage in events such as the basketball tournament hosted by Sean Williams and the fashion show supervised and managed by long time community member Linda Turnbull. The most recent park celebration was highlighted by a shift in activities and actors.

Many weekend events planned for C-U Days

■ Food, shows, games, rides will be offered

By PAUL WOOD

News-Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN — Family ties and community bonds have been celebrated for nearly two decades at the Champaign-Urbana Days in Douglass Park.

Nicole Steward, the summer camp coordinator for the Champaign Park District, says the event has grown to attract more than 3,000 people each year.

The events, all free of charge, start today and run through Sunday at the Douglass Community Center, 512 E. Grove St., C.

Activities include a barbecue cook-off, youth games, a bounce house, senior luncheon and bingo, carnival rides and a basketball tournament. Also included are a car show, a talent show and a fashion show.

Vendors from around the area will offer their wares.

Tonight, there's a movie in the park, "Spy Kids," and people are welcome to bring blankets and chairs, Steward said.

This year's Herb Stevens Memorial Talent show from 5 to 9 p.m. is special, she said, because Mr. Stevens, a philanthropist from Paxton, recently died.

"For many years, he sponsored the event on Fridays," Steward said. "Anyone 18 and younger could showcase a talent, and each participant got \$40. This year is different, with scholarships and awards. He left instructions in his will."

Saturday is a baseball tournament from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and

a barbecue cook-off showcasing local purveyors of the specialty meats. Mayor Jerry Schweighart will be the judge of the cook-off, which starts at 2 p.m.

"The car and motorcycle show features antique vehicles, and gets more popular each year," Steward said.

Alpha Kappa Alpha will present school and community awards.

Sizzling Greg Bacon and The Generic DJ will provide music.

The final day will feature the continued tournaments and a gospel fest showcasing local choirs from 4 to 7 p.m., Steward said.

There will also be a Back-to-School Fair at Champaign-Urbana Days at Douglass Park that is happening from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. The Christie Clinic Van, staffed by Family Practitioner Volunteers from Christie Clinic and the Carle Foundation's Mobile Unit, staffed by volunteers from the Public Health Department, will be there at the Douglass Community Center providing free school health exams to uninsured children, free immunizations, and assisting uninsured families to sign up for the state KidCare and FamilyCare insurance programs.

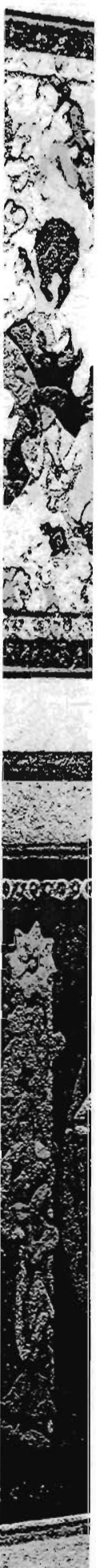
Also this weekend at Douglass Park and the farmers' market, the Anti-War, Anti-Racism Effort will have informational banners and leaflets marking the anniversary of the United States dropping weapons of mass destruction on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Aug. 6 and 9, 1945.

You can reach Paul Wood at (217) 351-5203 or via e-mail at pwood@news-gazette.com.

5th and Park Mural

Angela Rivers, Bennie Drake, Eugene Britt, and Daniel Mitchell created a respected community landmark from latex, oil, and lead based paints donated by community members. In cooperation with the City of Champaign, Angela Rivers initiated this project to provide area youth with an opportunity to create art and to provide hope to all who viewed the mural. Both Rivers and Drake selected the mural site because it was close to their homes and near community churches. After choosing the site, the wall was sandblasted and the artists proceeded to transfer initial sketches onto the wall. The sketches were then filled with paint.

Angela Rivers holds a position at the DuSable Museum in Chicago, Illinois. Eugene Britt and Bennie Drake still live in the Champaign Urbana area. Drake is still creating artwork using masonite, acrylics, rendering with pen and ink. He describes his current works as a “mind game”, illuminating the evolution and continual changing nature of life objects.



Douglass Park and Recreation Center



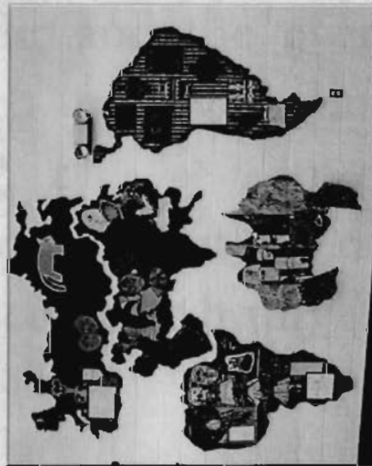
The Drake Family: Mr. Bennie Drake on right

Mural on 5th and Park





Booker T. Washington School



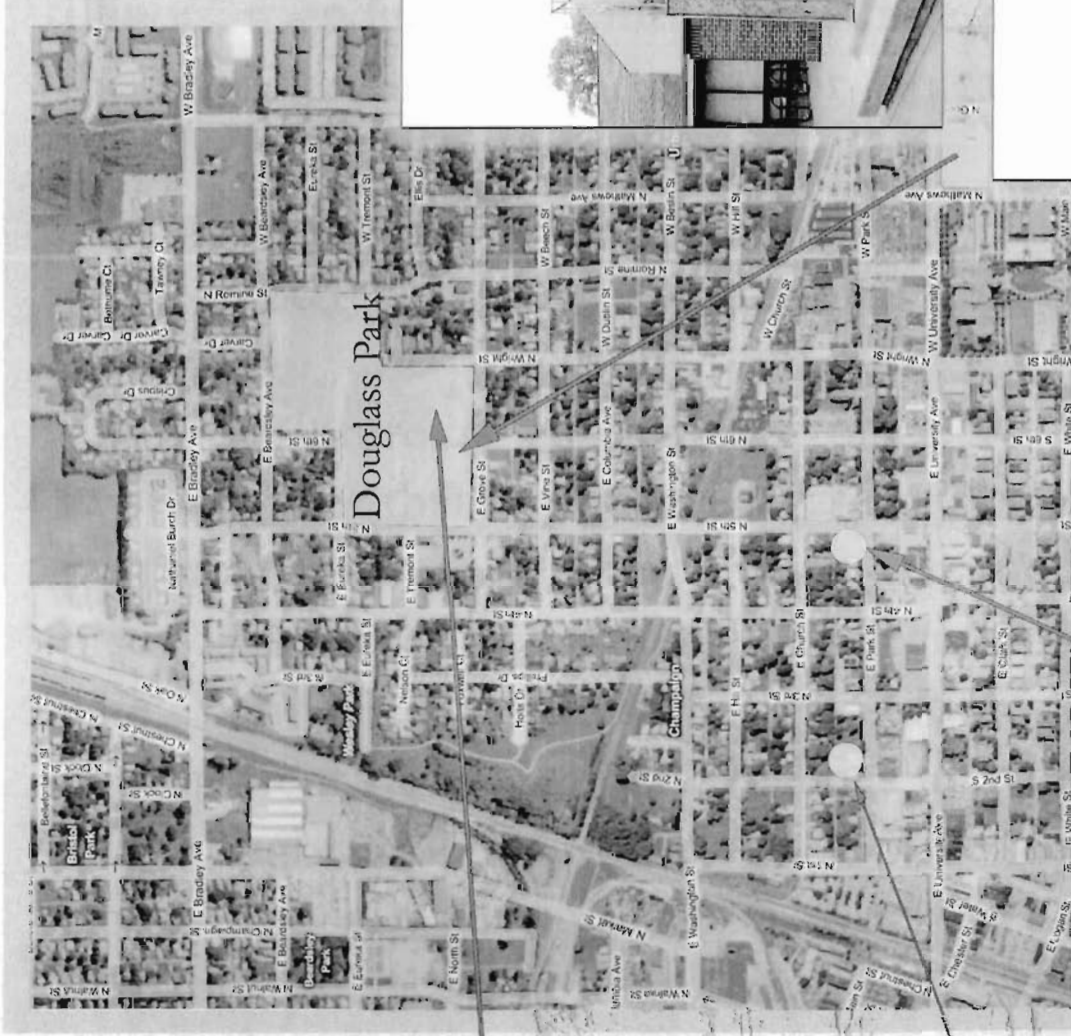
Daw Moyer's Boys and Girls Club



ART WALK

District 1, Champaign, Illinois

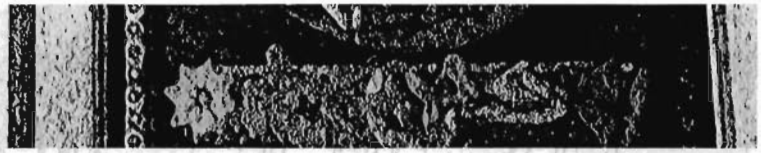
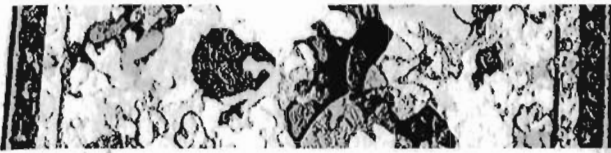
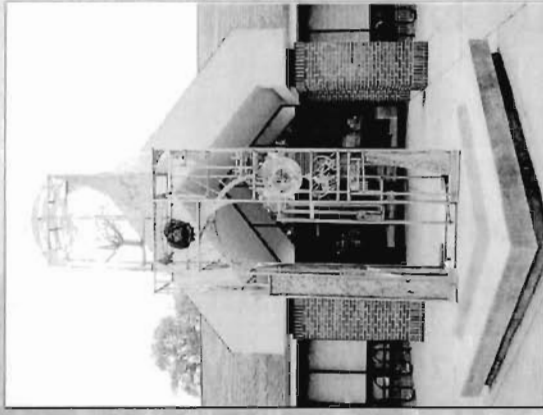
Art Walk



Mural on 5th and Park



Douglass Recreation Center



Douglass Park Sculpture: Fredrick Douglass: In Remembrance

Sculptor and musician Preston Jackson lives in Illinois, spending a majority of his time teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and in Peoria at the Checkered Raven Gallery.

The following is a portion of the artist's statement, taken directly from the Champaign Public Library website:

“This sculpture is an archway piece — it is a two-way door that symbolizes a gateway to both the past and the future. The door, which is central to the piece, is in a fixed position, neither open nor closed. The bar-like structures in the door suggest confinement of some sort. Dualities in symbolism and thought abound. At the very top we see storm clouds and a menacing-looking black tree whose branches pierce space like bony fingers searching for a hangman's rope. It also suggests the impending Civil War and the events at Harper's Ferry, events which occurred during Douglass' l i f e t i m e . ”

(http://champaign.org/about_us/douglass_branch_library/douglass_sculpture.html)

Douglass Park and Recreation Center



Mural: Booker T. Washington School

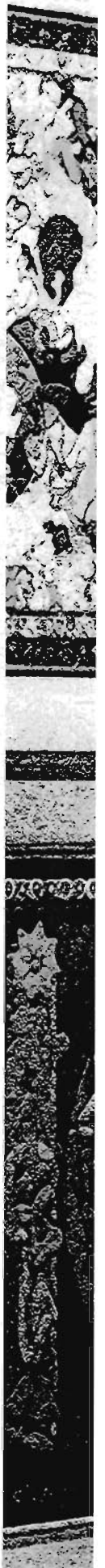
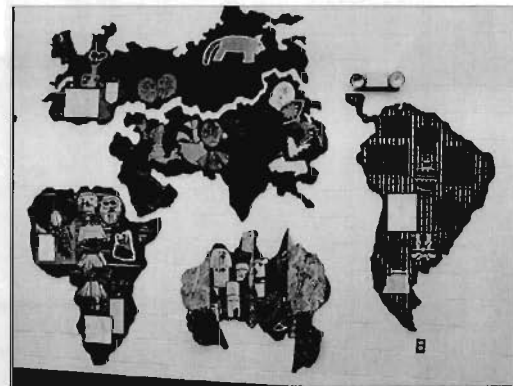
Shauna Carey, Art Teacher at Booker T. Washington, describes the project in the following way:

“The mural was painted with a group of eight 5th grade students as an enrichment project in 2002. The kids decided on the images and events that made our school unique. I drew the mural with their input and they painted it. We worked once a week for about a semester on it. A parent suggested the quote from Booker T. Washington and it fit with our school philosophy so it seemed the right quote to use.”

Douglass Park and Recreation Center

Staff at the Don Moyer's Boys and Girls Club have worked with students over the years to produce four different artistic projects highlighted in this tour. Artists are area youth from Champaign, Urbana, and Rantoul Illinois. Three works are exhibited at the club. Another is exhibited at the Douglass Center.

Upon entering the Don Moyer's the ceiling or "Tile art" is visible. Members paint tiles that reflect a favorite pet, animal, activity, or even their names. Each year, more tiles are painted, filling the corridor of the main hallway club members frequent.



Douglass Park and Recreation Center

“Continents” is another project found directly to the right before entering the gymnasium. Art therapist Morris Mosley and club members produced this wall art in 2006 according to staff members. Continents are made from wood and decorated with various multi-colored cloths, painted versions of masks, a pencil drawing of a Trojan horse, animals, fish, and pottery.

Current staff at the Boys and Girls club are not certain as to who the artists of the large mural (found in the gymnasium) are. “Gymnasium mural” appears to be crafted from bright colored acrylic paints. Individuals are shown playing basketball, shooting pool, working out mathematical equations, among other activities.



Works Cited

All newspaper articles are courtesy of the Urbana Free Library (Urbana, Illinois) Archive Department.

1. "Douglass Center doors locked", Douglass Park photo file, June 8, 1975. See page 1.
2. "Douglass Center", Douglass Recreation Center photo file, December 18, 1977, by Jerry Lower for the CU Courier, p.3. See page 1.
3. "Months to build, years to serve Northeast Champaign---Douglass Center comes down in minutes this morning", Douglass Recreation Center photo file, September 25, 1977, by Phil Greer for the CU Courier. See page 8.

This booklet was compiled by SriPallavi Nadimpalli and Sandra E. Weissinger in fulfillment of course requirements for Urban and Regional Planning 478 (Community Development Workshop). December 7, 2007.