

**Early Black Pioneers in Champaign
County: A Transcription of a Speech
by Doris Wylie Hoskins**

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INTRODUCTION

Today is April 24, 2000, and this is the joint meeting of the Historical Society and the Champaign County Genealogical Society. Our speaker this evening is Doris Hoskins, speaking on Early Black Pioneers in Champaign County.

Doris Hoskins: Thank you very much. What a wonderful introduction. It is indeed a pleasure to be asked to be your speaker this evening. What I will tell you about is the latest project that I've been working with since 1993 and of course that will bring us up-to-date since 1996, also. I work with a committee called the African-American History in Champaign County. This committee was started in 1993 by Cheryl Kennedy, who came to us from the Early American Museum. She had also talked with a Mr. Toalson, of the Champaign Park District, and we came together at the Douglass Center to start our project of learning about African-American history in Champaign County. Apparently, this had never been done before and we have worked diligently since 1993 to gather and try to preserve the history of the early families who came to Champaign County.

I usually bring something along to read because I can't keep all this in my computer. I call this my computer. (Pointing to head.) (Laughter.) So I will start again by saying in February 1993, I was invited to join a group organized and headed by Cheryl Kennedy, who's director of the Early American Museum, joined by members of the Champaign Park District to work together on accumulating and preserving the history of African-Americans who emigrated to and settled in Champaign County. Coming here from mostly southern states, Tennessee, one of them because of the flooding and prior to the T.V.A., Mississippi, Georgia and so forth. Some came because of jobs with the railroad, some were both agricultural and animal farmers raising cows, hogs and so forth as well as

vegetables. Some were skilled barbers, cooks, butchers, chauffeurs, etc., but they came. This was before and after the Civil War.

These emigrants were able to find housing and jobs to support themselves and families, and contrary to belief today, they were not confined to what is now called the "North End." Rather, most families lived south of Washington Street in Champaign, to Green, Charles and Ells Street in southwest Champaign. In Urbana, mostly they lived downtown, close to hotels and barbershops, on California, Nevada, Oregon streets and many others. Granted, the numbers were small, early on but they were good, hard-working, family-oriented people who lived harmoniously among the whites of various origins. As I said before, jobs were mostly menial. The women worked as cooks or maids, while the men were butlers, housemen or chauffeurs. Nevertheless, they were able to purchase homes. They raised their families and some of the families, the children went on to college. Those who owned businesses, such as barbershops, beauty shops, were able to rent spaces in downtown Urbana and Champaign and were successful business people. Many of these are listed in the – some of the records in the Archives here at the library, mainly the city directories from as early as the city directories began up to today.

As you know, religion is and has always been an integral part of African-American lives. Churches were organized. At first, worship and prayer services were held in homes and eventually with the help of members of the established white churches, both Baptist and Methodist, the African-American community was able to acquire land and build their own churches. I believe the Salem

Baptist Church was the first to build, followed by Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Both churches still stand. The Salem Baptist Church is on the corner of 5th and Park Street and it also has an historical marker in front of it. Unfortunately, the Bethel A.M.E. Church, the first church, was torn down, and they have a new modern building there, near the corner of 4th and Park Street. But both churches are alive and well. Later the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in Champaign, the Mount Olive Baptist Church and others that have followed came into being.

In March 1993, our committee assembled a very large exhibit at the Douglass Recreation Center honoring Frederick A. Douglass. This exhibit received help from the Early American Museum, the quilters from the Douglass Senior Annex. The quilters from the Douglass Senior Annex also put on a display at the Krannert Art Museum at about the same time, and maybe some of you went there to see that. They were beautiful quilts, all handmade. Many children from Unit 4 and District 116 attended these exhibits. And that was our first one. We also had members of the Early American Museum's, I might call it staff, but anyway, they came and brought equipment to show the children how you churn butter, and also how you carried water from a stream to your home to do laundry. And then the quilters set up the quilting frames so they could teach the children about quilting. And it was a very successful exhibit in 1993. Very well attended also.

Through the years, some publishers were able to serve the African-American Community with weekly or monthly newspapers. The longest running

publication was the *Illinois Times*. And on the presentation board there, there is a picture of the woman who was the publisher, along with her husband, was the publisher of the *Illinois Times*. She was born in Champaign many years ago. As far as I know, none of them are published today but in the Archives here at the Library, they do have some copies of the *Illinois Times* newspaper.

Initially, our schools were neighborhood schools, and were predominately white. You see, I was born here on October 18, I won't say when. (Laughter). But anyway, I enrolled in the neighborhood school, which was the J.W. Hays School. I don't know if any of you here who might remember the J.W. Hays School or the Lincoln School or the old Thornburn School, and eventually, the Urbana Senior High School. I lived in the neighborhood where J.W. Hays School was located. I entered the school there in 19, 19 (laughter) in the fourth grade. And since we did not have a sixth grade at the J.W. Hays School, I had sixth grade at Lincoln. And then from Lincoln, I went to the Thornburn School, and from Thornburn School to Urbana High School from where I graduated in 1928.

But as I said before, the population was predominately white. But in our neighborhood schools it was the same thing until I would say, after World War II and then things began to change so that we no longer have neighborhood schools. I wish we did have, but we don't have. And many of you, if you have children or grandchildren in the school system today, you know that story. I had a very happy school experience. I had wonderful teachers from the fourth grade through Thornburn, through high school. They were teachers that encouraged me and I made good grades, of course, and was eligible to go to college if I so

chose to, because in those days, we didn't have to take the "tests," college entrance tests, like they do today. If you were academically sound, you would be accepted at the University of Illinois. However, that's another story. I had taken secretarial training in high school, and unfortunately, in those days, they did not hire African-American secretaries in any of the businesses. So I moved to Chicago and I was employed by a law firm that I worked for for two years. And then I met my first husband, Mr. Wylie, fell in love, and got married. End of story!

But I started a family and I lived in that area off and on between 1928, 1939 and moved back to Urbana. I would visit back and forth because my parents were still alive and I'd bring the children down to know their grandparents. But, in 1939, we decided to move back to Urbana. I loved the community. The university is here. We had very good schools here and I've been here permanently since 1939. And as she said, I had six children when we moved back, and then I had four more, so I ended up with 10 children, five boys and five girls. Enough about me.

As I was talking about our schools here, initially, our schools were neighborhood schools and were predominately white. As African-Americans migrated to the community, schools naturally became more integrated and in the Champaign School System in 1934, the first teacher, "colored" teacher as she was called, was hired to teach at the Lawhead School. But she was hired to teach only the colored pupils. Eventually, more African-American teachers were hired after the desegregation laws, but they were employed to teach all pupils, and not just the African-Americans. So today, we have quite a number of

teachers and administrators in the, in both school systems, in both Urbana and Champaign.

With our committee, we have published, since 1995, newsletters. We publish them twice a year and I brought along with me tonight, a whole set of all the newsletters that we have published, and in these newsletters, we started as early as we could, as early as 1850 to tell you about families that emigrated to this area. And I would appreciate it if you would stop and take a look at those. And also the presentation board which is there. That's just part of our, of some of my own compilation of pictures and stories about early people who came to Champaign-Urbana. And I would be happy to tell you about that later on if you chose to look at it. And I also brought along a copy of our latest newsletter, which zoomed in on the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, which is no longer in existence. At one point in time, African-American students, nursing students, were not admitted to the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing until 1952. So when I was asked to do this story on the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, I worked with Sister Esther, at the hospital, because she was the head instructor at the school of nursing at the time that the girls were admitted. And, from 1952 from when the school closed, there were six young ladies from different parts of the state of Illinois, who graduated as R.N.s from the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing. There is one who's living in the community now that I know of that still has a connection. Excuse me, with it used to be Mercy, but is now Provena Covenant Hospital. Her name is Miriam Scantleberry. She is presently employed at McKinley Hospital on campus.

And in future letters, we will more, we will cover many more aspects of contributions of the African-Americans in Champaign County, those in government, academia and industry and other professional fields. So you see, it is of great importance that this history be documented and preserved and perhaps at some date will be all-inclusive in our history books so that all children may be made aware of the good and not so much emphasis on the bad which you read in the newspapers all the time.

That's about it for now. There's many other things I could talk about when we get into history I could just talk on and on and on, but I know we have limited time. (Laughter.) But I've said enough about myself. But I would like to say if any of you have any recollections of your high school days when you knew or had friends who were African-Americans that either were classmates or in any of your class pictures, I would appreciate you letting me know this and if you would trust me, I would take them and make copies of them and be happy to include that in our history. Because you see as I said many years ago, our neighborhoods were a mixture of people but that is no longer and we lived together as neighbors. We took care of each other's children. Our children played together. I fed many little mouths when mine were coming along in addition to my own ten and their parents shared their meals too with some of my children. And every once in a while I meet some people who lived in the "hood" as they call it, neighborhood, many years ago and they remember because we often talk about how things were then and how things have changed, you know, through the years, and that's

history. History is made every day. So feel free to talk to me about anything and everything, because I would certainly appreciate your input.

Audience member: Is the Smith Family outside the county?

Hoskins: Yes, they're in, well, oh what county – Raymond Township – that's still Champaign County, but it's Raymond Township. Yes, they're still there. They came there in 1876 and bought hundreds of acres. I know it was more than 400 acres and farmed the land for many years. There are not too many family members living. I very often go out and visit with Harriet Smith, who married Charles Smith, one of the brothers, third generation. But ...

Audience member: Some history professor from the university wrote a book about that family.

Hoskins: I'm sure, yes.

Audience member: I have it and read it. Very interesting.

Hoskins: Yes, I have many pictures. Harriet has been very kind in sharing pictures of the family.

Audience member: I believe the youngest daughter of John is still living up in Elgin, Illinois. Rosetta.

Hoskins: Rosetta. Yes, I hear from her all the time and I'm constantly sending her new stuff. You knew Rosetta? Yes, then, Harriet and Charles had a daughter and a son. The son has an engineering job in Memphis, Tennessee. But their daughter, Brenda, works as a nurse counselor for the Prairie Center. She's been with them for a number of years. But she lives in Urbana I believe. It's either Urbana or Champaign. Oh, there were many, many families that lived in Sidney, Homer, Ogden, Farmer City to the west, Monticello to the west. And in my research and with the help of Jean Gordon from the Library who is constantly sending me input about different things whether it's a social event or whatever, it's, it's just so interesting. As I said, I could just talk a lot about it.

But getting back to the businesses, at one point in time, yes, they had barbershops downtown Urbana. The women did work in the hotels and so did the men. The same was true in downtown Champaign on Main Street, when Main Street was *Main Street*, east of the Illinois Central tracks. There were businesses that were located downtown Champaign. Of course, through the years, the picture changed. So. Yes.

Dannel McCollum: Doris, what was the name of the first black teacher that you said that came in 1934?

Hoskins: Mae Hawkins, in 1934. She graduated from Illinois State, which was a two-year teachers college at that time and was hired to teach at Lawhead School. Of course Lawhead School is no longer in existence.

McCollum: Didn't, ah. I met a lady maybe 15 years ago who said she was the first black teacher in the Twin Cities. It could have been her. Is she still alive?

Hoskins: No, I don't think so. Fifteen years ago. I'm not sure. I don't think so.

McCollum: Pretty elderly.

Hoskins: Do you remember her name?

McCollum: I could might be able to dig it up, but I can't. It just doesn't jump out at me.

Hoskins: Would you please, and give me a call? I'd appreciate that.

McCollum: I corresponded with her several times. I'll check to see what I can find.

Hoskins: Mae Hawkins was the very first. I had a really tough time trying to track down that person. I called after I learned that she had graduated from Illinois

State. I called over there and after about talking to six people, I finally got the information that I needed. But she was the first. And when you stop and think, 1934, that's a long time ago. Any other questions? I forgot to mention the first teacher in the Urbana School System, and that was Taylor Thomas. And many of you probably don't remember him. He was hired in 1956. Urbana was a "little slow" but anyway, he was hired in 1956 and taught, how long did he teach, Jean? He retired, it was in the '80s, wasn't it?

Jean Burkholder: Yes, I just forget. I know he became assistant principal and then assistant superintendent.

Hoskins: Right. Assistant superintendent, yes. Taylor had attended Champaign schools and he didn't go to the University of Illinois. Rather he went to Jackson State in Tennessee and graduated. And came back and worked for the federal government and then finally ended up teaching in Danville, and then he came to the Urbana School system. How many of you went, well, of course, nobody's as old as I am, but. (Laughter.)

Audience member: Don't be too sure.

Hoskins: How many of you went to Urbana High School? You did, oh, that's a nice, yeah, great school. Oh yea, you did too. All of my children did. Let's see, I can't think of anything else, unless I talk about the people involved in the

presentation board over here. There was a family by the name of Anderson. Angeline Anderson, who lived in this house here which was on the corner of Vine and Elm. That's where the Firestone Station is now. Her, Mr. Anderson passed away, and she married a fellow by the name of McDermott who was a soldier in the Civil War. And after the war was over, he came to this area and they were married and lived there for quite a while. McDermott is mentioned in Bob Behrens' book about the black soldiers in the Civil War that settled in this area. And there were about seventeen of them. And most of them are buried in the cemetery in Homer because they settled in this area.

This was the woman that I spoke about who published the *Illinois Times* newspaper. (Pointing to picture). This is her brother, Les Jamerson, who was very prominent as a football player at Champaign High School, also played football at the University of Illinois in 1927. And this is Allen Rivers. I don't know if you remember him. He was a policeman with the city of Champaign for many years until he retired. Of course, all of these people are deceased. I don't know how many of you used to take your shoes downtown Champaign to Brownie's Shoe Repair to get your shoes repaired. Well, this is Willie Carraway. He worked for Brownie's Shoe Store, Brownie's Shoe Repair Shop for many years. And Mrs. Grant Brown, whose husband owned the shoe repair shop, just passed away not too long ago. And then on campus, there was this Mr. Homer Chavis, who owned a cleaning business, the Royal Cleaners, on Green Street between 6th and 5th Streets. He owned the building and the business and he was in business for many years. But as I said all of these people are no longer with us.

Ruth Hines lived on Park Street. Well she lived on University Avenue, right across from the old Illinois Field, when she was a child. She was born here in 1898, in 1893, in Champaign, a member of the family called Woodruff. But she married a gentleman by the name of Hines and Mr. Hines' family lived on Charles Street in southwest Champaign. She had quite a number of children. But you see in those days, there was not housing on campus for the students, the African-American students that came to the University of Illinois. So they had to live in the homes of people who would open their doors and accept them as students, you know, to live there even furnish room and board for them. And Mrs. Hines was one of the first to do that and the students would always come back on homecoming you know and stop by and see Mrs. Hines. Mr. Vakey, you probably remember the Hines Family.

And of course, this is Taylor Thomas who was the first teacher in the Urbana school system. This is Mrs. Mattie Tinsley. Mrs. Tinsley lived to be pretty close to a 100 years old.

Jean Burkholder: She was a 100.

Hoskins: She was a 100? And at age 77 she went back to Parkland College and earned an associates degree so she could work as a teachers aide in the Champaign school system. And she worked there as long as she could and of course she passed away also. Nettie Cook. Shortly after the Civil War, her grandmother came here and they lived on Stoughton Street. And at that time, it

was mostly cornfields and all of that so I don't know that they ever did any small farming but they did sell part of their property to the University of Illinois. But her father, Mr. Lewis, graduated from Champaign High School in 1892. And there was another woman by the name of Lila Bromwell who graduated from Champaign High School in 1891. So, history. But Nettie passed away a couple of years ago, or maybe it's been longer than two years ago. But she graduated from the Champaign High School and worked at Chanute Field during the war years.

Oh, this I thought was a very interesting piece of information. This gentleman was born in 1848 and he came to Champaign when he was 8 years old according to this. And at the time that the club, it was called the Royalties, I believe, or was it, yes, the Royalties Club was giving him a Christmas basket, Christmas or Thanksgiving basket. And at that time he was over 100 years old. Right. It goes on to say his first job when he was 10 years old was herding cows for 25 cents a week. He recalls shooting ducks where the 1st National Bank building stands and later working in a livery stable on the site of the Illinois Power Company. (Laughs). That's history. And I've been trying to find out more about Mr. Perkins, but I haven't been able to yet. But that's just part of my collection of people.

Oh, Carrie Nelson, I can't forget her. Carrie Nelson, she was born in Chuckey, Tennessee, but they moved from Tennessee, to Homer, Illinois, because of the T.V.A., the flooding. And they lived in Homer for a while but as her brothers grew old enough to go to the university, they moved in to

Champaign, and that's where they live. Well, Harriet's no longer here but she does have extended family that is still living in Champaign. And of course, Mr. Nelson, Cecil Nelson was very, how should I say it? Very, uhm, patriotic. (Laughs). The girls tell stories about whenever the *Star Spangled Banner* was played, even on the radio, they had to stand and salute. (Laughter). But he joined the Illinois National Guard and fought in World War I in France and at that time of course the Armed Forces were segregated. But he was awarded the Croix de Guerre, if I'm pronouncing it correctly. It was the highest medal that you could get from the, from France and then other medals that he won. I guess that's about it. But I would like for you to pick up copies of our latest newsletters and take a look at these that are here and if you would like to be... Yes?

Audience member: Where did Taylor Thomas come from?

Hoskins: He was born in Champaign.

Audience member: Was he?

Hoskins: And I don't know where his parents, let me see if I have anything on here that tells me where. It doesn't say where his family came from. But they lived on Hickory Street in Champaign near between Washington and what's the next street? Columbia. That's where they lived in downtown, in Champaign. His father Woody Thomas was a famous chef. That was his dad's name. I don't

think his mother worked outside of the home, because they had just the one child, just Taylor.

Audience member: My children were in school when he was teaching but I didn't pay too much attention, you know.

Hoskins: Sure. That's the story of all of us. (Laughter).

Audience member: Does your expertise go to Vermillion County?

Hoskins: Not yet. I have friends.

Audience member: There was a black family in Armstrong and I don't remember too much about them, but the father used to come up, oh silo filling and tilling and that sort of thing and he always was a good worker and was well-liked. And then the man, I don't remember his name.

Hoskins: Could you sort of dig it out of your memory? I would love to have that information.

Audience member: I'll ask around. But everybody's getting older and they don't remember. I never went to school with a colored child so I don't know what happened to him.

Hoskins: Sure, yes, well that's history.

Audience member: Whether he had children or not . . .

Hoskins: You had a question?

Audience member: I just wanted to, a couple of things. One, there is an audiotape of Taylor Thomas in the Archives as well as several others. Melinda Roundtree and Patrick and I did those when I was working at the Archives.

Hoskins: Yes. Right. That was a program that was sponsored by the Archives here at the Library. That was in the '70s, wasn't it? Right. And then another group started doing it again in the '80s. So I've noticed in the Archives you're doing a beautiful job of transcribing those and putting them in book form so that they're available for people to come and look at and read. It's just beautiful.

McCollum: Did anybody ever interview Al Rivers?

Hoskins: I'm not sure. I'll have to check, because some of those were stored in the Douglass Branch Library.

Audience member: We took copies of the ones that were done.

Hoskins: At Douglass?

Audience member: Patrick and all tried to. I think they even took a set to Parkland College.

Hoskins: Oh you did?

Audience member: I know we did because I [illegible].

Hoskins: You know, I have that in my information someplace, but they're quite a few of the Hite Brothers. Ernie Hite did one and some of them had two and three tapes to their history. Yes.

Audience member: I had one other thing. When I was well in the mid-40s, my aunt and uncle did the food service at the University YMCA and at that time there were very few places on campus where they could have meetings and food for large groups of people. And I was finishing high school, starting college at that time, and I stayed with them quite often. And I worked, you know, tables, waitress, but, it was a time that I remember very well and as you've said the students, you know, lived on campus at that time. And when their families would come those who lived away from here, when their families would come for the games or for Mother's Day, some of them, the waiters, I think mostly fella waiters there, my aunt and uncle would have them stay. They had a couple of extra rooms in their home. They lived on South 4th Street and they would stay there and so I met, you know, a lot of very interesting, nice people.

Hoskins: Well, you know many of the male students worked as waiters in the fraternity houses, meal jobs, because well they had to do something to earn some money. And the women, the young women, that were here sometimes they would work and live in faculty, with faculty families, and work there maybe baby-sit or whatever to earn extra money. Or have a place to stay while they were here. I remember one in particular, her name was Margaret Shannon. She moved here from Mechanicsburg, Illinois, and she was, I can't think of the name of the family that she was with, but anyway, he was a professor at the university. She enrolled in the College of Law and Margaret finished the College of Law with honors, left here and went to Chicago and worked as a lawyer. So there's many success stories you know from here.

Many of you might remember Albert Lee? Does that ring a bell? Mr. Lee was on campus, oh, late 1800s. He started in as a messenger, that's what they called them then, you know, they would take the mail from I guess from maybe department to department and also to the mail station there on campus. But around 19, maybe 1911, I think that was the date he gave, he was employed in the president's office. Anyway. He started in as a clerk and then worked up to chief clerk and in those days, being a chief clerk in any department on campus, was a top position for anyone. He used to travel with the president quite often to his board of trustees meetings and one article that I read, he was also a ghostwriter for some of the speeches that the president would make. I'm sorry I can't remember the president's name. I didn't have it in my notes. But anyway, he counseled a lot of the students that were here and guided them to places

where they could stay and even provided jobs for them. And then he also encouraged them to come to his church, which was the Bethel A.M.E. Church, and they used to have a gathering once a month that they called Lyceum. And I used to go, I was in high school then and it was a very uplifting program that they would have because each time somebody would have to make a speech about whatever topic that he would choose to speak on and they used to have an essay contest. I remember one year competing with college kids I did get an honorable mention. (Laughs). Which I thought was great.

Then, the next employee that I remember very well was a gentleman by the name of Raymond Scott. He started working at the university as a messenger, and through the years, he moved up to the supervisor of mails and he, well, he became ill. And then of course he passed away in the mid-'50s. But he still has extended family here in Champaign, the Bridgewaters. And there's the Banks Family, the Pope Family that came here early on who live on the west side of Champaign and those children went to Col, ah, Gregory School and Columbia School. Carrie. Bernice Pope, you were talking about a teacher. It wasn't Bernice Pope you were talking about, was it? That said she was the first teacher? It wasn't Bernice Pope?

McCollum: No.

Hoskins: She's still around. She's retired but she does tutoring now for a lot of the school children. But the Pope Family lived on west Maple Street, the part of

Champaign that Mr. Markstahler is working on to renovate it. It's in that area, but I know more about Urbana than I do about Champaign because I lived in Urbana. But I had friends that lived in Champaign. Time for me to shut up? (Laughter).

Audience member: No, you've got another hour to go. Do a little dance. Sing a little song

Audience member: Was Harry Anderson you mentioned of the Anderson Family?

Hoskins: Harry Anderson?

Audience member: Yes, he was a football player at Urbana High and he graduated [illegible].

Hoskins: Right, quite an athlete, I understand, his daughter is doing a search.

Audience member: Okay. He used to come in the Archives before he became ill.

Hoskins: Yes. He was also a policeman, and then I think his last job was a supervisor in the Illini Union. Yes, I knew the Anderson Family. The Andersons and the Hites were of the same family. Actually, their mother was a Hite and the Hite brothers, if you've listened to those tapes, had a, they used to call it,

emporium on campus. And as I understand from the location, it had to be in College Hall and they were there in the early 1919s before 1920. There were several brothers and they operated that place there. They did pressing of clothes, shoe shining, just lots of things in that category. But they made a very good living doing that. Yes.

Audience member: You mentioned the two earliest churches, Salem Baptist and also African Methodist Episcopal. About what time were they established?

Hoskins: 1863 or 5 or 66 they were pretty close together in establishing their, you know, themselves. But I do know, that I talked with a friend of mine and it is recorded that it was the Second Baptist Church. Well it started out as the Second Baptist Church and they used to have meetings in a house on Clark Street because my mother was a Baptist and she recalled that she used to go to some of the services there. My mother lived to be 98 but she passed away some 10 odd years ago. And that's something else I overlooked. I should have been doing tapes with her, because she remembered so much about Champaign. They came here in 1890 from Carlyle, Illinois, and she and her great grandmother and her mother. But you know we don't think about those things when we're younger and then we live to kind of regret it. She remembered when they used to go downtown to what they called the confectioneries and they had the, you remember the little round tables with the wrought iron legs and the

chairs with the curly wrought iron legs on them? And were served. It was so different then. Yes.

Audience member: Well our church, is former Congregational Church and there was some kind of a Sunday school program up around Park Street, 5th, 6th, 4th, somewhere around there and it became a Community Church or something. I didn't know whether that was, and I can't remember the name of the Sunday school.

Hoskins: Most of them have what they call daily Vacation Bible School and I think that program is still going on at, I'm not so sure about Salem. But I know at one point in time, they did have because there was one member of their church that started a Montessori school, there in the basement of Salem Baptist Church. Helen Johnson is her name. There was a family that lived here early on by the name of Jordan and they had a business. It was located at 36 Main Street in Champaign. It was a barbershop and also, one of the Jordan Brothers was a chiropodist and he had his office in the same building. That's what...

Audience member: Is that one of the Jordans that's still here?

Hoskins: No, different Jordans. Okay. I had another thought, but it sort of escaped me. A lot of the people that lived here too that came here early on

worked for the railroad, either the Illinois Central or the, what we used to call it the Big 4 in Urbana.

McCollum: IB&W

Hoskins: Pardon?

McCollum: The IB&W. I'd better walk. (Laughter).

Hoskins: But you know, you're into history, I was so amazed, I rode down North Oak Street and you know the round house used to be out there because Mr. Wylie worked as a machinist for the Illinois Central Railroad during the war years and there's nothing there anymore. I understand that they tore it down and buried it. Is that right?

McCollum: Well, I was out there maybe 25 years ago when they were beginning to take it out but that other turntable was there. But the turntable didn't move. It originally was there behind the Kuhn Building.

Hoskins: Oh, really?

McCollum: That was the original location.

Hoskins: Oh, years ago.

McCollum: Years ago and then they moved it, but you could go out there and a person could turn that turntable. It was so amazing.

Hoskins: Yup, he used to. We used to go out there and we'd take the kids just to see it because that's when they had the old steam engines you know. That was part of his job was to paint those steam engines and I have some numerals, my address 1208 came off of one of those engines. (Laughter). Oh yes, it's been very interesting to have lived all of these what's a decade, 10 years? All these eight decades and notice the changes that have come about. Yes, Mr. Bigelow.

Bigelow: We had a black podiatrist in Champaign for many, many years. I forgot the name but I used to see him regularly.

Hoskins: Male or Female? Dr. Earl Simpson.

Bigelow: Right.

Hoskins: Yes, He was killed. A car hit him you know and he was killed. Yes, we used to, that was one thing that I, it had sort of left me. We had early on back in 1916, a doctor here by the name of Dr. Rowan and he lived either in Sidney or Homer before he moved to Champaign and I remember Dr. Rowan very well,

because he delivered my two younger sisters. He had his office on Walnut Street. And then he was followed by a Dr. Ellis, who had his pre-med here at the U. of I. and went to the University of Illinois Med School and set up a practice here. He died in 1947. But we haven't had any permanent M.D.s.

[End Side A]

Doris Hoskins Talk

SIDE B

Hoskins: [Remarks joined in progress] . . . that have with Arm & Company that took him to Brazil and in 1919 he traveled those miles to come back to the United States to pick up his bride and someone from the Homer Historical Society sent me that newspaper article out of the newspaper telling that story. But he did graduate in Civil Engineering from the University of Illinois.

McCollum: He was listed as the first black graduate.

Hoskins: Yes, the graduate, but there were many who attended school here, both male and female early on. Most of them appear in *Who's Who in Colored America* or *Who's Who in Education*.

McCollum: I think he's mentioned in the Baker and Miller history of Champaign County.

Hoskins: Right. Any other questions?

Audience member: [Illegible].

Hoskins: I don't know if it's a gift or an affliction.

Audience member: Do you have any information on the Jones Family who were so prominent?

Hoskins: I have, oh yes, thank you for mentioning that. They lived on West Vine Street in Champaign. They were called the "West-side People." (Laughter). We lived on this other side of the Illinois Central. But anyway, it was, the wife's name was Daisy Jones and the husband was, was Irving Jones, and they had several children both boys and girls. Two of the girls I know went to the University of Illinois. The older daughter named Josephine became a teacher. The one I think that most people remember most was Anthony. Anthony was one of the younger children. Anthony joined the Air Force and became quite a boxer, so that he performed during his service time and then after he got out of the Air Force, he went professional. I wasn't able to follow-up what happened, you know, after he became a professional boxer. Anyway, I have pictures of him and his mother and his father, but Daisy Jones was very active in politics in Champaign, early on. She would go to all the political meetings. She would encourage people to (laughs) to get out, be sure and get out to vote. She also had relatives that lived in Urbana. One was Anna Watson and Hattie Wells. Do you remember them? Okay. And they too were involved in politics early on and of course most people were Republicans then, so (laughter) that's the way it went. Hattie Wells also was very active in missionary work, with her church, too. She was a Baptist.

But none of them were ever elected officials. I think in Urbana, the very first person who was a committeeman was a gentleman by the name of Fritz

Pettiford, in the city of Urbana. But of course since then, we have had many that have been involved in politics in recent years. Paul Hursey, Lonnie Clark, and Jim Hayes is our current, my current alderperson. And there are several who are on the county board. And as I said in my speech, here there are many people that are in high-level positions and this just didn't happen many years ago, but times change. History changes.

Audience member: A Eunice Jones was in my art class in Champaign High School.

Hoskins: Okay.

Audience member: And I thought it was so interesting when she became Roman Catholic.

Hoskins: That she what?

Audience member: I thought it was interesting that she became a Roman Catholic later on.

Hoskins: Yes.

Audience member: I attended her funeral at Holy Cross.

Hoskins: Okay. There was another person that lived... Did you remember the Calameses? Okay. Ruth Calamese, she was buried from Holy Cross because I played for her funeral. I play organ also. (Laughter).

Audience member: Now Irving Jones, a cripple, was in my fourth-grade class along with Taylor Thomas and Margaret Ray.

Hoskins: Yes, Margaret.

Audience member: Vivian Green.

Hoskins: Oh yes. Right.

Audience member: Two coloreds.

Hoskins: Right. They're all gone. And they were my peers. Vivian was my age. Well, you and I are the same.

Audience member: [Illegible].

Hoskins: Yea, Vivian, her dad also had an emporium downtown Champaign, on the corner of Church and Neil many years ago. Allen Green was his name. That was Vivian's dad.

Audience member: Vivian Green was a fine artist.

Hoskins: Yes.

Audience member: We had a poster contest in high school and she won, I, I didn't get even into third place.

Hoskins: I see. Lots of memories. Okay, I think I'm going to run out of steam. (Laughter). But I've had a very happy life here in Urbana. I've been in the same house for 60 years, raised my 10 children there and it's still standing. (Laughter). And I still have some of my original furniture, not much, but a piece or two here, but I have a lovely family, my children are just wonderful to their mom, and they were to their dad, too, as long as he was alive.

Audience member: Are they around town?

Hoskins: My one daughter here, she lives here. This is my son-in-law from New York.

Audience member: She doesn't make up 10.

Hoskins: Pardon.

Audience member: She doesn't make up 10.

Hoskins: No, they're scattered all over. I have a son in California who is, he's a skilled tech. He makes molds for medical equipment, and he worked for Baxter Company for many, many years. And then they closed that part of their activity in Orange, California, so now he's working for another firm, it's high-precision stuff. Plus, he's a certified watchmaker, so he does that, you know, kind of on the side, looking toward his day of retirement, so he can use that as his, you know, retirement income. My oldest son, I lost him in 1987. He was a skilled auto tech. The boys called him the master, he was just that good. The next son is also, he trained in hydraulics in the Navy and then he got two degrees from Parkland College. He's the oldest one living now. My daughters all trained in secretarial work. Some of them went to college. They used that as...

Audience member: They needed it.

Hoskins: That's right. Well she did. She went to Parkland, but she worked for the retirement system for more than 20 years as secretary to Edward Gibala, who was the director of the retirement system. The next daughter is just retired. Well, the oldest daughter just retired January 1. She worked for a law firm in New York for more than 40 years. One of the older law firms in New York. That's Yvonne, his wife.

Thompson: Yes.

Hoskins: And the son I was talking about who's the oldest now is Jesse. Jesse Wylie. He worked for Caterpillar for a number of years, until he had a stroke two years ago, but he's still active. And then Edward, who is the precision instrument person, lives in California. Estella lives in Denver. She worked for N.E.A. for quite a number of years in their national office in Washington, D.C., but they wanted to open an office in Denver, so they offered her the job to be the administrator of the office in Denver. And then, that's Estella, then, of course, Ruth Anne, I've already told you the story. Ah, Sharon, the next youngest, lives in Denver. And she's a systems analyst for a big insurance company there now. Michael lives in Evanston. He was a skilled tech. He worked on Jaguar cars, Mercedes, the sophisticated foreign cars. But he too was injured and now at age 50 plus, he decided to go back to school so he's attending Northeastern University and is quite skilled in making jewelry. He's made some beautiful pieces. As a matter of fact, he was commissioned to make a piece for Alice Walker, the lady who wrote *The Color Purple*. And he sent all of his brothers and sisters pictures of him pinning it on her. (Laughter). He was so proud of himself and of course we are proud of him, too.

And then my youngest, Roger, passed away in '96. He just keeled over with a heart attack, but he had worked for the Bank of America in California. Stress, stress, stress. So, and I'm still here.

Audience member: Do you travel?

Hoskins: Pardon?

Audience member: Travel? Travel quite a bit?

Hoskins: Me? Yes, I have. I married Dr. Hoskins in '79. Mr. Wylie passed away in '76, and we did quite a bit of traveling. We went on cruises. We traveled across country. It was a very good life for 10 years. So now I'm involved in this. I'm very dedicated to it and I hope to hang in there for as long as I can and finally get it published, hopefully and deposit it (laughter) maybe here, in the Archives. So, enough about me. (Laughter.)

Secretary of the Historical Society: So, surely from that audience participation shows that you that we enjoyed your talk.

Hoskins: Please, please feel free to come and look at the newsletters and there's copies, plenty copies of our latest one here, [illegible] copy of that and, if you would like to be on our mailing list just stop and let me know and you would get them from now on.

[End Side B].