

p.m. Program begins at 7 p.m. A freewill offering will be taken to pay the Archives Big Band members. **July 26** - Jarman Baby Reunion 3 - to mark the final months of the Jarman Baby Project. Program begins at 5 p.m. Potluck begins at 5:30 p.m.

**August 2** - Summer Tuscola Toy Show, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Tuscola Community Building.

**August 30** - Tea dance featuring Gene Trimble's Orchestra, 6-9 p.m. Fee: \$6 per person. No alcohol. No smoking.

### SPECIAL FEATURE

#### "THE HISTORY OF TUSCOLA'S BLACK POPULATION"

**ONE HUNDRED BLACK RESIDENTS OF TUSCOLA?** Yes, that many and more! The 1990 federal census reports that, among Douglas County's population of 19,464, only 16 people were black. Compare this with the black population of neighboring Champaign County the same year—16,559 Afro-Americans. Douglas County has never had a large black population, but the City of Tuscola has had a fair number of blacks living in the community at various time periods. The biggest concentration at one time was 1890-1940. Through some research, and with the assistance of some of our *Cabin Chatter* readers, we located the names of over 100 former black residents of Tuscola. We found a number of pictures, too, and decided to share the information with our readers, many of whom will find some of the names and faces familiar. Some of the names showed up on early census records of Tuscola, while others showed up in the 1895 City Direc-

tory of Tuscola. Members Earl Albritton, John Chapman, Milas Thomas, Doris Hoskins, O.B. Smith, and Pat Pearson gave us some hints, too. One of Pearle Ervin Wardall's personal memoirs tells about three black residents, and the occasional 1897/1898 news item from the *Tuscola Journal* newspaper revealed a name or two. We also sought the advice of Pete Bridgewater, Dr. Carla Hayden, and James Davis. Bridgewater and Davis are former residents of Tuscola, and many area folks will remember Carla's grandfather—the popular city mail carrier, Bruce Hayden. The resources of the Urbana Free Library Archives, including its friendly and knowledgeable staff, were also of great help to us in researching this story. Following are the names we have found to date of Tuscola's black residents:

**Anderson, Arthur** - Judged the most graceful walker at the 1898 "Colored Folks Cake Walk" in Tuscola. His partner was Cozy Chavous. Arthur later resided on DeWitt Avenue in Mattoon. **Anderson, James** - name appears in 1895 City Directory of Tuscola. He was a barber. His residence was 600 S. Main. Harmon Gregg was the owner of his house. His barber-shop was located at 11 North Main Street. **Archey** (sometimes recorded as Archer), **Franklin** - Name appears in 1895 City Directory of Tuscola. He was a barber. His residence was 14 W. Central Avenue. His business address was the same. According to the 1880 census, he was 33 years old. He was born in South Carolina. He moved from Tuscola to Hoopeston. **Archey, John** - son of Franklin and Maggie Archey. Born in Illinois.

In the 1880 census, he was 4 months old. **Archie, Maggie** - wife of Franklin. Born in Illinois. She was 19 years old in the 1880 census.

**Box, Jim** - brother-in-law of Lemuel Riley, husband of Nancy Box, and father of Vernettie Box. The Box family was originally from Corinth, Mississippi. He was a handyman while living in Tuscola, but he is now deceased. The State Death Index lists a James Box who died December 12, 1929 in Carbondale, Jackson County. It is not certain if the Jim Box in Jackson County and the one who lived in Tuscola are the same person. (We're checking!)

**Box, Nancy** - sister to Lem Riley and wife of Jim Box, she was domestic help in Tuscola. After leaving this community, she and her husband moved to Springfield. She was the mother of Vernettie Box.

**Box, Vernettie** - daughter of Jim and Nancy Box. She lived in Tuscola with her parents before moving away. She was married and had two sons. Mose was the name of one of the sons. Vernettie is now deceased. **Bridgewater, Cecil "Pete"** - A graduate of Tuscola High in the class of 1929, Cecil [pictured] was born in a house in Tuscola. His parents were Preston and Effie Chavous Bridgewater.

Readers should note that both Cecil and Harold Bridgewater were known as "Pete" by their Tuscola classmates. "*Cecil was older than me,*" said Harold. "*They called him 'Pete', and called me 'Repeat'.*" Just so our readers do not get confused, know that when we mention "Pete" in this article, we are referring to Harold Bridgewater. Cecil lives in Champaign and is retired from the



University of Illinois as an upholsterer. Cecil married Erma Scott and they have three children, Cecil Jr., Ronnie, and Cassandra Bridgewater. Cecil Jr. was married to DeeDee Garrett and they have one children. Cecil and DeeDee are divorced, but she kept the Bridgewater name. DeeDee is a talented singer of ballads and jazz tunes. Cecil Jr. is a successful trumpet player in New York. He has not only traveled all over the world playing trumpet, he is also a music director who makes special arrangements for musicians. Ronnie is a teacher of music at the University of Illinois. When he switched over to the Muslim faith, he changed his last name. He is married and lives in Central Illinois.

**Bridgewater, Effie** - mother of Harold and Cecil Bridgewater, she is pictured Pg 35. Born November 30, 1877 at El Paso, she was the daughter of Thomas and Mary De Groat Chavous. Mrs. Bridgewater worked for James L. and Edith Bush as a domestic. She was working there at the same time Smiley



Burnette worked at radio station WDZ in Tuscola. Smiley called her "mom" and Pete Bridgewater said that Smiley was especially keen on Effie's chocolate pie! When Pete was in the service in California, he called Smiley to say hello. A delighted Smiley sent his chauffeur to bring Pete and his Army buddy straight to his home for an afternoon visit. Pete laughed when he recalled that he was "the talk of the camp" because a Hollywood movie star was his old pal. Effie Bridgewater died December 5, 1975 in Champaign and is buried in Tuscola Cemetery. **Bridgewater, Geneva** - daughter of Preston and Effie Chavous Bridgewater, she died in infancy and is buried in Tuscola Cemetery.

**Bridgewater, Harold "Pete"** - graduate of Tuscola High School in the class of 1935. [Pete's picture is shown here.] He was born at his parents' home in Tuscola on March 20, 1916. After graduating from high school, he married Ethel Cannon of Danville, and they now reside in Champaign. They are

parents of Corlett Murray, Harold Bridgewater Jr., and Monique Bridgewater. Corlett lives in South Bend. She is divorced and has one child, Mercedes. Harold Jr. is a professional artist who lives in Seattle, Washington. Monique lives at home following a three year tour with Ebony Fashion Fair as one of their models. She is currently studying art at Parkland. Pete Bridgewater came to the Douglas County Museum on Wednesday, March 26, to do a taped interview about the black residents of Tuscola. In the interview (with friends John Chapman and Milas Thomas [pictured], and classmate Martha Brown, as well as Edith Chapman and Marguerite Thomas sitting in to listen), Pete told us about his interesting life.

At the age of nine years, he decided to take an Omaha, Nebraska-based correspondence course in taxidermy. He received instructions in the mail on how to stuff various animals, then sent his finished product in to the company to be graded. Pete notes that he is probably the first Boy Scout in Tuscola to get a merit badge in taxidermy. His scout leader was Ray Wulliman. Growing



up in Tuscola, his closest friends included the Kennedy brothers, Byron Dust, Charlie Abercrombie, Stanley Romine, and Rex Robertson. Pete has fond memories of 1937-38 when the Star Store building in Tuscola was vacant and Saturday night dances there were all the rage. *"Kids from Villa Grove caught the train and came to the dance, then rode back home later that night,"* he recalled. The live band featured Harry Sherman Marsh on alto sax, Lewis "Luke" Belles, Forrest "Frosty" Ellis, and Willy Hixon on the mandolin. Pete was the featured tap dancer at the dances, having learned how to tap dance from someone who lived in the Meister house on South Parke Street in Tuscola. *"Lessons cost 50 cents, which was a lot of money at the time,"* said Pete. *"Somehow mom and I scraped the money together and paid for the classes. Then the instructor told me that for every new student I brought him, I could have a free lesson. I started tap dancing down at the school and got a lot of kids interested in taking lessons. I didn't have to pay for too many lessons after that."*

After high school, Pete joined the Mac Willis band, playing the bass fiddle at Wheat's Steak House, Phren's, the Eight O'Clock Club, and other area nightclubs. *"At the Eight O'Clock,"* Pete said, *"they called me the 'Triple Threat Man' because I could sing, dance, and play the bass fiddle."* When he was drafted into military service during the war (serving 1942-45), he took basics at Ft. Riley and then went to Camp Lockett, California with the 10th Cavalry. He served with a combat engineering team in Italy, France, Ger-

many, and Belgium. After being discharged, he formed his own group, "the Pete Bridgewater Quintette" and they played all over the area, including regular performances at the Pioneer Hotel in Tolono. His group stayed together for one year, when he decided to return to sunny California. There, he ran the elevator at the Hall of Justice during the daytime, and at night played in bands.

Pete returned to Illinois when his aunt, Cozzetta Chavous, was seriously ill, arriving home just days before Cozzetta died. From then on, Pete stayed in East Central Illinois. He formed bands with various numbers of band members. The year 1953 saw the beginning of his remarkable radio career. He was an announcer on WKID and WITY radio stations, and on WDWS for twenty years. Although he "officially" retired in 1995, he still announces a Sunday show from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. on the all-black station, WBCP (1580 on your AM dial). **Bridgewater, Preston** - The father of Harold and Cecil Bridgewater, he played coronet with Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus Band. The family lived across the street from the old North Ward school about 214 E. Ensey. Preston and his wife, Effie, were married in 1906 in Danville. He was a native of Kansas who came to live in Illinois in 1900. He grew up in the home of Benjamin Lafferty. Preston was already a professional musician when he met Effie. He died February 19, 1921 in Kankakee at the age of 38 years. **Bridgewater, Theodore** - the son of Preston and Effie Chavous Bridgewater, he died in infancy and is buried in

Tuscola Cemetery.

**Buchanan, Billy Buck** - One of the most fondly remembered of Tuscola's black residents, Billy Buck was born in Southeast Missouri in 1848. His father was Afro-American and his mother was a Cherokee Indian. Billy came to Coles County at the close of the Civil War with Capt. Granderson Smiley. In 1868 he became a hired hand for Col. Lige McCarty, a large land owner. For three years he was employed by James McCoughtry. For 16 more years he worked for Dr. John A. Field. For five years he worked for the Henry Caraway family. Billy Buck lived in a rundown shack [pictured here] at the corner of South Main and Pinzon Street. He was familiar to local residents as a "shuffling figure with broom in hand sweeping the Main Street pavement". Around 1935 or 1936, his shack was hit by a windstorm that blew off one room and a chimney. According to a 1936 newspaper article, this did not deter Billy from remaining in his beloved shack. Because the chimney was gone, *"he built a fire on the dirt floor of the shack and went outside. When the room was*



*heated, he opened the door and let the smoke out. Then he went inside to enjoy what heat remained."* The rest of the house began to lean perilously, but Billy refused to move out. A wire was run around the shack and fastened to a big tree nearby to keep the building stable. Local citizens became very concerned that a human being should live in such squalid quarters, especially since it was located on one of Tuscola's main thoroughfares. With Christmas on the way, locals decided to collect money to build a new house for Billy Buck. According to the 1936 newspaper article, *"About \$85 was raised, carpenters, brickmasons and others donated their services. Mrs. Walter Jones and Mrs. A.W. Bragg agreed to furnish the new cabin. A good bed, curtains, a rug, washstand and other comforts were provided. Dr. J.F. Gillespie gave a cook stove."* The citizens of town built him a new cabin as a Christmas present the same year. Billy Buck died February of 1938. Among the first to find him dead in his home were Earl Albritton, William Mitchell, and Doc Dixon. Billy's mother's name was Myra Buchanan. Neither the year his shack was hit by a windstorm, nor the year he died has been confirmed. After his death, Billy Buck's cabin was moved next to the railroad tracks near the west exit of the north part of Ervin Park. According to John Chapman, the wooden floor was removed, and city worker, Pete Helm, used the building as a shed for mowers and other park maintenance supplies.

**Calimese, Eunice** - adopted daughter of Sherman and Maybelle Calimese. She was born May 2, 1913. **Calimese, Grace Grigsby** -

The wife of James Calimese, she is buried in Tuscola Cemetery. The inscription on her stone says 1882-1935. Her parents were among the early black families that came to Douglas County at the close of the Civil War. She was employed at a fraternity house at the University of Illinois, but lived practically her whole life in Tuscola. Her children were Ruth Calimese McMurray, Vergiealena Grigsby Cook, and Cozzetta Grigsby Earnest of Champaign. **Ruth Naomi Calimese** was born July 5, 1914 in Tuscola, daughter of James and Grace Manuel Grigsby Calimese. She married widower Wilbern McMurray, a graduate of SIU-Carbondale, on July 23, 1966. Ruth was a very accomplished woman, holding membership in Holy Cross Church, Champaign, the Champaign Education Association, National Education Association, and Retired Teachers Association. She was also a member and secretary of the National Association of Negro Musicians. She retired after more than 30 years in the Champaign Unit 4 School district, where she served as teacher and then assistant principal and counselor at Jefferson Junior High School. Her husband was also a teacher in the Champaign school system, and served as principal of Willard School from 1947 until 1964. He then became principal of Marquette School in Champaign until his retirement in June of 1968. Ruth McMurray died February 23, 1984 in Urbana at the age of 69. She is buried in Tuscola Cemetery. **Calimese, Henry** - adopted son of Sherman and Maybelle Calimese. He was born October 28, 1912. **Calimese, Isabelle** - born February 6, 1852 and died November

7, 1915. Mrs. Calimese was the widow of Peter Calimese (died June 10, 1899 at the age of 54 years), who was a resident of Camargo. Isabelle was living in Tuscola at the time of her death, and owned Lot 4 in Block 54 of the original town of Tuscola (the museum is located on Lot 2 and 3 of the same block). Isabelle and Peter were parents of children Eva Waldon, Robert Calimese, James Calimese, Maggie Allen, and Sherman Calimese. When she died, her estate consisted of the lot in Block 54, plus one long kitchen table, four kitchen chairs, one rocking chair, a wash stand, one bureau dresser, four stand tables, a safe, a cot bed, a flour chest, and one lamp. Williams and Hanna was the undertaking firm that was in charge of her burial. They charged a fee of \$84.00, including 50 cents to express her body and casket to Camargo for burial next to her husband.

**Climese, James Edward** - Jim worked at the Douglas County Garage on North Main Street where he washed and waxed cars and handled the gas pump. John Chapman recalls that he was a slow, easy-going man who always asked his customers if they wanted "geese" (gas). He was born November 14, 1882 in Wolf County, Kentucky and came to Douglas County at an early age. He later moved to Champaign. He died October 18, 1946 at the age of 63 and is buried in Tuscola Cemetery. According to his obituary, Ruth Calimese was his daughter and Cozzetta Grigsby Earnest and Vergiealena Grigsby Cook were his stepdaughters. When he died, he also was survived by a sister, Maggie Williams of Peoria, and brothers Sherman Calimese of

Mattoon and Robert Calimese of Terre Haute, Indiana. **Calimese, Maybelle** - wife of Sherman Calimese and mother of Eunice and Henry Calimese. **Calimese, Ruth** - daughter of James and Grace Calimese (see Grigsby). **Calimese, Robert** - brother of Sherman and James Calimese, he was married to **Dessie Derricksen Calimese**. Robert and Dessie were parents of daughters, **Mabel Calimese Jackson Bell** of Forrest City, Arkansas, **Helen Calimese Avery** of Terre Haute, Indiana, and a son, **Robert Calimese**, who later moved to California. Mabel Calimese was born September 24, 1907 in Tuscola. She was a 1925 graduate of Tuscola High School. She first married Percy Baugh, but when he died she married Cornelius Jackson. Jackson died in 1949 and Mabel married Frank Bell in 1957. He died in 1971. Mabel and Cornelius were parents of a son, Robert Jackson of Forrest City and daughter Cornelia Jackson Lewis of Washington, D.C. Mabel also had ten grandchildren, six great grandchildren, a brother, Robert, and sister, Helen. Mabel Bell died February 26, 1995 in Forrest City and is buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery. She was preceded in death by a son and daughter. Mabel was a member of Bethel AME Church in Champaign and formerly operated Bell's Catering Service.

**Calimese, Sherman** - son of Peter and Isabelle Calimese and husband of Maybelle Calimese. Father of Eunice and Henry Calimese. Sherman and Maybelle were living in Tuscola in 1926.

**Chavous, Amanda** - Servant in the home of Robert and Louise Foster. Mr. Foster was a druggist in Tuscola, according to the 1880

census. Amanda was born in Illinois. In 1880 she was 23 years old. There is an Amanda J. Chavous listed in the Illinois State Death Index with the death date and place of April 22, 1937 in White County. It is uncertain at this printing whether the two are the same women. **Chavous, Belle** - second wife of Solomon Chavous, Belle Wilson was the daughter of Asbury and Hannah Brinkley Wilson. Solomon and Belle were married on April 26, 1904 with Mathew and Francis Anderson witnessing the ceremony. The couple lived at the end of West Pinzon Street near the drainage ditch. Belle died August 22, 1930 in Douglas County. **Chavous, Cozzetta** - daughter of Thomas and Mary DeGroat Chavous, she was born March 15, 1875 in Illinois. She died April 12, 1951 and is buried in Tuscola Cemetery. She was domestic help in Tuscola, cooking and keeping the house for the Ervin family. For 20 years, she



was a maid in the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority house at the University of Illinois. When she died, she was survived by her sister, Effie Bridgewater. **Chavous, Effie** - see Preston Bridgewater. **Chavous, Mary** - wife of Thomas Chavous, she was born April of 1843. She was of Native American descent. She and Thomas lived in El Paso, Illinois before coming to Atwood in a horse and buggy. From Atwood the family came to Tuscola. **Chavous, Mahlon** - a pressman for the S.A. Richmond Patent Medicine Company (located where Jarman Center is now). His residence in 1895 was 27 West Wilson Street. Mahlon was Harold and Cecil Bridgewater's uncle. **Chavous, Solomon "Sol"** - His name was often spelled "Chavours" in newspaper articles and official documents. He was born in Sangamon County, son of Thomas Chavous. He lived



in Urbana and Tuscola, but died October 26, 1933 in Kankakee at the age of 80 years. He was a

native of Illinois, having lived in the state all of his life. He was married twice, but had no children by either marriage. Although he had no formal education, he could read and write. His half sister was Effie Bridgewater, so he was an uncle of Cecil and Harold Bridgewater. **Chavous, Thomas** - Born February of 1828, his occupation according to the 1900 Douglas County census was engineer. **Cockelreas, C.L.** - at the time the 1900 census was taken, he was a boarder in the Chavous home. He was born February of 1870.

**Davis, Charles** - Son of James and Reba Davis, he attended school in Tuscola until the 5th or 6th grade, when the family moved away. Charlie died in 1978. His wife, Blondine, is also deceased. They were the parents of one daughter, Denise "Mat" Davis Russell, who lives in Indiana. **Davis, James** - Father of Laxey Mae Davis. He lived in Tuscola from 1935 until 1945 when he worked on the section crew for the Illinois Central railroad. He also worked for Smith's Lumber in Tuscola. He was drafted during World War II and served with the Quartermaster Corps on Okinawa. After the war ended, he stayed in Gary, Indiana, where his wife had moved during the war. Reba died and Jim married Gertrude Joy in 1992. The Davis family now lives at 2033 West 19th Avenue in Gary, Indiana. **Davis, Laxey Mae** - Reared by James and Reba Davis after her birth mother, Essie Belle Wallace, died around 1932-33, Laxey Mae lived at the southeast corner of Ensey and Carico Streets while in Tuscola. Her mother, Essie Belle, was the sister of Reba Davis. Laxey Mae married Carl Berry and they live



in Gary, Indiana. They are the parents of five girls and two boys. **Davis, Reba** - First wife of James Davis. She and Jim met in Alabama and moved to Tuscola to live near Reba's brother, Lemuel Riley. She worked for the VanVoorhis family while living in Tuscola. Charlie Davis was her son. She also raised her niece, Laxey Mae Wallace Davis. Reba died in 1990.

**Dixon, Mrs. Doc** - She had a store in a building in the backyard of their home on the south side of town. According to museum member Earl Albritton of Tipp City, Ohio, Mrs. Dixon ran more of a convenience store than a grocery store. She sold soft drinks, cigarettes, candy, and a few staples. **Dixon, Doc** - He was, according to Earl Albritton, a handyman for C. Ed Cox. Cox had a hardware store the first door west of the Tuscola Kandy Kitchen. Dixon took care of the lawn work at the Cox residence. **Easter, Kathryn** - Born in 1898, she lived at the corner of Ficklin and Court Street in Tuscola and hired out as domestic help for doctors and other prominent citizens. Among the people that we know she worked for are Pearl Bailey and Letha Williams. Letha was a 7th grade schoolteacher at South Ward in 1948-49, and hired Kathryn as a cleaning lady. *"I remember that she always wore white gloves and a hat,"* said Letha. *"She was very refined and loved pretty things. She seemed to be well-traveled and told me many stories. She thought the grocer, Bruce Williams, was wonderful because he was so good to her. I don't think she had hardly anything, so she was always appreciative of everything anyone*

*gave her."* Kathryn loved red, so her friend and other employer, Pearl Bailey, made arrangements for her to be buried in a red velvet dress. When she died in 1958, Kathryn was buried in Tuscola Cemetery.

**Fant, Olla** - Adopted daughter of Stephen and Sarah Page, she was born in Kentucky and was 12 years old in 1880. **Grigsby, Cozzetta** - She was born February 17, 1902 in Illinois, a daughter of Jerry and Grace Manuel Grigsby. Grace Manuel Grigsby later became Mrs. James Calimese. A 1922 graduate of Tuscola High, Cozzetta married Robert "Bob" Henry Earnest of Champaign on August 21, 1928 in Indianapolis. He was born June 27, 1889 and died September 11, 1972. He was a janitor at a U of I fraternity house for many years. Cozzetta Grigsby Earnest died on December 1, 1982 at the age of 80. The couple is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Urbana. Cozzetta's sisters included a half sister, Ruth Calimese (see Calimese, Ruth), and sister, **Vergiealena Grigsby**.

Vergiealena Grigsby was born July 19, 1908 in Tuscola, the daughter of Jerry and Grace Manuel Grigsby. She was reared by her mother and stepfather, Grace Manuel Grigsby Calimese and James Calimese. She was a 1923 graduate of Tuscola High School. When she died in St. Elizabeth Hospital, Chicago, on July 23, 1991, she was 83 years old. At that time, her only survivor was a cousin, Karl Manuel, of Chicago. She is buried in Tuscola Cemetery. Vergiealena married James G. Cook and they had a son, Jimmy Jr., who died when he was about 20 years old. James Sr. is also deceased. Vergiealena was a cook at the University of Illi-

nois. She was a member of Holy Cross Catholic Church, Champaign. **Harrison, Miss Harriet Jane** - She was listed in the 1895 Tuscola City Directory as a laundress who resided at the northwest corner of East Ficklin and South Center. She owned the home. She was 51 years old in 1880.

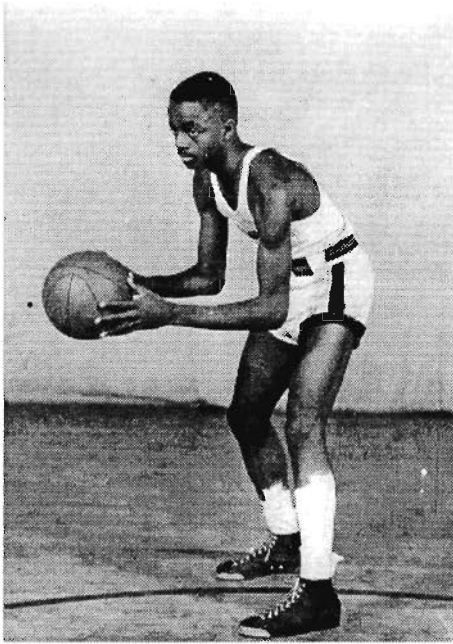
**Hayden, Bruce Kenard** - This black resident touched many lives in Tuscola as a city mail carrier.



He was born August 14, 1889 in Fulton, Kentucky, the son of Henry and Mariah Hayden. He attended elementary school in Fulton and secondary school in DuQuoin, where he received his high school diploma. He married Myrtle Theodora Holmes in 1918 [the couple is pictured here in a 1950s photograph] and in the same year he entered the military service. He attained the rank of master sergeant and was stationed in France. He moved to Tuscola in the 1910s, and later became a mail carrier out of the local post office. He retired after 34 years of service in 1944. He and his family then moved to Springfield, where he became an employee of the Illinois State Department of Finance and Labor. He retired in 1965 after 20 years at that job. While living in

Tuscola, his family attended the Salem Baptist Church in Champaign. Bruce Hayden was active in the church throughout his life, serving as Sunday School Superintendent for many years. After the family moved to Springfield, he was a deacon at Zion Baptist Church as well as Sunday School Superintendent. He also sang in the senior choir. He was a member of the Mayor's Commission for Senior Citizens, the Coroner's Jury, and various other civic organizations. His children were Bruce Hayden Jr. and Ruth Hayden Morgan. His grandchildren are Carla Hayden, Deborah Morgan, and Bruce K. Hayden III. Bruce Hayden Sr. died March of 1977 and is buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield. Milas Thomas, who worked for the post office for many years, referred to Bruce Hayden Sr. as "one of the best Tuscola ever had, always on the job, dedicated, conscientious, went the extra mile, well-liked, and educated." The family lived in the 100 block of West Overton Street. Bruce's first wife died young (see Hayden, May). May and Bruce were parents of a daughter, Ruth. Ruth was raised by Myrtle. Bruce Jr. was Bruce and Myrtle's son.

**Hayden, Bruce Kenard Jr.** - He was born on July 22, 1928, son of Bruce K. and Myrtle Holmes Hayden. Known as "Brucie" to Tuscola folks, he graduated from Springfield High School and received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in music from James Milliken University in Decatur. Like his father, Bruce Jr. [pictured here in a 1943-44 photograph taken in Tuscola] is fondly remembered by local residents. A distinguished violinist (first taught by his



father) and teacher, he began his teaching career as Director of the String Department at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida. His musical career extended throughout the recording and performance medium across the country, playing with such groups as the Soulful Strings and the Schubert Theater Orchestra. Bruce was a veteran of the Korean War, serving from 1952 until 1954. He was first married to Colleen Dowling, a graduate of Milliken University who was originally from Champaign, in June of 1951. They had one daughter, Carla Diane, before divorcing. Dr. Carla Hayden now lives in Baltimore, Maryland and Colleen Hayden resides in Chicago. Carla is the executive director of the Baltimore Public Library System. Bruce Jr. later remarried, and he and his second wife, Patricia, had a son, Bruce Hayden III. On June 2, 1977, Bruce Hayden Junior died of cancer at Billings Hospital in Chicago. He was 48 years old at the time, and was professor and

director of music at Malcolm X College. He is buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery. Bruce Hayden III died in 1992 at the young age of 23 years. Patricia Hayden lives in Springfield.

**Hayden, Ruth Norris** - She was the daughter of Bruce Sr. and Myrtle Holmes Hayden. Ruth [pic-



tured here] was a 1933 graduate of Tuscola High School. She married John Morgan and they resided in St. Louis until both died. To this union was born one child, Deborah Ann Morgan. Deborah is a chemist and currently resides in California. **Hayden, Mariah** - Bruce Hayden Sr.'s mother, she was born in 1860. When she died in 1915, she was buried in Tuscola Cemetery. Her grave is just south of the Unknown Soldier's memorial plot. **Hayden, May Gordon** - first wife of Bruce Hayden Sr. Born May 11, 1887, she died at her home in Tuscola on October 14, 1917. (The State Death Index lists her death date as October 10, 1917, but her tombstone in Tuscola Cemetery says she died on the 14th.) Dr. W.E. Rice attended to Mrs. Hayden while she was at her death bed. When

she died, she left to mourn her passing, husband Bruce, as well as an infant daughter, Ruth. J.L. Warren furniture and undertaking service charged her family \$167.00 for funeral preparations, including \$100 for the casket. **Hayden, Myrtle Theodora Holmes** - Wife of Bruce Hayden Sr., she was born August 8, 1902 in DuQuoin, the oldest of five children born to John and Stella Lott Holmes. She married Bruce K. Hayden Sr. on February 16, 1918 and moved to Tuscola. She was an active church member at Salem Baptist Church in Champaign. When the family moved to Springfield, they became active members of the Zion Baptist Church. She was also active in civic and cultural affairs in Springfield through the James Weldon Johnson Study Guild, Urban League Guild, YWCA, and NAACP. She was employed by the State of Illinois for 21 years until her retirement in 1966. She loved music. Myrtle Hayden also loved her garden and flowers. She died November 2, 1991, leaving one living brother, Tubal and Irene Holmes. Her other brothers were Julian, John, and Selwyn Holmes. Myrtle Hayden is buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield. Her husband and two children preceded her in death. Myrtle's brother is now deceased, but her nephew, Tubal Holmes, lives at 439 West Doubet Ct. in Peoria. She also has other nephews and nieces who reside in various parts of Illinois.

**Hollis, Doc** - Information about him unknown, except he was a barber. **Hunt, Thomas** - His name appears in the 1895 Tuscola City Directory as a laborer whose address was 23 West Pinzon Street.

He owned his own home. **Hunt, Logan** - a laborer listed in the 1895 Tuscola City Directory at the same address as Thomas Hunt. **Hunt, Lafe** and **Hunt, Joe** - sons of **Lode Hunt**. Lode lived on Pinzon Street where he had a large garden. He had a two-wheel cart from which he sold his garden vegetables. He chanted "*Lode Hunt here, Lode Hunt here*" as he sold his wares. He is buried in Tuscola Cemetery and his tombstone inscription says "1875-1954". Lode Hunt might be Logan Hunt. **Hunter, Mrs. James (Emma)** - Her name appears in the 1895 Tuscola City Directory as a resident at 128 East Overton Street.

**Jacob, Joshua** - Born in North Carolina, Jacob was a laborer living in Tuscola in 1880. He was 60 years old at the time. **Jacob, Joshua Jr.** - Son of Joshua Jacob, he was born in Indiana and was 17 years old in 1880. **Jesse, George L.** - A printer in the *Tuscola Journal* newspaper office, his name appears in the 1895 Tuscola City Directory. **Johnson, Jack** - A dishwasher at the City Hotel, his name also appears in the 1895 directory.

**Lamb, Elizabeth** - She was a hairdresser who lived in Tuscola in 1880. She was born in North Carolina, and was 26 years old at the time of the 1880 federal census. Her children included **Flora Lamb** (a domestic who lived at 216 South Main in 1895); **Nettie Lamb** (born in Illinois in 1873), and **Noble Lamb** (born in Illinois in 1876). **Lamb, Joseph** - a day laborer who was born in Tennessee. His name shows up in both the 1870 and 1880 Tuscola census. He was 55 years old in 1870. His wife was **Mildred Lamb** (born in Virginia in 1825). **Lee, Miss Maria** - a

laundress living at 15 East Ficklin in 1895. She owned her own home. **Linn, William** - a laborer who lived at 128 E. Overton in 1895. The house was owned by Charles Jones.

**Masters girl** - Raised by a white couple named Frank and Minnie Masters, we know very little about her. Museum member John Chapman remembers that she and her parents lived in a house behind Dekalb. The daughter frequently visited and supposedly later moved to Chicago. **May, Frank** - Milas Thomas of Tuscola remembers this black resident very well. Frank May was the barber who cut Milas' hair when he was just a kid. May lived in the 200 block of East Buckner Street. He gave Milas a dime a day to bring him his lunch. **Mrs. May**, from whom he was later divorced, fixed the meal and put it in a large market basket. Milas recalls that it must have weighed about 25 pounds. The first day he delivered the basket, Milas walked. The next time he rode his bike, which had a large carrying basket. The weight in the market basket was caused by the thick dishes Mrs. May put the food on. Milas said that the food smelled wonderful because Mrs. May used to be a cook in St. Louis. **Frank May** weighed about 300 pounds. Milas carried the basket for about two years to the May barbershop located on South Parke Street next to F.H. Jones Lumber and between the photography shop. Milas only had a few minutes to eat his own lunch since he carried Mr. May's lunch to him on his school lunch break. Milas was about ten years old at the time. Frank May was killed when his coupe was hit by

train engine 2701 at the Wabash railroad crossing in Tolono before the grade crossing was eliminated. He died on Sunday, April 8, 1928. At the time of his death, he was 62 years old and had a flourishing barbering business in Tuscola. He had been divorced twice and had no children and no known survivors. J. McGary of Tuscola was the undertaker.

**Menefee, Ruben** - This old gentleman worked for Pearle Wardall and Bill VanVoorhis. He was not married and never had been, nor did he have any children. He also did not have a home to call his own. Museum members Lois Marsh and Martha Brown remember that later in his life he slept in a cot in the back of the Tuscola State Bank. At the bank, he was the janitor and handyman. He died December 26, 1936 and is buried in Tuscola Cemetery without a tombstone. It is possible that he could be the Ruben Minifield who was listed in the 1900 census as a day laborer and boarder in the home of Thomas Chavous. **Mingo Family** - **Ben, Jossie, Ben,** and **Tyrome**. This family lived in Tuscola township near the USI swimming pool from 1984 until 1991. They now live in Champaign, but Mr. Mingo commutes to Tuscola to his job with the National Resource Conservation Service. Tyrome was Tuscola High School homecoming king in 1987, and brother Ben was runnerup for the same title in 1991. **Mitchell, William "Billy"** - He was a porter at the Beach House. He lived at 231 East Ensey Street, according to the 1895 Tuscola City Directory. Later he drove a small truck. William A. Mitchell died January 15, 1938 in Douglas

County. According to O.B. Smith, Billy Mitchell lived in the vicinity of Brookside Restaurant, which was on North Niles Avenue. Tommy Wright told us that his wife's name was **Janet Mitchell**. Billy and Janet Mitchell were parents of two sons. **John Mitchell**, whom his classmates in Tuscola called "Billy", is the only one of the two boys who lived in Tuscola. He is a retired state policeman and is now a resident of Barrington, Illinois. John's wife suffered the death of her brother on the very day we called him about his family information, so we will tell our readers about this family in the next issue of the newsletter, if possible. **Page, Sarah J.** - Born in Maryland in 1830, she was the mother of an adopted daughter, Olla Fant. Her husband was **Stephen Page**. According to the 1895 Tuscola City Directory, Mr. Page was a laborer who lived at 213 East Ensey. Born in Virginia, he was 54 in 1880.

**Phillips, Bingham and Flora** - Mr. Bingham owned a dray business and had a team of high-spirited horses. The family was poor, and they had several children.

**Phillips, Vesta** - attended grade school in Tuscola.

The **Lucian Reeves** family lived next to the Bragg house on North Main in Tuscola. The family consisted of **Mr. and Mrs. Reeves** and a son, **Eugene Reeves**. Mr. Reeves worked for Mr. Bragg as his chauffeur. Milas Thomas remembers him as keeping the Bragg cars in excellent condition. Just west of the Bragg house was a garage and home with bathroom, living room, kitchen and closet downstairs, and on the second floor three bedrooms. The Reeves family lived in

this garage house. According to Thomas, the family was well-educated. One day Lucian Reeves and Mr. Bragg went to Indianapolis and for some reason, Bragg drove home. The car hit crushed rock on the side of the road and Mr. Bragg was thrown from the car and killed. Shortly after that, the Reeves family moved away. **Riley, Lemuel** - born June 16, 1893 in Walnut, Mississippi, Lemuel was the son of



**William and Susan Riley**. He worked on the railroad for 25 years, as a guard at USI, and an employee of the Tuscola Cooperative Elevator. He and his wife, **Nettie**, came to Tuscola in 1925 and lived on Carico Street for many years. He was a member of the Baptist Church and the Masonic Lodge of Champaign. Lem Riley suffered a stroke in the early 1960s and was forced to retire as a semi-invalid. He died September 4, 1973. Nancy Box of Tuscola was his sister. **Riley, Nettie B. Garden** - wife of Lemuel Riley, she was born and reared in Ramer, Tennessee. She married Lem Riley at Clarence, Mississippi on September 15, 1915 and the couple came to

Tuscola in 1928. [The couple is pictured here.] Mrs. Riley remained in Tuscola after her husband died, but was residing in Gary, Indiana when she died. After Nettie's death, ownership of the Riley residence on Carico Street in Tuscola transferred to her brother, James Davis. He still owns it, and leases the house to renters.

**Shedd, Laura** - a washerwoman who was a boarder in the Harriett Harrison residence in Tuscola in 1880. That same year, she was 31 years old. **Shedd, Robert** - He was a porter at Washburns. His name appears in the 1895 Tuscola City Directory as living at 131 E. Ensey in a home which he owned. He was a day laborer who was born in Tennessee in 1856. In 1870, he lived in the home of Joseph Lamb in Tuscola. According to a *Tuscola Journal* news clipping, by 1898 there was a **Mrs. Robert Shedd** attending "colored folks" social functions. **Slash, Andrew** - Name appears in the 1895 Tuscola City Directory as a laborer living at 323 East Overton Street in a house owned by J.F. Poole.

**Walker, James** - He lived at 203 N. Parke Street in 1895, where he served as a cook at the Beach House hotel. **Wright, Geraldine** - daughter of Thomas and Willa Mae Jones Wright, she was born August 14, 1917 and was a 1935 graduate of Tuscola High School. [Geraldine is pictured here.] She married Robert Johnson in Lafayette around 1937 or 1938, and they resided there until he died in 1985 and she died in 1989. Geraldine and Robert were the parents of Robert Leslie, Jerry, Rosalyn, and Martha. They had eight grandchildren and three or

four step-grandchildren. During her years in Lafayette, Geraldine worked for the license bureau and a dry goods store, but she was primarily a homemaker. She and her husband also ran the Aero Inn Restaurant at the Aretz Airport in



Lafayette from 1946 until 1953. **Wright, Howard Leslie "Tommy"** - son of Thomas and Willa Mae Jones Wright, he was born August 6, 1915 and was a 1933 graduate of Tuscola High School. According to Earl Albritton, both Howard and his sister, Geraldine, were very bright students. Howard married Leora Easley in 1938. They are now divorced, but they were parents of Howard Jr., born in 1938, Joel, born in 1940, Jon, born in 1942, Tom, born in 1950, and Jean Anne, born in 1953. The Wright children had four, two, one, four, and three children, respectively. Howard Wright married Frances Finley in 1970. From 1952 until 1989 he operated his own janitorial service in Lafayette. He is now retired and lives at 606 S. 18th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47905. Tommy says "hi" to all of his old Tuscola pals via this

Cabin Chatter. **Wright, Thomas Leslie "Tommy"** - Thomas's birth mother had a terminal illness which left him an orphan at a very young age. Thomas was taken from his birthplace in Kentucky to live in Tuscola with a white couple named Josiah and Martha Jane (Easter?) Wright. It is possible that Tommy's birth mother was a servant in the Wright home, but that has not been verified. This Tuscola High School football player was a 1905 graduate of TCHS. He scored the winning touchdown at a Thanksgiving game against Arcola High's football team. At that time, according to Earl Albritton, a black person could not be on the streets of Arcola after sundown. After Tommy made the winning touchdown, he laid the ball down, climbed over a fence, ran across a field, and jumped into a waiting buggy that took him back to Tuscola. After high school, Thomas married **Willa Mae Jones** in Champaign in 1914. Born in Lafayette, Willa Mae Jones had moved to Paxton and then to Champaign with her parents. Her dad was a barber.

On March 17 of 1914, Thomas' father, Josiah, died, leaving a considerable estate for those days. He owned Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 in Block 1 of England's Addition to Tuscola, and Lot 2 in Block 1 of Helm's Addition in Tuscola. Josiah also owned about 82 acres of farmland. His total real estate holdings were valued at \$18,000 and he had \$6,000 in personal property when he died. In his will, Josiah left the bulk of his estate to his widow, Martha Jane. His last wishes were that most of the real estate be sold for its cash value. The remainder of the estate was shared with 18

other heirs, most of whom were cousins and nieces of Josiah. Thomas Wright got one share of Josiah's estate, and also got ownership of the family automobile upon his mother's death. Martha died on October 4, 1925 and Thomas then also acquired his parents' house.

Thomas operated a car garage on Wilson Street (the Armory building—now Kelsey's storage) in Tuscola, where local residents with open vehicles parked them overnight. During the day, the empty garage was turned into a skating rink, and "young Tommy" remembers that, as the boss's kid, he had the privilege of skating there whenever he wanted to without paying. This would have been around 1926 or 1927. In the 1930s, Thomas did odd jobs around Tuscola. Thomas died in 1942 in the Chicago Research Hospital. He is buried in Tuscola Cemetery. Mrs. Wright, who was Bruce Hayden Jr's godmother, did domestic work in Tuscola, possibly for the VanVoorhis family. She died in Lafayette in 1990 at the age of 102 years. She is buried in Lafayette.

**Young, Eliza** - Born in Illinois in 1858, she was the wife of **Joseph Young**. In 1895, she lived at 518 South Main in a house she owned. Joseph was a laborer who was born in Illinois in 1804. Unless the 1880 census has a misprint, Joseph and Eliza had an age difference of 54 years. Eliza is listed as his wife. **Young, Tabby** - mother of **George Young**, she died while residing in the Beach House. More about Tabby, George, and **Katherine Young** will be found further on in this story. **Young, Adrian S.** - Born July 1870 in Il-



linois, he died March 5, 1939 in Douglas County.

With a tape recorder, Earl Albritton documented his memories of Tuscola's black residents, and mailed them to the Douglas County Museum from his home in Tipp City, Ohio. He remembers a black couple whose names we have not yet been able to determine. He said, "About 1922 there was a black couple who lived on the extreme west end of Scott Street on the south side in a little frame cottage. I forget the names. He murdered his wife and took off. The body laid there four or five days before it was discovered. I don't believe he was ever caught. We lived two or three blocks distance from their house." Member Pat Ellis Pearson of Plainfield, Indiana has strong memories of Bruce Hayden. She wrote to say, "My dad (Wilbur Ellis Sr.) and Bruce Hayden Sr. were great friends. My dad carried a rural mail route and Bruce a city one. Each morning dad would take Bruce to his relay box on his way out of town. Bruce always sat in the back seat because dad had his mail in front. This led Bruce to always call dad "Frontseat" which became quite a joke with them. They took singing lessons together in Charleston and were intense checker players."

At one time, Tuscola had two churches with black congregations. One of the churches was located on Ensey Street in the northeast part of town (the second building west of North Niles on the north side of the street). Its name was the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church. Member John Chapman told us that, as a child he and some other youngsters used

to peek into the church window so they could watch black churchgoers sing lively gospel music. The other church was located at the northwest corner of Houghton and Center Streets at 114 E. Houghton. The latter church was called the "White Horse Riders" church. Originally built in 1882 as an Episcopal Church called "St. Stephen's", the building was turned into a private residence by a local carpenter named Allen Trigg. The Triggs lived there for a time, but the house is now the residence of Earl and Mary Watson. Wonderful gospel music filled the air on both Ensey and Houghton streets when church was in session.

Pearle Ervin Wardall of Tuscola was a prolific writer. She was granddaughter to the owners of Tuscola's well-known, turn-of-the-century hotel, the Beach House. The hotel had many intriguing visitors and staff members. At one point in time, Mrs. Wardall jotted down her memories of George, "Aunt Tabby" and Katherine Young. Following are Pearle's memoirs of the Youngs: "A colored man appeared at the Beach House one noon and asked Sarah McNally, the cook, if she would give him something to eat. She always would feed tramps if they would do some work for the food. While he was eating, Sarah found out he had a mother and sister down south and he had tramped up north and wanted to make a home for them. His mother and sister had been slaves, but he was what he called Free Born. Sarah started him to splitting wood and filling up the wood boxes and went in and talked to Grandmother Beach about him.

The wind up was George came there to work. He slept in the barn loft, on the hay, and attended to the cows, milking and feeding them and taking them to the pasture across the Illinois Central Railroad tracks. George [pictured here] was with Grandmother Beach for a good many years. He did all sorts of odd jobs; even blackening shoes for the traveling men. He saved his money and sent for his mother, Aunt Tabby, and Katherine, his sister. George rented a cabin over on the Gail lot next to the pasture where he took the cows. Aunt Tabby was a great big fat woman and Katherine was simple-minded. She never talked, but just made gestures with her hands. Aunt Tabby said she was whipped by an overseer of the slaves when she was a young girl and hadn't been right since, and had Katherine show Sarah the scars where she had



been flogged. Katherine and Tabby worked there and ate their food at the kitchen or wash house for several years. At last Aunt Tabby died and George put Katherine up in the asylum at Kankakee.

George lived there around the hotel and got a salary as long as grandmother ran the hotel. But when Mr. Kessel took over after he married Aunt Jenny, they didn't get along. When my father S.B. Ervin moved into the house up here, George came to work for him and stayed here for years. My father, S.B. Ervin, raised cattle just across the railroad back of our home and we had a big barn and mules, and three cows, and horses and George was busy from morning until night working in the garden, mowing the yard, chopping wood, milking, helping with the churning, and doing chores around the house. He used to load the hay on the rack and he would take a load of kids and drive over to feed the stock. He went by Uncle Rice and John's elevator and over the dredge boat bridge and then we all played over by the windmill while George did the feeding of the cattle. George was quite a character in our lives a good many years. He sang sad Negro melodies: one I remember well—"Go chain the Lion down"—it was weird. When Papa quit raising and feeding stock, he talked to one of the conductors of the C.H.&D. railroad and George got a job in Decatur at the station there, moving trunks and baggage. We were young and guess we lost track of him, but George Young was a good man and quite a feature in our young life. Always good natured. Never used bad language."

Tuscola's white and black

population seemed to get along together. Articles in the 1897 and 1898 Tuscola Journal newspaper tell of a time when "colored folks cake walks" were quite a social event in town. White residents attended the festivities as spectators. Around Christmas of 1898, the following news items appeared in the Journal: "The colored people have arranged for a grand cake walk and dance at the opera house next Monday night. These cake walks have always been productive of much merriment and with a few specialties in the way of clog dances, the proper cut of "de pigeon" and the latest of ragtime music. The projectors of the walk can expect a crowded house. Colored people from Charleston, Mattoon, Champaign, Decatur, and other towns will be present. The irresistible George Jesse of Charleston will no doubt be on hand to make a good showing in the walk. The cake walk will be in charge of Arthur Anderson, Will Parker, and Robert Chevours [Chavous] and they assure the public an entertainment that will be worthy of patronage. The following prizes have been offered by the managers: 1st prize - \$5 and cake to most graceful couple; 2nd prize - \$2 for second best couple; Gold ring to the most lovely lady waltzer; \$2 for the champion 'buck' dancer; box of cigars for second best." A follow-up story in the next issue of the newspaper said, "The grand march was led by Mr. Robert Johnson of Champaign and Mrs. Robert Shed of Tuscola. William Montgomery of Mattoon acted as "drum major". Mr. Arthur Anderson and Miss Cozy Chavours [Chavous] of Tuscola were judged the most graceful walkers. Mr.

Harry Brumble of Champaign won the \$2 prize for the best buck dancer. The prize for the most lovely waltzer was given to Mr. Louis Brumble and Miss Gertrude Chavous."

While most black and white residents of Tuscola managed to get along, there are occasional indications that some townspeople considered their black neighbors inferior. Notice, for instance, this derogatory remark which was made in the February 6, 1897 Tuscola Journal newspaper: "The proverbial hardness of a colored man's cranium was tested Tuesday morning when Adrian Young took a header from the end of a wagon, lighting on the pavement. Adrian's head made quite an impression on the pavement and street superintendent McGinnis says it will cost a few dollars to make the repair. He said that Adrian had taken two or three "bracers" before breakfast which caused him to lose his equilibrium. He had been hauling ice and was compelled to give up his work for a few days to rub arnica on his head." According to a Tuscola Review article dated May 17, 1923, the KKK suddenly reared its ugly head at the city park one evening. The headline stated, "FIERY CROSS - Symbol of K.K.K. Draws Great Crowd to Ervin Park Wednesday Eve". The article said, "The first demonstration by the K.K.K. organization in Tuscola or immediate vicinity took place Wednesday evening at about 7:30 when a fiery cross was displayed in Ervin Park and which was viewed by a great crowd of people. Many expected that something else would follow, but were disappointed, the burning of the cross being all. The

cross, which was made from a part of a telephone pole with a telephone cross bar for the cross section, was about eight feet high and was set about a hundred yards from the south side of the park and just to the east of the east driveway. It burned beautifully for a long time and hundreds of cars were driven up to and through the park to see it. Many people came on foot. Shortly after the cross began to burn someone turned in a fire alarm saying that the home of W.M. Dotson on North Main Street was on fire. This alarm had much to do with getting the crowd to come and see the cross. There was no fire in the Dotson home. It is said that there are quite a number of Klan members in and about Tuscola, though as yet there is no local organization."

Pete Bridgewater remembers the day when 15 or 20 hooded Ku Klux Klansmen marched down North Court Street in front of his house. However, the event didn't bother either him nor his mother, he recalled. "I was real little, so to me it was just a parade." He said that the only time he ever heard a derogatory remark made against him in Tuscola was when a group of itinerant Texas pipeliners came into Riley's Pool Hall and one of them made a racial slur. Riley cracked the Texan over the head with a pool cue and ordered the men out of the building. Pete also recalls the day when the school track team went to a meet in Monticello. The team hadn't eaten anything that day, so Coach Vernon Askew took the boys to a restaurant in Monticello. All the team players got their food except Pete Bridgewater. When it became obvious that Pete was being by-

passed on purpose, the coach told the players not to eat their meal until Pete got his. Askew eventually asked the restaurant owner why Pete hadn't gotten any food yet. "We don't serve blacks in here," he said. Askew answered, "Then we won't pay for the white's food." The whole team got up and walked out of the restaurant without eating or paying.

In Tuscola, Bridgewater said, there was more affection for the black residents than there was hate. When asked if growing up in a nearly all-white community placed him at a disadvantage, he said "no". "It was to my advantage," he said. "I didn't know I was black until I moved up to Champaign. Blacks living in Tuscola didn't have to go through all the hullabaloo of prejudice", Pete recalled. Classmate Martha Brown [pictured with Pete] said, "The black students were treated no differently than anybody else at school, and I really think that at the class reunions, everyone is happier to see Pete than anyone



else." Pete has seen his fair share of prejudice since he left Tuscola, however. He has the distinction of being the first black

to be accepted into Local 196 Musician's Union. Before Pete demanded equality, black musicians had to not only make a long drive to Springfield to join a black musician's union, they also had to pay 15 cents on the dollar traveling fee to Local 196. Pete knew that was unfair, and set about with strong determination to change things.

Local white residents thoroughly enjoyed the musical talents of the town's blacks—everything



from the sound of Preston Bridgewater's trumpet, to Pete's music and tap dancing, to Bruce Hayden's violin, to the choir music wafting out of the town's black churches, to the black bands and orchestras that played at the local pub and on radio station WDZ. Jerry Lynch and his Rhythm Club Band could be heard on WDZ, and Mac Willis and His Doctors of Rhythm Boys also appeared on WDZ, as well as at the Friendly Tavern on Rt. 36 in Tuscola. Both bands are pictured here. Appearing in the Willis band are (l to r) - Everett Wesley, Biddell, Ducky, Smitty, Mac Willis, unknown, and Wilda Willis. Lynch band members are (l to r seated) - Richard Carr, Jerry Lynch, Ben Conover and (l to r standing) - Dewey Lamonte, Duke Crowder, and singer Bill Rush.

The information we have found so far about Tuscola's black community is being documented for the first time in this issue of *Cabin Chatter*. No doubt, there were other black residents not mentioned here, since Bill McCarty remembers his mother, Frae Thompson McCarty Kenner, once saying there were at least 100 black families living in Tuscola at one time or another. Just like so many transient white residents throughout the town's history, some black families stayed such a short time there is no written record of their presence in the community. Do any of our readers have more information to add to this historical record? We would like to hear about Tuscola's former black residents, as well as hear about blacks living in other mostly-white small communities in East Central Illinois. The Douglas County Museum is also seeking photographs like the ones that are shown on the final pages of this newsletter.



Special thanks to Bob Stallsworth for assisting with the photographic section of this story!

PHOTOGRAPHS OF  
TUSCOLA'S BLACK RESIDENTS

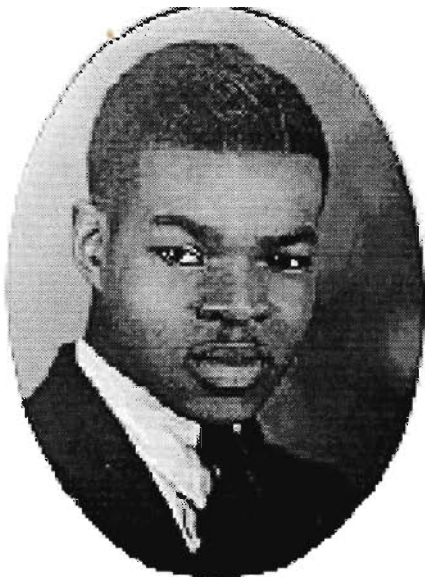
Howard Wright  
Harold "Pete" Bridgewater  
Cecil Bridgewater (1928-29)  
Bruce K. Hayden Jr. & Colleen  
Dowling (Hayden) as students at  
James Millikin University, 1951.  
Thomas and Mary Chavous  
Preston Bridgewater and Benjamin  
Lafferty  
Effie Bridgewater  
Effie Bridgewater (1), Jessie  
Backento (middle), and Cozzetta  
Chavous  
Mary Chavous  
Ralph Bassett, Bruce and Myrtle  
Hayden, and granddaughter



Harold "Pete" Bridgewater



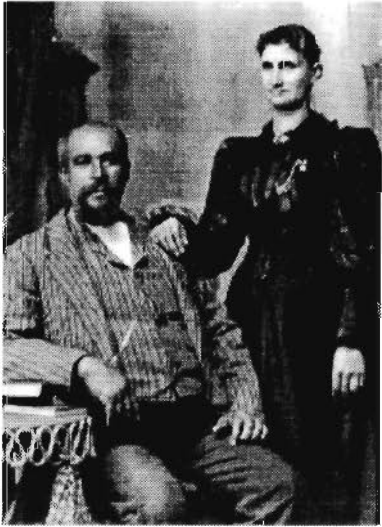
Cecil Bridgewater (1928-29)



Howard Wright



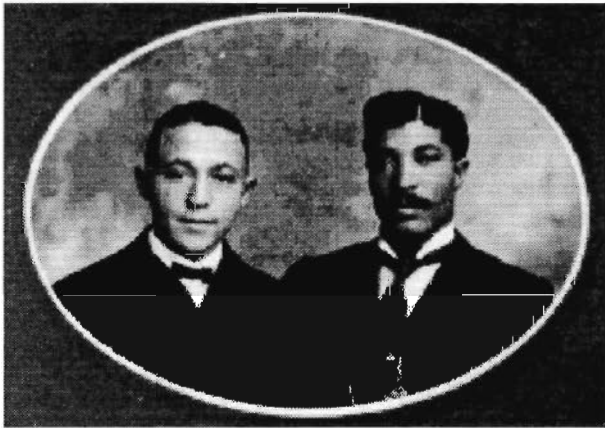
Bruce K. Hayden Jr. & Colleen  
Dowling (Hayden) as students at  
James Millikin University, 1951.



Thomas and Mary Chavous



Effie Bridgewater (l), Jessie Backento (middle), and Cozzetta Chavous



Preston Bridgewater and Ben Lafferty



Mary Chavous



Effie Bridgewater



Ralph Bassett, Bruce and Myrtle Hayden, and granddaughter