















































**FRATERNAL & SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS**  
 Through the Years: African American History Comes Home

Local African American fraternal organizations have provided leadership for students in many ways. They have provided financial support to operate day-care centers and health clinics. They have provided leadership for students in many ways. They have provided financial support to operate day-care centers and health clinics.

1940 - 1970



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1940 - 1970



**SMITH LOVES HORSES BUT HAS MECHANIZED FARM**  
 John M. Smith, 40, of Smith Farm, has a love for horses that is as strong as his love for his mechanized farm. He has a collection of 15 horses and a 100-acre farm. He has a collection of 15 horses and a 100-acre farm.



Smith's farm has been mechanized for several years. He has a collection of 15 horses and a 100-acre farm. He has a collection of 15 horses and a 100-acre farm.



**Generation Two: John M. And Frances (English) Smith**

NAME	DATE	AGE	SEX	RELATIONSHIP
John M. Smith	1940	40	M	Head of Household
Frances (English) Smith	1940	38	F	Wife
John M. Smith	1940	12	M	Son
Frances (English) Smith	1940	10	F	Daughter
John M. Smith	1940	8	M	Son
Frances (English) Smith	1940	6	F	Daughter
John M. Smith	1940	4	M	Son
Frances (English) Smith	1940	2	F	Daughter

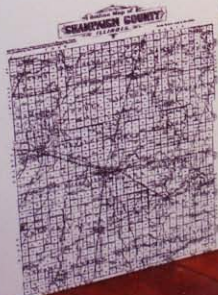


# THROUGH THE YEARS

## African American History Comes Home



The experiences of African Americans in Champaign County address universal themes of human existence: family, work, education, religion and friendship. After Emancipation, the first wave of African Americans migrated mainly from the South to different sections of the country, hoping to provide better lives for themselves and for their families. Since the primary mode of travel was by train, and Champaign County was located along a major railway route, some African Americans decided to reside in Champaign County. The census reveals that the "first wave" of African American migration (late 1860's through 1880) to Champaign County resulted in an increase from 48 in 1860 to 233 by 1870 and 462 by 1880. From 1900 to 1920, the number tripled from 551 to 1,620.



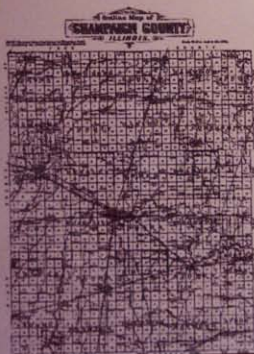
Champaign County African Americans built and developed institutions—churches, businesses, social groups—married, raised families, worked, served in the military, and contributed to Champaign County's economic, political, social, and cultural development. This exhibit is a long overdue celebration of achievements, triumphs, and sacrifices. There is still much more to do.

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Champaign County African Americans have been active in the Arts and Entertainment scene since they have contributed to jazz, gospel, and contemporary dance.

### 1880 - 1900



### 1900 - 1930



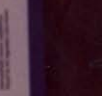
### 1930 - 1950



**JACKIE ROBERTS**  
"I was born in Champaign, Illinois, on August 28, 1921. I grew up in a family of seven children. My father was a carpenter and my mother was a homemaker. I started singing in church at a young age and later became a professional singer. I was discovered by a talent scout in 1947 and signed to Capitol Records. My first single, 'The Great Pretend', was a hit. I went on to have several other successful singles and albums. I was a pioneer for African American women in the rock and roll industry."/>



### 1950 - 1970



Colored residents of Champaign-Urbana, celebrating the anniversary of Emancipation in 1863. The British West Indies with song at the front of the Champaign event." **Doris Hawkins** (1993).

"Small bands started making an appearance in Champaign-Urbana. One of the first, the 'Firewer's Juvenile Band,' was established in 1907. Continuing on throughout the 1920s, the 'Firewer's' and other bands were also formed." **Doris Hawkins** (1993).

"In 1936 Miss Rosemary Louis and Mr. Cecil Nelson, Jr. painted the beautiful mural in the auditorium. The north gables of the auditorium. The one by Miss Louis represents Christ in the garden. That of Mr. Nelson, the blind Bartimaeus." **History of Bethel A.M.E. Church, 1938.**

"William Warfield sang 'Old Man River' in the movie 'Showboat' in 1931 and performed the role of Porgy in 'Porgy and Bess' in 1932. In 1937 and 1938 NBC-TV broadcast his performance in the Harkness Hall of Fame production of 'Milk and Honey' in 1938. He received a Grammy Award in 1984 for his spoken performance in 'Aunt Cece's Aunts'." **The Afroamericain**, 1964, p. 100.

J.B. Lenoir, a cook helper at the University of Illinois, was the first to play the Chicago Blues as a "I've Been Down So Long," "Down in Mississippi," and "Eisenhower Blues." He died April 29, 1967 in an automobile accident and his wife, who was also a blues singer, died in a plane crash. It is noted that he was "probably more famous in Europe than in Champaign." Sandy Summers, an executive with Mc Records in New York, noted that Lenoir was the first to record many songs he wrote that somebody else took credit for. That happened all the time."

Ron Bidgood was a saxophonist with the legendary Lena Horne.

Cecil Bridgewater was a long-standing trumpet player in with the great Alsa Beach.

Jazz organist Jack McDuff is an internationally acclaimed recording artist.

And the tradition of Champaign County African-Americans in the Arts and Entertainment continues!"

"Crystal Laves Green just finished shooting a movie with James Earl Jones and Robert Duvall." **News Gazette**, 1973.

"Jackie Capri-Luckie provided a riveting portrait of Betty Holiday for the first time in her new play, 'Betty Holiday.' She has teamed with George Kennedy, Jack McCall, Henry Turner, and many others across the country." **Parke College Department of Fine and Applied Arts.**



PH. 1910



PH. 1910



PH. 1910



PH. 1910



PH. 1910



# COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Through the Years: African American History Comes Home  
 Chicago's County Board has approved the right to live in any neighborhood. The right to live in any neighborhood is a long fight for the University of Illinois.

1930-1950

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**Year-Limiting Ordinance Approved in Champaign**  
 This ordinance will limit the number of units in a building to the number of units that were in the building in 1950.

**Negroes Vary in Views on Ordinance**  
 Many Negroes in Chicago are opposed to the ordinance, but some are in favor of it.

**Paul J. Davis For Six Months**  
 Paul J. Davis has been appointed to the position of...



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**DEATH OF GEORGE W. SMITH**  
 George W. Smith, 68, died of a heart attack at his home in Chicago on...



**RECORD ANDY BORN COVER OF BUREAU BEE**  
 This is a record of the birth of Andy Smith, son of George W. Smith and Mary Eliza Smith.

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## Generation One: George W. And Mary Eliza (Oglesby) Smith

NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF DEATH
George W. Smith	1862	1930	Chicago, Ill.	Chicago, Ill.
Mary Eliza (Oglesby) Smith	1865	1935	Chicago, Ill.	Chicago, Ill.
Andy Smith	1900	1970	Chicago, Ill.	Chicago, Ill.
...	...	...	...	...



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**Final Drive For Sit-ins Nears Goal**

By [Name]

The sit-in movement in Champaign is nearing its goal. The University of Illinois has agreed to desegregate its dining halls. The sit-iners are now demanding that the University desegregate its classrooms and other facilities.

**Three Honored by Council**

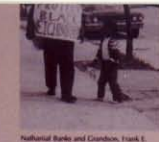
Local, Middle, Strong in East Valley

The Champaign Board of Education has honored three individuals for their contributions to the community. The recipients are [Names].

**Negroes Vary in Views on Ordinance**

By [Name]

The passage of the anti-discrimination ordinance in Champaign has elicited a wide range of reactions among the Black community. Some view it as a significant step forward, while others express concerns about its effectiveness.



Northern Banks and Cranford, Frank L. Banks, early 1970s.



Photo: [Name]



Douglas Carter Frazier, date unknown.



Frances Nelson, North End Health Center, 1960s.

April 26, 1963

Dear Mr. J.P. Bremer Sr.,

Enclosed for the University of Illinois are copies of the proposed ordinance. I am sure that the University will find it to be a most desirable one. I am sure that the University will find it to be a most desirable one.

- The proposed ordinance is as follows:
- The ordinance will be withdrawn from the Board.
- The ordinance will be withdrawn from the Board.
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- The ordinance will be withdrawn from the Board.

C. Bremer, Jr.



1957 KKK march in Champaign. Photo: [Name]



Photo: [Name]

"I came North in 1938 to find a better job. Better housing, only to find the same discrimination in the North that I left in the South." Mary Alexander (1966)

In housing discrimination, Foster Suggs remembers, "the government's agreement" where Realtors would agree not to sell or rent to African Americans. Thomas remembered meeting a real estate agent who said, "if you would have had the phone when you were, it would have saved me a lot of time." News Gazette

Roman Green and Kenneth Strahan, Champaign natives and U of I students, worked with an interracial group in the 1940s. They protested housing conditions in North Champaign after several African Americans were killed in house fires due to faulty wiring. Malcolm Green, brother of Roman, remembers the group meeting on outside "porch" in a Champaign-Urbana 4th of July Parade. The group also brought attention to the conditions of North End families by writing articles about and publishing photographs of the houses. "As a result, twenty units of housing were provided. The first two built houses 10 and 14th streets and the second ten on Columbia. Birch Village followed. The twenty units were called "tin hogs" by the Black community because they were all some kind of wood and the exterior was made of tin and they were noisy when it rained." Malcolm Green (1996)

In 1960 Mary Alexander co-founded Champaign Urban Improvement Council "to open up new job areas for colored people." The first project was to picket a men's L.C. Penney's store that had not hired a single Black person. This "organized a boycott which forced Penney's, after three weeks, to hire one colored subordinate. As a result of this protest, Robinson's Department Store hired one colored subordinate, and after picketing, Coca-Cola hired a colored stock clerk. The Council issued a meeting and named my husband first because of my activities. His boss took up for him and he was allowed to keep his job." Mary Alexander (1996)

In 1957 KKK march in Champaign took place in Carter Park, a subdivision north of Bradley Avenue and east of Wright Street. This was the first large-scale residential development in Champaign-Urbana to be initiated with private capital raised entirely through Negro families. This was the first large-scale residential development in Champaign-Urbana to be initiated with private capital raised entirely through Negro families. This was the first large-scale residential development in Champaign-Urbana to be initiated with private capital raised entirely through Negro families.

The North End Health Center (now an NIH site) was created by a coalition of African American organizations (OCAA), a group of Black men, Adler Zonen Center, a state mental health center, Champaign County Urban League, and the Champaign Economic Opportunity Council in the 1960s because of the poor and inhumane treatment of Blacks in the local medical facilities. A landmark two-story house on John Hill Street at Kankakee Street was provided by the Economic Council. The Center was named after Frances Nelson who ran an orphanage for Black Children in the house during the 1940s.

"What do our Council members know of living in 90 year old houses? What do they know of how the original Negro families fought and struggled with dignity to purchase homes and care in the development of this City. To force urban renewal upon the people who have spent the better part of their lives preparing a future for themselves to retire and a trust held for their offspring is unfair enough, but to force the sale of voluntary and investing belongings into the area is adding insult to injury." Cecil B. Nelson, Jr. (1962)

# COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Through the Years: African American History Comes Home

Champaign County African Americans agitated for better housing, the right to live in any neighborhood, the right to eat at any eating facility, for equal employment opportunities, and the right to live on the University of Illinois campus. For the most part, they were successful in obtaining their goals.

"And my parents and some of the other parents went to principal [11207] and told him that they wanted us to have swimming. Young people today think that, you know, people didn't do anything about things like that years but they fought just as hard. They probably didn't have as many people with them, but still fought. So they went to and demanded that we be allowed to swim. What they were let us swim after everyone else was out—you know, all the white kids had their day, and I was able to swim. That was bad, we did get swimming." Erna Bridgwater (1983)

The University Senate committee recommended that "Unless new campus restaurant owners change their policy and admit Negroes, the University ought to set up the Woman's building a restaurant to 250 students without racial discrimination." One of the Black students, Joseph Taylor, convinced the recommendation as "the most damaging" welfare of Negro students on this campus as far as the cultivation of feelings toward a minority group is concerned. The University restaurant is a more intimidating of the rest people. A more beneficial and less expression would be to bring pressure to the offenders (restaurant owners who discriminate)." Black Alumni News, July, 1957.

"It is more than fortunate for the colored that he has full use of the Union building. He uses the cafeteria regularly, but not served in many of the restaurants also sent hang-out on the campus. He uses lounge regularly, but not allowed to be in rooming houses between classes, as it is one or two miles away. There are probably less than 110 students, and probably more, are rooming with local colored families in Champaign and Urbana." From a newspaper article on Martha Harry (The first African American elected for a U of I class officer in 1908 and The Index-Examiner Political Party in 1910 ran two Blacks [including Miss Harry] in

## 1930-1950



Northern Champaign, Photographer: [Name]



Romeo Green, 1942.

## 1950-1970

**Open Housing Is a Right, Priest Tells 200 at Rally**

By [Name]

A priest addressed a crowd of 200 people at a rally in Champaign, Illinois, on [Date]. He spoke about the importance of open housing and the rights of African Americans.





"Not for School, but for Life, we learn."

# HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

THIS CERTIFIES

THAT

*William Lynn Spemann*

has completed the Course of Study prescribed for the High School of

CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS,

and by his attainments and course department is entitled to receive this

# DIPLOMA

In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto affixed our signatures, at Champaign, Illinois,

this 21st day of June 1890

*E. J. Williams* President  
*Wm. A. DeGrazer* Secretary  
*Wm. A. DeGrazer* Treasurer  
*Wm. A. DeGrazer* Librarian  
*Wm. A. DeGrazer* Reporter

Board of School

## THIS CERTIFIES THAT

*Wm. A. DeGrazer* and *Wm. A. DeGrazer*  
of *Champaign* State of *Illinois*  
AND  
of *Champaign* State of *Illinois*  
WERE UNITED IN

# Holy Matrimony



According to the  
State of  
on the 25th day  
in the year of Our  
And One



and the Laws of the  
State of  
of October  
LORD One Thousand  
Nineteen  
By *Wm. A. DeGrazer*  
*Wm. A. DeGrazer*

Witnesses  
*Wm. A. DeGrazer*  
*Wm. A. DeGrazer*



political, economic, social, and cultural lives of the community. Although the church did not have the financial resources, reality did not allow for that. It often provided them with a channel of inner strength into action. Churches were the center of a community's activities. In addition to providing a place for worship, they provided a place for meetings, socials, and orientants served as schools.

"Salem would have their Sunday school, and then in the afternoon they would have their Bible school, and we went to both Sunday Schools, of course that took in both in the afternoon and in the morning. We'd ride in the bays and we'd have to go back to Salem for BYPU." Carrie Nelson (1982)

### A. M. E. CHURCH.

#### SPRINGFIELD PRESIDING ELDER'S DISTRICT.

DEAN BERNHEIMER: Another Conference Year is commencing. God willing, we will begin our rounds August 31, and remember I come not to hold it over God's heritage, but in the line of my duty. (See Discipline, pages 116 and 119.) I hope to be present at the opening of the year with you, and I will need your help and your assistance in thank. Let praise and glory to God. I will need you and your assistance in thank. Let praise and glory to God. I will need your help and your assistance in thank. Let praise and glory to God. I will need your help and your assistance in thank. Let praise and glory to God.

The following are the appointments for the conference year.

**FIRST QUARTER.**

Charlotte	September 1, 1909	Dr. P. C. Sprague
Berkeley and Park	September 14, 1909	Dr. John Sprague
Meriden and Lockwood	September 28, 1909	Dr. John Sprague
Highland and Woodlawn	October 12, 1909	Dr. John Sprague
Highland and Woodlawn	October 26, 1909	Dr. John Sprague

**SECOND QUARTER.**

Charlotte	November 28, 1909	Dr. P. C. Sprague
Berkeley and Park	December 12, 1909	Dr. John Sprague
Meriden and Lockwood	December 26, 1909	Dr. John Sprague
Highland and Woodlawn	January 9, 1910	Dr. John Sprague
Highland and Woodlawn	January 23, 1910	Dr. John Sprague

**THIRD QUARTER.**

Charlotte	February 20, 1910	Dr. P. C. Sprague
Berkeley and Park	March 6, 1910	Dr. John Sprague
Meriden and Lockwood	March 20, 1910	Dr. John Sprague
Highland and Woodlawn	April 3, 1910	Dr. John Sprague
Highland and Woodlawn	April 17, 1910	Dr. John Sprague

**FOURTH QUARTER.**

Charlotte	May 16, 1910	Dr. P. C. Sprague
Berkeley and Park	May 30, 1910	Dr. John Sprague
Meriden and Lockwood	June 13, 1910	Dr. John Sprague
Highland and Woodlawn	June 27, 1910	Dr. John Sprague
Highland and Woodlawn	July 11, 1910	Dr. John Sprague

Resolved and One District, we will build upon existing and expand our existing services, including Sunday School, Prayer Band, and other church activities. We will also engage in the work of the community, and we will continue to be a part of the community. We will also engage in the work of the community, and we will continue to be a part of the community. We will also engage in the work of the community, and we will continue to be a part of the community.

The Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church was legally organized March 16, 1916 by Rev. D.J. Tyler as chairman, the Clergy Bro. and Sis. Nun. The group attending called themselves The Prayer Band. They invited all the neighbors, friends, and anyone else who would meet. The Prayer Band began on Sunday, March 12, 1916. They bought two small houses on a lot at North Fourth Street for \$1000.00. They used one of the houses for the church and the other for \$500.00 a month. The members of the church were \$1500.00 per month and a payment of \$1000.00 each August.

History of Mount Olive Baptist Church

The Members had to carry their own chairs from their homes to sit in their own spaces to make fires. Practically



The members of the African M.E. Church, the homes of worship on the 3rd and 1st, and clear an indebtedness resting upon their building at Bethel Church Abstract of Title



Presented To  
Mrs. Mary Alexander  
In Recognition of  
"Women of the Community"  
Salem Baptist Church  
June 21, 1984

The Missionary Baptist Church was organized on May 7, 1909, in Champlain as pastor, Mr. F.A. Hagden was the first pastor, the Trade School was the first school and the first class of students was Christiana Day.

Sovereign Program  
Temporarily closed until further notice  
THE BAPTIST  
GENERAL STATE CONVENTION  
AT WASHINGTON

MADISON  
MADISON BAPTIST CHURCH  
Organized by K. C. Johnson  
CHAMPLAIN, VERMONT  
JANUARY 14, 1911



The July 1921, Rev. Donelson established Boy Scout Troop #41 Blake Raming was the first Scout Master, James O. Wilson was the second and Otis M. Scott was the third.

1887  
Robert Allen  
Allen J. Allen  
takes pleasure in awarding this certificate of recognition to  
The Salem Baptist Church  
of Champlain, Vermont  
who became a member of this church  
Eating, June 20, 1916



With Song

and Jas. Dean to Trustees of the  
4,1870 Lot 465 St. Lot 1, SW, 7, 19, 9.

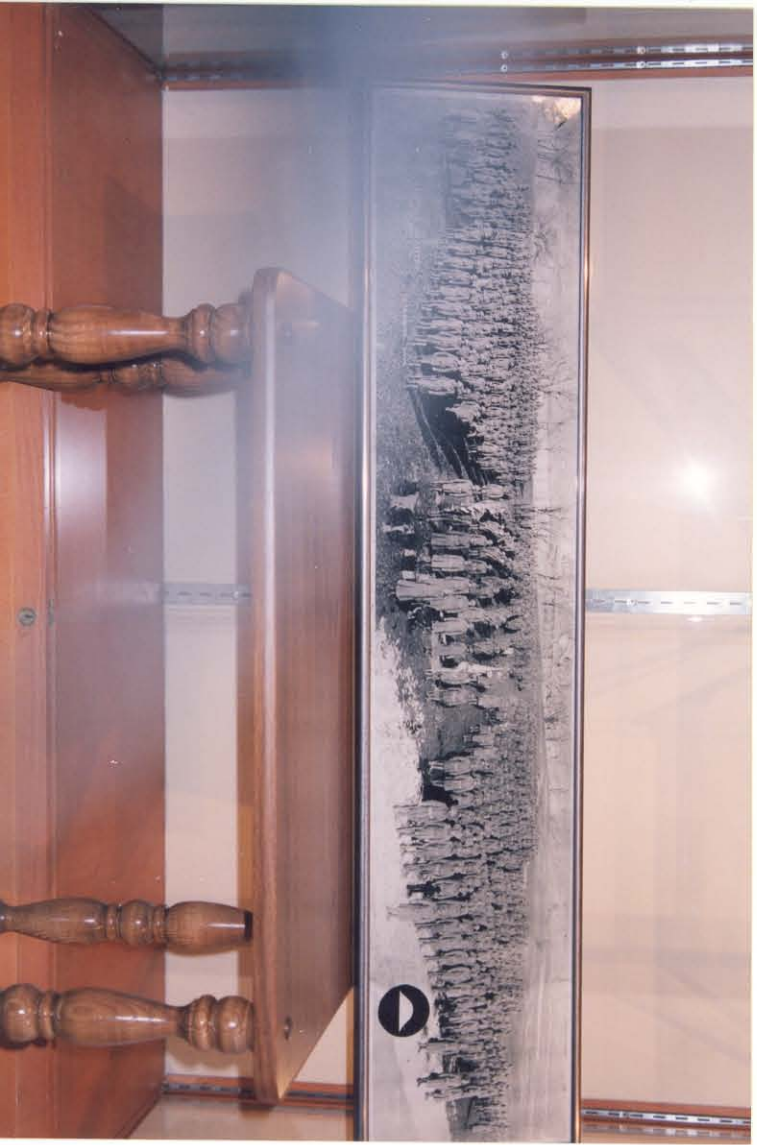
Salem Baptist Church

To devote the use of the facilities. The children of the school ranged in age from 2 to 5









## BUSINESSES

Through the Years: African American History Comes Home

Through the Years: African American History Comes Home is a project of the National Archives and Records Administration, in partnership with the National Black Leadership Initiative Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The project is a collaboration between the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Black Leadership Initiative Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the National Black Leadership Initiative Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The project is a collaboration between the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Black Leadership Initiative Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the National Black Leadership Initiative Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

### 1900 - 1930

**THE GREAT MIGRATION**

During the early 20th century, millions of African Americans moved from the rural South to the urban centers of the North and West. This migration was driven by the search for better economic opportunities and an escape from the harsh conditions of Jim Crow segregation in the South.

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### 1930 - 1950

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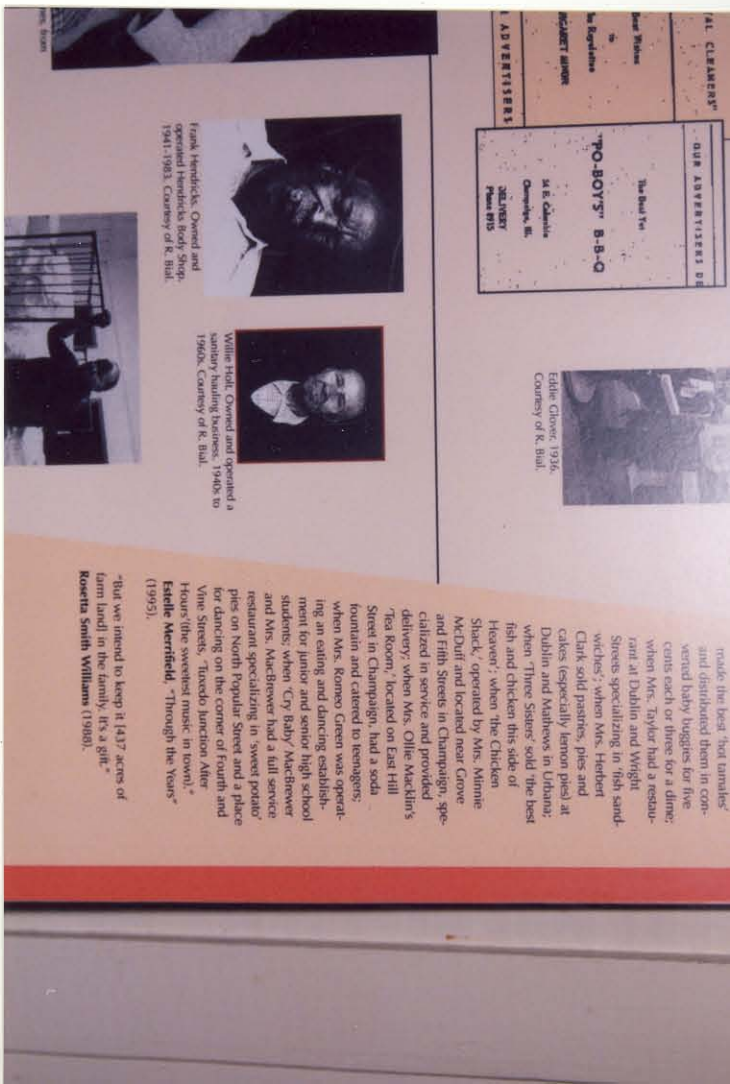
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### 1950 - 1970

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"But we intend to keep it 1437 acres of farm land in the family. It's a gift."  
Koreita Smith Williams (1980).

made the best hot tamales and distributed them in convenient baby buggies for five cents each or three for a dime; when Mrs. Taylor had a restaurant at Dublin and Wright Streets specializing in fish sandwiches; when Mrs. Herbert Clark sold pastries, pies and cakes (especially lemon pie) at Dublin and Mathews in Urbana; when "Three Sisters" sold the best fish and chicken this side of Heaven; when "the Chicken Shack," operated by Mrs. Minnie McDuff and located near Grove and Fifth Streets in Champaign, specialized in service and provided delivery; when Mrs. Olie Macklin's "Tea Room," located on East Hill Street in Champaign, had a soda fountain and catered to teenagers; when Mrs. Romo Green was operating an eating and dancing establishment for junior and senior high school students; when "Cry Baby" MacBrewer and Mrs. MacBrewer had a full service restaurant specializing in "sweet potato" pie on North Popular Street and a place for dancing on the corner of Fourth and Vine Streets. "Toledo Junction After Hours" the swayed music in town."  
Estelle Merrifield. "Through the Years" (1995).







# BUSINESSES

## Through the Years: African American History Comes

Champaign County African Americans like others attempted and often succeeded in securing a part of the dream, property ownership and community building. They understood the need for fraternal and social organizations in an attempt to provide racial uplift as well as self-help. They also worked to build the community. Of course, not all were successful. By 1911 a former slave and one of the first African American landowners in Champaign County owned 437 acres of farm land in the Broadlands.

- 1930



"I married October 1, 1916. I graduated in June." Carrie Nelson (1982).

"I was born in the north part of Champaign. My mother and dad were living with his mother." Erma Bridgewater (1982).

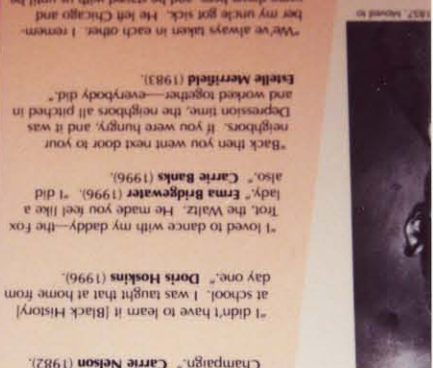
"Well my uncle Frank Earnest, who was a few years older than I, had graduated from Homer high school and he wanted to go to college. [UUC] and they [the family] were trying to decide whether he should come up back and forth...and they decided they'd move. And they moved to Champaign." Carrie Nelson (1982).

"I didn't have to learn it [Black history] at school. I was taught that at home from day one." Doris Hoskins (1996).

"I loved to dance with my daddy—the Fox Trot, the Waltz. He made you feel like a lady." Erma Bridgewater (1996). "I did also." Carrie Banks (1996).

"Back then you went next door to your neighbors. If you were hungry, and it was Depression time, the neighbors all pitched in and worked together—everybody did." Estelle Merrifield (1983).

"We've always taken in each other. I remember my uncle got sick. He left Chicago and came down here, and he stayed with us until he died. My grandfather and grandmother lived with us, you know, with my mother and dad, and we just took care of each other. You're having up, you get home. Elderly didn't go into nursing, and kids home or that sort of thing. They stayed right with family." Erma Bridgewater (1982).



**Books in African-American Studies from The University of Illinois Press**

**Lynching in the New South**  
Georgian and Virginia, 1880-1930  
St. Hilda's, Birmingham

**Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights**  
Organizing Southern Workers  
Michael R. Perman

These two books explore the complex relationship between labor and race in the South. Lynching in the New South examines the role of lynching as a tool of racial control in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights explores the role of labor unions in the struggle for civil rights in the South.





