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Thurs. 4 Jan 1912 p. 4 CDG

A GOOD COLORED MAN.

There is matter of much interest in the filing of the will of George W. Smith, who died lately at his home in Raymond township, this county. He left an estate valued at about $116,-000 and was probably one of the richest colored men in this state. His history shows what the colored man can do by setting himself zealously and honestly to work. Mr. Smith came out of slavery into Illinois and first worked in Sangaomn county. He came into Champaign county later and had then begun to see something of what might be done by diligent and economical habits. He acquired a reputation for honestry and integrity and died possessed of more than 400 acres of as good soil as there is in the state.

Though his record is unusual, it is a worthy portion of the record which marks the uplift of his race. Stripped of all prejudice, the negro has been making great progress. Emerging from slavery less than fifty years ago, members of his race have taken positions in almost all walks of life. It is estimated that the accumulated wealth of the negroes of the United States is at least $900,000,000. In Georgia alone, their real estate is valued at $8,000,0000. One colored man in Georgia farms 2,000 acres and employs forty-six families. John Benson of Alabama owns over 3,000 acres of the best lands in that state and another colored man in Alabama operates five plantations and has won the title of the "Potato King," by cultivating over 300 acres of potatoes every year, his average being 245 bushels an acre. For many years Deal Jackson, a colored Georgia man, has been

ly than Christmas and New Yea
New Year's comes just in time
catch many a man with a Christ
box of cigars at the psychological
ment to swear off.

There is many a page in the
diary carefully filled, beautifully w
ten and carefully punctuated,
many a book will always retain
pristine immaculateness on the p
devoted to the last months of
year.

PAY INCREASE ALLOWE

Engineers, Conductors, Firemen Brakemen on the C. & E. I.

Chicago, Jan. 4.—Engineers,
ductors, firemen and brakemen in
employ of the Chicago & Eastern
nois railway will get the incre
in pay asked for several months
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out this month.

STATE EXAMINER WAS SURPRIS

W. F. Launtz, who conducte
chauffeur examination in Urbana
terday, had forty-eight appli
and eighteen of the number fa
Mr. Launtz said it was the wor
of applicants he had run across
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Bloomington and only one appl
was present from Danville, which
also included in the examina
The next examination will be he
about three months.

TOWNSHIP COLLECTI

Georgia alone, their real estate is valued at $8,000,0000. One colored man in Georgia farms 2,000 acres and employs forty-six families. John Benson of Alabama owns over 3,000 acres of the best lands in that state and another colored man in Alabama operates five plantations and has won the title of the "Potato King," by cultivating over 300 acres of potatoes every year, his average being 245 bushels an acre. For many years Deal Jackson, a colored Georgia man, has been the first in that state to put a bale of cotton from the new crop on the market. Ann Maria Fisher, who grew to womanhood a slave, died worth more than $70,000, which she bequeathed mostly to educational and benevolent purposes. Alfred Smith of Oklahoma, a colored man, won the first prize in the cotton-growers' section of the World's Exposition at Paris in 1900.

The negro has been making a place for himself in almost all lines of art and industry. Fully 30,000 of them are teachers and of that list Booker T. Washington stands at the head. Dr. Daniel H. Williams, a colored man, is one of the two or three surgeons in the known world who have operated successfully upon the human heart. Successful colored doctors are scattered all over the states. If the negro is measured justly by the circumstances that surround him, and the barriers that have been thrown in his way, he has done as well as, if not better than, his white

terday, had forty-eight ap[illegible] and eighteen of the number Mr. Launtz said it was the w[illegible] of applicants he had run acro[illegible] a mechanical standpoint, p[illegible] due to the tender years of th[illegible] cants and he never has befo[illegible] so many boys at an examinati[illegible] number was about the same Bloomington and only one a[illegible] was present from Danville, wh[illegible] also included in the exam[illegible] The next examination will be about three months.

TOWNSHIP COLLEC[illegible] FILE THEIR B[illegible]

The following collectors' have been filed with Circul[illegible] Porter:

Homer—M. L. Hollis, c[illegible] bond, $43,000. Sureties, Ch[illegible] Babb and Ernest L. Richard[illegible]

Condit—Arthur W. Condi[illegible] $31,000. Sureties, J. M. J[illegible] E. Jackson, F. B. Vennum.

Raymond—G. S. Reinhart tor, bond, $28,000. Suretie[illegible] Keefe, Samuel Kincannon, Chapman.

Bridal Pair Snowboun[illegible]

F. O. Hopkins received a ca[illegible] his son, Harry Ward Hopki[illegible] with his wife, left here a f[illegible] ago for their future home land, Ore., having been recen[illegible] ried, stating that they had [illegible] layed eight hours by a snow[illegible] The card was sent from New

Many who used to smoke 1[illegible] now buy Lewis' Single straight 5c.

+ Box 649 (Personal files)

BOX 694
[Range 13B, section 1]

PERSONAL FILES (ROWELL)

Reel to reel tapes, not inventoried, received from Betty Rowell in 2002.

Log updated 2/14/2003 (jek)

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

Suggested Subject and Name Headings For African-American Research

- Select Number Two on the computer menu:
- "Champaign County Historical Archives Index"
- and search either N [name] or S [subject].

African Methodist Episcopal Church (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Afro-American Athletes—Illinois—Champaign County [Subject]
Afro-American Baseball Players—Illinois—Champaign County [Subject]
Afro-American Basketball Players—Illinois—Champaign County [Subject]
Afro-American Business Enterprises—Illinois—Champaign County [Subject]
Afro-American Consolidated Contractors, Inc. [Name]
American Civil Liberties Union [Name]
Anna Tutt Honeys Senior Citizens [Name]
Association For the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH) [Name]
Barkstall, Vernon L. [Name]
Beardsley Recreation Center (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Bethel Church of God in Christ of the Apostolic Faith (Urbana, Ill.) [Name]
Black Law Students Association [Name]
Black Mothers Association [Name]
Black Panthers [Name]
Blacks in Government [Subject]
Bowles, Theotto [Name]
Bridgewater, Erma Scott [Name]
Champaign (Ill.) – Human Relations Commission [Name]
Champaign Centennial High School (Champaign, Ill.). Afro-American Club. [Name]
Champaign Centennial High School (Champaign, Ill.)—Race Relations [Name]
Champaign Central High School (Champaign, Ill.). Afro-American Club [Name]
Champaign Community Unit School District Number 4 (Champaign, Ill.) –Integration and Segregation [Name]
Champaign County African-American History Committee [Name]
Citizens for Racial Justice [Name]
Civil Rights [Subject]
Columbia Elementary School (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Discrimination in Employment [Subject]
Discrimination in Housing [Subject]
Donaldson, William Howe [Name]
Douglass Park (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Douglass Recreation Center (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Frances Nelson Health Center [Name]
Griggs, Alvin [Name]
Hays School (Urbana, Ill.) [Name]
Harmon, Loretha [Name]
Hite, Ernest [Name]
Hoskins, Doris [Name]

Humphrey, Kathryn Britt [Name]
Jamerson, Leslie [Name]
Johnson, John Lee [Name]
Lawhead School (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Merrifield, Estelle [Name]
Minorities – Employment [Subject]
Miss Black America [Name]
Miss Black Champaign County [Name]
Miss Black Teenage America Pageant [Name]
Nesbitt, Bruce D. [Name]
Nesbitt, Charlotte [Name]
North End (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
North End Center [Name]
North End Cleaning Co. [Name]
North End Culture Project [Name]
North End Health Center (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
North End Pastors Alliance [Name]
North End Progressive Development Corporation [Name]
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity [Name]
Race Relations [Subject]
Racial Discrimination [Subject]
Ransom, Mildred [Name]
Royalettes Club [Name]
Segregation [Subject]
Shelton, Albert [Name]
Smith, Charles [Name]
Smith, George W. [Name]
Stratton Elementary School (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Suggs, Raymond Eugene [Name]
Thomas, Taylor [Name]
Turner, Bernell [Name]
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus). Afro-American Campus Community Relations Program [Name]
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus). Afro-American Culture Series [Name]
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus) . Afro-American Studies And Research Program [Name]
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus). Black Faculty and Staff Association [Name]
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus). Black Graduate Student Association [Name]
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus). Black Greek Letter Association (BGLA) [Name]
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus). Black Student Association [Name]
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus). Committee on Human Relations and Equal Opportunity [Name]
Urban League of Champaign County [Name]
Washington School (Champaign, Ill.) [Name]
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority [Name]

Black farm family's area roots run deep

Smiths recall labors of love growing up near Broadlands

The George W. Smith family, circa 1887. George Smith is seated second from left with baby son John at center. Their farm near Broadlands is still in the family.

By ANNE COOK
News-Gazette Staff Writer

BROADLANDS — John and Brenda Smith treasure the lessons they learned growing up on the rural Broadlands farm their great-grandfather started in 1876.

They raised livestock, they joined 4-H, they went to camp, they won prizes at fairs, and they learned firsthand about rural America's work ethic.

Both were leaders at Allerton-Broadlands-Longview High School, but Brenda Smith remembers one difference — just about the only one she remembers — that set her apart from her 1960s-era classmates.

"I didn't date anyone," said Smith, now a registered nurse at Prairie Center for Substance Abuse in Urbana.

"You didn't do that then."

John Smith, a football star at ABL, has more insidious memories of discrimination.

"There was no difference, no prejudice at our school," he said. "But playing sports, we ran into it at other schools, especially in Vermilion County. Our team did well."

On the farm, the family worked hard to continue the tradition started by George W. Smith, who escaped from slavery in Tennessee, joined the Union Army as a scout and settled down in the Springfield area before moving to Champaign County as a homesteader in 1876.

By the time Mr. Smith died in 1911, he'd built up a farming operation of 437 acres, major holdings in those days. His son, John Smith, expanded the family operation to about 600 acres.

Today, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture 1997 Ag Census, black farmers are rare in Illinois — only 100 of the state's 76,000 farms are run by black operators.

Nationwide, 18,451 of the nation's 1.9 million farms are operated by blacks.

John Smith's family was active in the

See FAMILY'S ROOTS, A-6

News-Gazette photo by John Dixon

Harrieett Smith stands in front of the Smith family farmhouse near Broadlands, where she lived in 1939 as a newlywed and raised her two children.

Family's roots

Continued from A-1

farm community, and John Smith was well-known in horse circles for his love of the animals, for the horse shows he sponsored to underwrite 4-H and FFA activities, and for his beautiful show horse, Pat.

John's son, Charles, and Charles' wife, Harrieett Smith, both have dark memories related to that horse hobby.

"There was an annual stock show at the University of Illinois, and when I asked my grandfather why he didn't ride, I was told to be quiet," Harrieett's son, John, said.

"Dad ran into discrimination at the county fair in the '40s," said Harrieett Smith, who started farming with the family in 1939 when she married Charles.

"He couldn't ride in the horse show, so he had someone else ride his horse, his good friend Oscar Witt," said Harrieett Smith, who still lives in Broadlands. "The board finally gave up."

She said her family followed simple rules making a living on the farm.

"We didn't go into debt," said Smith, now 83. "I made the kids' clothes, I made the curtains, I made the bread, and I made the noodles. I still do."

She also worked almost as hard as her husband in the field.

"When the kids were in school, I was the helper," she said. "I drove the tractor, I planted corn and soybeans, I fixed dinner, then I went back to the fields.

"It was a wonderful place to bring up kids," Smith said.

Charles Smith also held a full-time job at the UI as a groundskeeper, and Harrieett Smith became the first black UI employee to head an office.

"The kids wanted to go to college," she said of the chief reason for all that extra work.

Their children remember those years as demanding but rewarding.

"It was the hardest job I've ever had," said John Smith, now an engineer for the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority at Memphis, Tenn.

"People are amazed at our work ethic, but when I was growing up, we'd be up at 5 or 6 a.m. We had cattle and hogs to take care of in the summertime, and we showed livestock all summer," he said.

"I remember going on a class trip to Washington, D.C., and when we got back, after staying up all night, Mother was sitting there in the truck," Smith said. "I remember thinking, 'That's not good.' It had been raining while we were gone, and she took us straight out to the field to work all night planting."

"They taught us you have to earn your way because you don't get something for nothing," Brenda Smith said. "Our rules were: You tell the truth, you work hard, and you're always clean."

She remembers a trip to Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry that gave her a new perspective about race relations.

"We stopped at Stoney Island to eat, my classmates talked to people in the restaurant, and I remember asking my best friend, 'Should we be so friendly with people we don't know?' because it was a bad neighborhood," Brenda Smith said.

"She said, 'We just assumed all African-Americans are like your family,' " Smith said. "We were the only ones the white kids in Broadlands were exposed to on a regular basis. We were the standard."

So were relatives, the Wards, who also grew up in Broadlands and whose descendants also still own farmland in the area.

Eugene Ward, now 74, grew up on a farm about 3 miles north of the village and just west of the Smith farm.

Ward still lives on the family farm, but he rents to neighboring farmers 120 acres he and his brother own. Their mother, Helen Ward, the connection to the Smith family, was 100 when she died in February last year.

Their father's family came to the Mansfield and Bellflower area, also to escape slavery, and became the only prominent black family farming in that area.

Ward, who's retired from the UI, said his Broadlands childhood was completely untroubled by racial differences.

"We're part of the community," he said.

John Smith said his parents taught him how to survive at home and how to work in the field when he was very young. He learned how to iron when he was in grade school, and he learned how to drive.

"Mom taught me how to drive a grain truck in a wheat field when I was 7," he said. "It was a mile long, so there wasn't anything there for me to run into. I learned how to drive the tractor later that year. It had a hand clutch, and it was harder to drive."

His mother proudly displays newspaper stories about the children's success in county yield contests and livestock shows.

"The kids won a lot of prizes," said Harrieett Smith, who grew up in a prominent farming family in northern Mississippi.

She said her husband's parents almost put an end to their relationship before it began because they didn't want him to go down to Mississippi to visit a male friend, a UI student who was married to Harrieett's sister.

"My sister's husband finally convinced them by saying, 'It's not like the rest of the South,' so Charles decided to come down, and that's when we met," Smith said. "It's all according to who your people are."

The family still has farming interests in that area just south of Memphis, and John Smith tried his hand at agriculture for five years starting in 1980 before he went to work in Memphis.

"I grew soybeans, wheat and cotton for two years before I decided I was tired of losing money," he said.

Inheritance and sales have reduced the Smith family's land holdings, but 160 acres of the original family farmland remain in their hands. Harrieett Smith said she rents the land to other farmers.

Her children remain committed to the family roots.

"The land is still in family hands," John Smith said. "It's there now, and it always will be."

PACKET CONTENTS

"Finding Local African American History Resources." Workshop, Early American Museum April 26, 2003

1. Schedule for the Day
2. Complete Set of *Through the Years*
3. History Resources from the Urbana Public Library and Urbana Archives
4. Various Bibliographies
5. CD
6. Illinois State Learning Standards Chart
7. African American All Stars
8. Photocopies from African American History N-G Insert
9. Pages from "A Place in the Parade."
10. Pages from *In All My Years,* Ray Bial
11. Church History Information
12. Education Brochure
13. EAM Calendar

ISBE and IHC evaluation forms

A Place in the Parade

Citizenship, Manhood, and African American Men in the Illinois National Guard, 1870–1917

ELEANOR L. HANNAH

Between the end of the Civil War and the onset of United States involvement in World War I, African American men overcame great difficulties to maintain their military presence in the Illinois National Guard (ING). African American men in Illinois, acting on the strength of and faith in the ability of military service to confirm and preserve their claims to equality, citizenship, and manhood, created military companies whenever and wherever they could find the numerical strength and community support to do so. They created short-lived company after short-lived company and finally achieved institutional stability with the formation of what would become the Ninth Battalion ING in Chicago in 1890. That battalion served in Cuba during and after the Spanish-American War as the Eighth Illinois Infantry United States Volunteers (USV), solidifying their once-tenuous position within the ING. Later, the same organization formed the core of the Thirty-third Infantry American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), one of the four African American regiments sent to serve with the French army in 1917. Their accomplishment is all the more remarkable at a time when the limited gains of Reconstruction were rapidly being lost and racial tension in Illinois was increasing.[1] The record of their efforts is a testament to the importance that African American guardsmen and the African American community in Illinois placed on a continuing state military presence for African American men.

[1]For a brief survey of the failures of Reconstruction and the consequent limitation of the rights of African Americans, see Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper, 1990). For Illinois specifically, see Roberta Senechal, *The Sociogenesis of a Race Riot: Springfield, Illinois, in 1908* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Felix L. Armfield, "Fire on the Prairies: The

Eleanor L. Hannah is an assistant professor of history at the University of Minnesota Duluth. She received the Ph.D. in American History from the University of Chicago and is currently working on a history of the Illinois National Guard.

African American guardsmen persisted despite the many difficulties of maintaining an active company during the nineteenth century. The difficulties facing all Illinois militia companies, African American or white, revolved around the twin needs for members and money. Membership was time consuming and voluntary, requiring weekly drill attendance, summer training, and numerous social and fundraising activities. Once established, companies also desperately needed money because the Illinois militia appropriation did not fully support militia activities until well into the twentieth century. In the face of insufficient support from the state, militia members had to rely on their members and their communities to make up the shortfall through nearly incessant fundraising. That presented particular challenges for the African American militia members because the African American community in Illinois was relatively small, providing an insubstantial base from which to draw money and members.[2] In fact, scores of Illinois militia companies (white and African American) failed within two years or less throughout the 1870s and 1880s due to lack of community support.[3] And yet, time after time, African Americans created companies for themselves. Some lasted only a year or two, some almost a decade, until the creation of the Ninth Battalion in Chicago in 1890.

1895 Spring Valley Race Riot," *Journal of Illinois History* 3 (2000): 185–200; Caroline A. Waldron, "'Lynch Law Must Go!' Race, Citizenship, and the Other in an American Coal Mining Town," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20 (2000–2001): 50–77; Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, "'A Warlike Demonstration': Legalism, Violent Self-Help, and Electoral Politics in Decatur, Illinois, 1894–1898," *Journal of Urban History* 26 (2000): 591–629; Shirley J. Portwood, "'We Lift Our Voices in Thunder Tones': African American Race Men and Race Women and Community Agency in Southern Illinois, 1895–1910," ibid. 26 (2000): 740–58; Dennis B. Downey, "'A many headed monster': The 1903 Lynching of David Wyatt," *Journal of Illinois History* 2 (1999): 2–16; Christopher K. Hays, "The African American Struggle for Equality and Justice in Cairo, Illinois, 1865–1900," *Illinois Historical Journal* 90 (1997): 265–84; Anna R. Paddon and Sally Turner, "African Americans and the World's Colombian Exposition," ibid. 88 (1995): 19–36.

[2]The African American population in Illinois grew substantially between 1870 and 1900, from just fewer than 29,000 to over 85,000. This is a conservative figure for 1900 because the census that year broke out the categories "Colored" and "Negro," and the 85,000 figure is that for the "Negro" population alone. The figures for the "Negro" population in 1900 closely match those used by St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton in *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945; rpt. New York: Harper, 1970). For population figures, see *The Statistics of the Population of the United States . . . Compiled, from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census, (June 1, 1870)* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1872), 24; *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880)* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1883), 3; *Report of Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1895), xcviii; *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900: Population* (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Office, 1901), cxv.

[3]This was true of virtually all ING companies in the early years, not just the African American companies. For example, in 1874 Adjutant General Higgins reported that of twenty-four listed companies, four were disbanded, four more failed to report, and one company failed to completely organize, fizzling out before ever getting going. *Biennial Report of the Adjutant-General of Illinois, Transmitted to the Governor and Commander-in-Chief. For 1873 and 1874* (N.p., n.d.).

The Eighth Illinois was mustered into federal service between July 12 and July 21, 1898, at Camp Tanner in Springfield. This broadside, published by Fuller Brothers of Chicago, celebrates the Spanish-American War service of Company H, which was composed mostly of men from the Springfield area. The Eighth Illinois was mustered out of federal service on April 3, 1899.

African Americans struggled on because a militia company was a tangible demonstration of their independence. As Eric Foner has argued, one of the many things that freedom meant for African Americans was that they could now do the same kinds of things white people did.[4] And one thing white Illinois men did in increasing numbers throughout the 1870s and 1880s was raise and sustain militia companies.[5] By doing the same thing, African Americans demonstrated their belief that equality of military service would carry with it equal access to the public space in which to act out one form of responsible citizenship and disciplined manhood—the formal military parade down city streets. After a militia law overhaul in the late 1870s, only militia companies recognized by the state had the right to parade with guns. Private organizations had to petition the state for the right to march in a military-style parade with weapons.[6] If African American men wanted to preserve and extend their rights to perform as part of the state militia in the public domain on the same terms as white men, they needed a formal militia company to exercise that particular freedom.

African Americans actively serving in the guard also provided a forceful reminder to Illinois residents, both black and white, of the important role that African American troops played in the Civil War. Not only did African American troops tip the balance toward victory for the Union army, but as Frederick Douglass put it: "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S.; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth that can deny he has earned the right of citizenship."[7] Although many African Americans were convinced by that argument, many whites were not. The connection that Douglass drew between the uniform, weapons, and

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[4]See Foner, xi–xvi.

[5]In 1870 the state reported to the federal government that there was no active militia. By 1880 there were over eight thousand active members of the state militia—and thousands more had passed through in the intervening decade—the average member spending slightly less than three years in a militia company. Hannah, "Manhood, Citizenship, and the Formation of the National Guards, Illinois, 1870–1917" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1997), 4; *Fourth Annual Report of the Adjutant General of Illinois. December 1872. Submitted to Governor John M. Palmer by Adjutant General J. Dilger, Dec. 31, 1872* (Springfield, Ill.,1872); *Biennial Report . . . 1873 and 1874*; *Biennial Report of the Adjutant-General of Illinois to the Governor and Commander-in-Chief. For 1879 and 1880* (Springfield, Ill.: Phillips Bros., 1880).

[6]They could, of course, march in military uniforms without weapons. *Laws of the State of Illinois: Enacted by the Thirty-first General Assembly* (Springfield, Ill.: Weber, 1879), 192–204. The Military Code of Illinois was rewritten or substantially amended in 1874, 1876, 1879, 1885, 1897, 1899, and 1903. See the general orders in the complete run of the adjutant general's biennial reports. The 1879 law formally changed the name of the state militia to the Illinois National Guard.

[7]James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, Oxford History of the United States, Vol. 6 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 564. See Ira Berlin et al., *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), for ways that freedmen viewed their military service as a vital aspect of winning citizenship rights. See also Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860–1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

citizenship highlighted the importance of a recognized militia company and further explained why a simple, unarmed, marching company would not do. After 1877, it was only as a member of the Illinois National Guard that African American men could parade as recognized soldiers, making and remaking Douglass's case for their citizenship.

The idea of citizenship itself was under great stress in the late nineteenth century. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments shattered the previous linkage of whiteness and citizenship. The continuing pressure of the women's suffrage movement challenged the necessary maleness of citizenship. Militia volunteers in Illinois saw their organizations as intimately involved with the issue of redefining citizenship in that new era, stressing the ability of the militia to recognize, foster, even create model citizens and manly men. They believed that the role of the citizen-soldier in civic pageantry, especially parades, and the responsibilities of the citizen-soldier for national defense placed the militia squarely in the midst of the general debates about who was a citizen, what was responsible citizenship, and how a citizen might be made. By parading publicly as members of the state militia, African Americans secured their own place in the larger public dialogue about who was a representative, responsible citizen. Of course, actual military service was a sine qua non argument in favor of responsible citizenship, and in Illinois and elsewhere, many African Americans hoped service in the Spanish American War would seal the citizenship that they earned in 1865.[8]

Ultimately national service in the volunteer army of 1898–1899 would not further the case for African American citizenship or equality, even for African American soldiers. In fact, incidents of racial tension or outright violence directed at the African American members of the Illinois National Guard, which were rare in Illinois before 1900, became more regular and overt after 1901. Though the racial violence colored their experience and limited the ways in which they could or would be deployed at home or abroad, African Americans in Illinois preserved and held on to their organization into the early decades of the twentieth century.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Illinois militiamen in general also perceived their organizations to be centrally involved in the ongoing debate of

[8]Hannah, chap. 3; Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1974), chap. 5. See also Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., "An Experiment in Color: The Eighth Illinois Volunteers, 1898–1899," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 65 (1972): 293–312.

what it was to be a man in a rapidly changing world; they argued that their organizations created and developed ideal characteristics of manhood.[9] As Illinois guardsman Henry Lathrop Turner put it, his regiment was the "home of the highest discipline." His fellow members combined "reliability with dash, conservatism with enterprise, culture with athleticism" in "a regiment whose gayety shall be but eddies in the current of devotion to duty—whose *bonhommie* and good comradeship shall be the foam lightening up the surface of its patriotism."[10] While that description of the quality of manhood created and confirmed for white men by guard membership suggests a certain muscular romanticism, African American guardsmen framed the issue in still more dramatic terms.

In the opening of his 1899 history of the Eighth Illinois USV, author William T. Goode conveyed a powerful sense of the importance that at least some black men placed on military service in the late nineteenth century:

> Far back in the early seventies the desire for military organization first began to inspire the hearts of the leading colored men of the state of Illinois. . . . As early as 1870 this military spirit and feeling bubbled up in the hearts of the colored men in Illinois, and like the subterranean activity of a passive volcano, kept constantly bubbling, burning and boiling up until it reached the crater of their ambition. The lava of aspiration, overflowing the open apex of the mountain of "Success," crept down its steep slopes until its warmth had animated the ambition of the entire colored population of the commonwealth.[11]

That sentiment first overflowed in 1870, with the creation of African American companies in both Springfield and Chicago. In 1870–1871, African American men created the Hannibal Guards in Chicago. Like many local companies in those

[9]For a sampling of recent work on manhood, gender, and American culture, see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). Mark C. Carnes's *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989) and Mary Ann Clawson's *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) are two of the more recent explorations of nineteenth-century American fraternalism. See also J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987). For issues concerning homosexuality and the military, see George Chauncey, Jr., "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War One Era," *Journal of Social History* 19 (1985–1986): 189–211; Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Plume, 1990).

[10]Turner, *Souvenir Album and Sketch Book: First Infantry, I.N.G. of Chicago* (Chicago: Knight & Leonard, 1890), 5. The new armory also represented considerable fundraising success, as the regiment and their supporters paid for it themselves.

[11]Goode, *The "Eighth Illinois"* (Chicago: Blakely, 1899), 5.

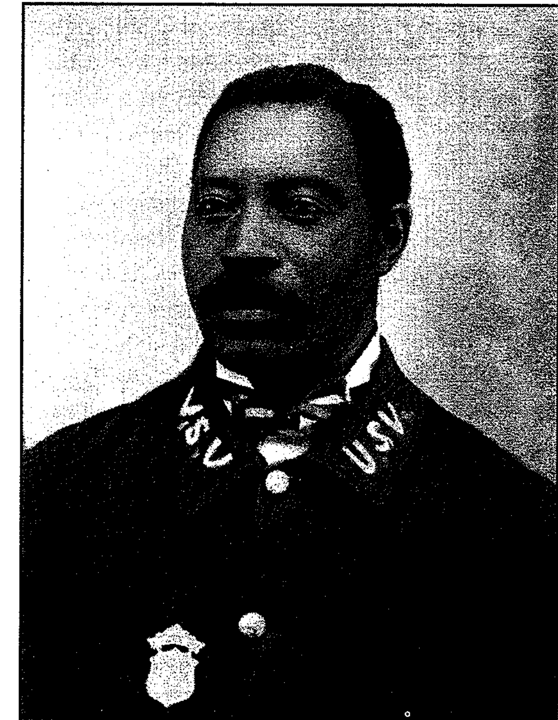
years, the Hannibal Guards never secured formal ties to the state militia forces.[12] Membership in the state militia before the revised law of 1876–1877 was a tenuous thing, indicating only that the officers were commissioned by the state, and conveying no particular privileges or responsibilities.[13] Chicago was not the only place where enough African American men had the interest and organization to form a company. In 1872 the "*McLean County Guards*, (colored,)" formed by residents surrounding Bloomington, joined the state militia.[14] In the state capitol the officers of the African American "Springfield Zouave Liberty Guards" were commissioned sometime between 1870 and 1872. They were listed as disbanded by the state in 1872, but must have re-formed sometime soon after without seeking new commissions for their officers. In October 1874, the Springfield Zouaves marched in a procession leading President Ulysses S. Grant to the unveiling of a statue of Abraham Lincoln in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield. Regardless of the formal status of the company, the Springfield newspapers identified the Springfield group as a member of the state militia.[15]

[12]Ibid. Hannibal was a Roman general of African origin whose name was a popular choice for African American organizations. It is unclear if they weren't officially recognized because they were turned down or because they never bothered to pursue state officer commissions.

[13]See *Fourth Annual Report . . . 1872.*

[14]Ibid., 1–5. Zouave companies were a pre-Civil War craze, initiated by Elmer Ellsworth in Chicago in 1859 with his company, the "United States Zouave Cadets." He trained the cadets in the gymnastic drill of the French-African Zouave regiments, which he had picked up from a veteran of those corps a few years earlier. Essentially, in Ellsworth's vision a Zouave unit was a drill team with an emphasis on athleticism and group precision in both marching and marksmanship. The flashy and distinctive Zouave uniform consisted of a red cap, short jacket, sash, and baggy trousers. Ellsworth drilled his company so well and was so encouraged by the result that in 1860 he took it on a successful twenty-city tour, and Zouave companies sprang up all over the country in his wake. That same year Ellsworth came to the attention of Abraham Lincoln, accompanying him to Washington as a bodyguard and receiving a second lieutenant's commission in the professional army. Ellsworth was shot and killed just after the firing on Fort Sumter while attempting to remove a Confederate flag from a Washington, D.C., hotel and was briefly immortalized as the Union's "first martyr." There were many Zouave regiments during the early years of the Civil War, in both armies, but they never made headway with the professional officer corps. However, at least in Illinois, after the war the Zouave model retained its fascination and romance. The idea remained popular long after other forms more closely tied to the United States Army became the norm among volunteer militia and national guard companies. Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers & Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775–1865* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), 241–47. A description of a Chicago company's performance in Massachusetts in 1887, quoted in Martha Derthick's *The National Guard in Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 19, sounds very much like the Zouave Drill: "At the word they broke for the fence, rapidly formed a pyramid, tossed up and passed over their guns, and with cat-like agility followed themselves."

[15]*Fourth Annual Report . . . 1872*, 3–5; *Illinois Daily State Journal* (Springfield), Oct. 16, 1874, p. 2, col. 3; *Daily Illinois State Register* (Springfield), Oct. 15, 1874, p. 4, col. 2.



WILLIAM T. GOODE

The Hannibal Guards of Chicago appear to have withered away sometime within a year or two. By 1874, interest in a Chicago company had revived enough that in September, "Seventy-nine colored men signed a roll last night toward the formation of a colored militia regiment. . . . From the energy thus far displayed the movement will undoubtedly be a success." The name of that new company was the Hannibal Zouaves.[16] The Hannibal Zouaves next appeared in the news in late February 1875, when there were "riotous demonstrations . . . directed more especially against the treasury and building of the Relief and Aid Society" in Chicago.[17] In response,

[16]*Chicago Evening Journal*, Sept. 8, 1874, p. 4, col. 3.

[17]Holdridge O. Collins, *History of the Illinois National Guard, From the Organization of the First Regiment, in September, 1874, to the Enactment of the Military Code, in May, 1879* (Chicago: Black & Beach, 1884), 17. The Relief and Aid Society had a long-standing commitment toward the prevention of a creation of a welfare class. That resulted in a number of policies designed to judge those most fit to receive aid and deny it to any who did not meet their standards for being only temporarily distressed. For further information on the Relief and Aid Society, see Karen Sawislak, "Smoldering City," *Chicago History* 17, nos. 3 and 4 (1988–1989): 70–101.

militia companies, including the Hannibal Zouaves, mobilized all across Chicago to protect the Relief and Aid Society from attacks by putative "communists."[18] That company, too, seems to have died out within a few years.

In time the African American military association in Chicago became known as the "Cadets."[19] As with the Hannibal Zouaves, it was most likely a new organization that rose out of the ashes of the old. Like the Hannibal Guards and the Hannibal Zouaves, the Cadets never formally belonged to the state militia. On July 1, 1877, a new militia law became effective in Illinois. The following spring, two African American companies developing from the core Cadets were organized with the intention of creating an African American battalion within the new Illinois State Guard. After African American Chicagoans successfully organized two new companies, the Adjutant General recognized the new Sixteenth Battalion ING during the spring and summer of 1878. The Sixteenth included companies A and B in Chicago, the "Clark County Guards" of Marshall, and in October gained the "Cumberland County Guards" of Greenup. Major Theodore C. Hubbard, along with the battalion staff, was commissioned in September 1878.[20]

The Sixteenth Battalion remained active and on the state's rolls for three years. Then, in 1882, new Adjutant General Isaac Elliott eliminated inefficient, undermanned, or virtually disbanded companies as part of a more general reorganization aimed at bringing expenses under control. At that time Elliott dissolved the Sixteenth Battalion.[21] However, Alexander Brown, who served with

[18]*Chicago Times*, Feb. 25, 1875, p. 3, col. 1, p. 4, cols. 1, 4. The history of the Ninth Battalion ING/Eighth Infantry USV written by Goode doesn't distinguish between the Hannibal Guards and the Hannibal Zouaves. Perhaps enough of the men were involved in both units that Goode didn't feel the need to. Perhaps he didn't realize that there were, in fact, two distinct, though sequential, organizations.

[19]Goode, 5–6. Once again Goode does not distinguish this as a separate organization. In fact, he traces it directly back to the Hannibal Guards of 1870.

[20]*Biennial Report of the Adjutant-General of Illinois Transmitted to the Governor and Commander-in-Chief. For 1877 and 1878* (Springfield, Ill.: Weber, Magie, 1878), 51–52. I am not sure if the Clark County Guards or the Cumberland County Guards were African American. I suspect that they were not, as they are listed as "Independent," though under the Sixteenth Battalion's officers and staff, and in 1880 they are assigned with letter designations to the Seventeenth Battalion. It is entirely unclear, and I can find no evidence to corroborate this one way or another, but based on the organization charts, I suspect that for technical purposes these two white, independent companies were subject to the orders of the black major of the Sixteenth Battalion, though I am quite sure that no attempt was made to place them under his command.

[21]*Biennial Report of the Adjutant-General of Illinois, to the Governor and Commander-in-Chief. For 1881 and 1882* (Springfield, Ill.: H. W. Rokker, 1883), 4, 24–29, 35, 40. It is difficult to follow what exactly happened with the African American companies. Major Scott of the Sixteenth resigned on September 23, 1881. No company of the Sixteenth appears on the disbanded list at that time. However, the commissioning of Alexander Brown of the Chicago Light Infantry (Colored), which took place on July 12, 1882, is not mentioned in the 1881–1882 report either. *Biennial Report of the Adjutant-General of Illinois, to the Governor and Commander-in-Chief. 1883 and 1884* (Springfield, Ill.: H. W. Rokker, 1884), 94–95, 195.

the Sixteenth Battalion, was commissioned captain of a new company in Chicago on July 12, 1882.[22] The "Chicago Light Infantry (Colored)" under Brown lasted for almost five years, until May 2, 1887, when it, too, was mustered out of state service.[23] Future historian of Eighth Illinois USV, William Goode, in writing of that otherwise low moment for African American military organizations in Illinois, stressed that nevertheless "the colored men were undaunted. It was not their intention to be discarded."[24] But it was not until the early summer of 1890 that African American men in Chicago again gathered to start up a volunteer military organization.

The companies formed between 1870 and 1887, unstable as most were, participated in the full range of activities shared by ING companies in general. Companies took their place in civic parades and celebrations, as with the 1874 parade in honor of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield. In 1875, the Hannibal Zouaves mobilized along with all the other militia companies in Chicago and held themselves in readiness for a call to preserve public order that never came.[25] Far more common than mobilization for riot duty, which seldom happened, was the military "entertainment" held by the Hannibal Zouaves in the late summer of 1875.[26] "The Hannibal Zouaves (colored) Captain R. B. Moore, [will] give a grand military entertainment at Burlington Hall . . . on next Monday evening, Aug. 2. The entertainment will consist of drills, dialogues, speaking, sham battles, cotillions, etc., and a supper. . . . The proceeds are to be used to procure arms for the company."[27] Those kinds of fundraising spectacles were the bread and butter of state militia companies as they struggled to supply themselves with the necessary military accoutrements—rent for their armory space, uniforms, and weapons.

[22]*Biennial Report . . . 1883 and 1884*, 55, 195. It is unclear why it did not make the 1882 or 1883 rosters, because the company clearly existed from July 1882 onward.

[23]That Brown was the commander of this unit for the entire time is undoubtedly one of the most important factors in its longevity. See Jerry Cooper, with Glenn Smith, *Citizens as Soldiers: A History of the North Dakota National Guard* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, 1986), in which the same point is argued for the earliest years of the study.

[24]Goode, 6. It is not clear when or why the McLean County organization folded or the Springfield company lost steam. However, the record of all companies in the state suggests that black companies must have suffered from the same difficulties of financing, enthusiasm, and membership that plagued most companies across the state.

[25]This mobilization was not sought by the mayor, the sheriff, or the Illinois Adjutant General, and was later repudiated by the governor. *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1875, p. 2, cols. 5–6.

[26]Because the "Cadets," or their successor organization, the Sixteenth Battalion, wasn't officially part of the Illinois militia until 1878, it wasn't called to active duty during the railroad strikes of 1877. As those strikes created the opportunity for a massive race riot in Braidwood, Ill., with white miners forcing African American miners and their families out of their homes, the existence of an African American state militia organization would have been a challenging proposition for the state authorities.

[27](Chicago) *Inter Ocean*, July 28, 1875, p. 8, col. 3.

Again, after joining the ING in 1878, the Sixteenth Battalion entered fully into the life of an ING company; training, drilling, holding parades and benefits, and throwing "entertainments" for their members and their supporters. In 1879 "A grand entertainment for the benefit of Company B, Sixteenth Battalion, I.N.G., was given at the Exposition Building last evening. The Sumner Guards of St. Louis were in the city on a visit, and of course there was a great time generally among the colored population. . . . After a competitive drill, in which the Chicago Company compared very favorably with the St. Louis organization, there was a ball at which a large number of the ladies and gentlemen tarried till well into the small retreating hours of the night." In September 1881 the Sixteenth Battalion was still able to muster two companies totaling some eighty men, a band, and a drum corps to march in the solemn Chicago parade that marked President James Garfield's funeral.[28]

One difficulty in maintaining militia companies was the rapid turnover in membership and officer slots. According to the newspapers, the man elected captain of the Zouaves in September 1874 was James Shelton, and his lieutenants were Charles Segmore and A. J. Etheridge.[29] At the time of the elaborate entertainment held less than a year later, the captain was R. B. Moore. Theodore Hubbard was the major of the Sixteenth Battalion in 1878; Samuel W. Scott held that post in 1881. The composition of the companies is difficult to determine with any accuracy, but the Chicago newspapers reported that the "Sumner Guards (colored), of St. Louis, are visiting their Chicago friends. Several of the high privates are among the wealthy men of that benighted burg, one of them, a barber, paying taxes on $100,000 worth of real estate."[30] While that has nothing to say about the membership of the Chicago company, it makes clear the appeal of the militia to a broad segment of the African American population in the Midwest.

Summer camp was also an important event in the life of any Illinois National Guard company, and on August 1, 1879, the "colored regiments of the city, together with their sisters, their cousins, and their aunts, leave the Northwestern depot at 9 o'clock this morning for Geneva Lake. There they intend to have a grand celebration."[31] In the years before 1885, when the state purchased the property to house Camp Lincoln on the outskirts of Springfield, guard companies organized their own summer training camps, and Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, was a popular choice for Chicago organizations.[32]

Those kinds of social activities were crucial in holding militia companies together during the lean decades when state and federal funding was at best a limited gesture

[28]Ibid., May 20, 1879, p. 2, col. 2; *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 26 (p. 1, cols. 1–7), Sept. 27 (p. 9, cols. 2–3), 1881.
[29]*Chicago Evening Journal*, Sept. 8, 1874.
[30]*Inter Ocean*, May 21, 1879, p. 8, col. 1.
[31]Ibid., Aug. 1, 1879, p. 8, col. 1.
[32]Hannah, chap. 3.

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toward supplying the needs of the average militia company. In order to stay together, companies had to foster camaraderie, largely without the full trappings of military life, and earn the support of a larger community to help pay all the company expenses. Both kinds of support were created and strengthened by a full social calendar. African American guardsmen needed time to bond and to demonstrate via their presentation of themselves as free adult men and citizens of Illinois, that their company was an asset to their own community as both a model for manhood and as a reminder and a challenge to the larger, white audiences that lay beyond the small African American communities.

Writing about the formation of the Ninth Battalion in 1890, Goode wrote: "The formation of such an organization, it was thought by many, would in time prove a beneficial and a social advantage to the colored residents of Illinois."[33] The benefits and social advantage that the African American community derived from supporting

[33]Goode, 13.

A / 929.3096
Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society. 1986 - current.

A / 929.3096 / AFR
African American genealogical sourcebook. Paula K. Byers. 1995.

A / 929.3096 / BEA (Adult Department: 929.10896 / BEA)
The complete guide to tracing African-American genealogy. Donna Beasley. 1997.

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Slave ancestral research: it's something else. Mary L. Jackson Fears. 1995.

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Case studies in Afro-American genealogy. David T. Thackery and Dee Woodtor. 1989.

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List of free black heads of families in the first census of the United States, 1790. Debra L. Newman. 1973.

A / 929.373 / SZU (Adult Department: Q929.1 / SOU)
"Tracking African American family history" in **The source: A guidebook of American genealogy.** Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Luebking. 1997.

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Black courage, 1775-1783: documentation of black participation in the American Revolution. Robert Ewell Greene. 1984.

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A / ILLINOIS / (Champ) / BEH (Adult Department: 977.366 / BEH)
"Black soldiers in the Civil War" in **From Salt Fork to Chickamauga: Champaign County soldiers in the Civil War.** Robert H. Behrens. 1988.

A / ILLINOIS / (Champ) / BIA (Adult Department: 977.366 / BIA)
In all my years: portraits of older blacks in Champaign-Urbana.

ORAL HISTORY TAPES

Oral history tapes are recorded interviews with local citizens, who recall their experiences in their own words. The collections of the Archives include more than fifty oral history interviews with African-American citizens of Urbana and Champaign. About half of these have been transcribed and are available for study in printed form as well as on tape. The transcriptions are filed in the biography section in the book stacks under A/B/surname. For example, to find the transcription of Rosetta Gray's interview, look under A/B/GRAY. All interviews are available on cassette tapes; to listen to one of the oral histories ask a librarian.

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLECTION

Local History and Genealogy

The Urbana Free Library

African-American Collection

LOCAL HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

ABOUT THE ARCHIVES

The Champaign County Historical Archives is the department of The Urbana Free Library specializing in local history and genealogy. Begun in 1956 as a file drawer of historical materials on Champaign County, the Archives has grown to become one of the best and most heavily-used collections of its type in the Midwest.

HISTORICAL MATERIALS

Historical materials in the Archives focus on Champaign County, but there is also a strong collection of materials on all of East-Central Illinois, as well as the states through which the early settlers traveled before reaching Illinois.

Vertical files. Located in the Archives are dozens of filing cabinets filled with local historical materials. Among these are original copies of Champaign County documents from 1833, historic photographs, and materials on hundreds of county events and organizations. The files cover subjects in such areas as churches, businesses, historic buildings, and transportation.

County and state histories. The Archives has hundreds of histories of towns, counties, and states. Our collection is especially strong for Champaign County and the fourteen surrounding counties, but we also have materials on most states in the eastern United States.

Newspapers. The Archives has microfilm copies of most Champaign County newspapers, including the ***News-Gazette***, the ***Courier***, and the ***Daily Illini***, as well as many newspapers now long forgotten. It also has a computer index of thousands of newspaper articles and photo negatives from the ***Courier***; the newspaper ceased publication in 1979.

In addition to these items, many of the materials useful for genealogical research also will help with local history research.

GENEALOGICAL MATERIALS

People who set out to trace their family histories will find a wide range of helpful materials in the Archives.

Getting started. Our staff will explain the best ways to begin finding out about your ancestors, and show you some helpful ways of keeping track of the information you find. Stop by and talk with them to get some ideas. Before you start doing library research, you will want to write down everything you and members of your family already know about your ancestors, especially places, names, and dates.

Surname index. One of the most important resources in the Archives is a card file containing a third of a million listings for Champaign County marriages, probates, births, deaths, tombstones, and other records. It's the best place to start looking for your Champaign County ancestors.

Family histories. Maybe, just maybe, someone else has already gathered information on your family. Check our files.

Genealogical indexes and lists. We have many indexes to census records, vital records (births, marriages, and deaths), military records, and so on. We'll be happy to help you check them for your ancestors. And we can tell you how to write to official agencies for copies of these records.

Genealogy classes. If you really get excited about gathering your family history, consider taking a genealogy class. Each spring and fall, classes meet in the Archives for eight weeks. Register through Parkland College.

Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society. This international organization was formed in 1977 and is dedicated to the encouragement of studies of local and family history; the Society has more than a dozen chapters. Among other activities, it publishes the ***Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society***, which is available in the Archives. The Society's address is:

Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society
PO Box 73086
Washington, DC 20056-3086

Ask the Archives staff for addresses of other helpful organizations.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN GENEALOGY

Entered here are both handbooks for getting started in African-American genealogy and source materials for locating family information. This list represents only some of our materials that may be of use to you in your family research. For additional sources or searching strategies, ask for help from the Archives staff. The books in the Archives collection may not be borrowed for use outside the Library, but for some items the Adult Department has copies that may be borrowed.

A / 016.07304 / UNI
Black studies: a select catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications. 1984.

A / 016.929 / THA
Afro-American family history at the Newberry Library: a research guide and bibliography. David T. Thackery. 1988.

R / A / 016.929 / UNI
"Records of black Americans" in **Guide to genealogical research in the National Archives.** 1982.

A / 016.9291 / LAW
Generations past: a selected list of sources for Afro-American genealogical research. Sandra M. Lawson. 1988.

A / 929.1 / CRO (Adult Department: 929.1 / CRO)
"Focus on African-American genealogy" in **The genealogist's companion and sourcebook.** Emily Croom. 1994.

A / 929.1 / ROS (Adult Department: 929.1 / ROS)
Black genesis. James M. Rose. 1978.

A / 929.1 / STR
Slave genealogy: a research guide with case studies. David H. Streets. 1986.

A / 929.1 / WAL
Black genealogy: how to begin. James D. Walker. 1977.

A / 929.1028 / BLO (Adult Department: 929.1028 / BLO)
Black genealogy. Charles L. Blockson. 1977.

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Front cover and interior photographs: Elizabeth Lewis and Theodore Crawley wedding, ca. 1925; Top: The Ray Scott Band, 1922-26; Center: Bethel AME Church, ca. 1900; Bottom: Cecil D. Nelson, Sr., WWI. Photographers unknown.

Champaign County African-American History Committee

African Americans in Champaign County created a rich and interesting history. A Champaign County census shows that the "first wave" of African-American migration (late 1860s through 1880) resulted in an increase from 48 African Americans in 1860 to 233 in 1870, and to 462 by 1880. Later, in the early twentieth century, African Americans migrated from border and southern states seeking jobs in the industrialized northern society. Since the primary mode of travel was by train, and Champaign County was located along major railway routes, both major migrations resulted in African Americans deciding to reside in Champaign County.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African Americans in Champaign County were limited mostly to railroad, domestic, and day labor; however many were successful in establishing their own businesses such as barbershops, stores, cleaners and in owning their own farms.

The church was a primary institution for African Americans to achieve social independence and stability. The two earliest churches in Champaign County were Bethel A.M.E. Church founded in 1863 and Salem Baptist Church founded in 1866. Another institution established for the social welfare of Champaign County African Americans was the Douglass Community Center, built in 1945 in response to social segregation and inadequate recreational facilities for African American communities.

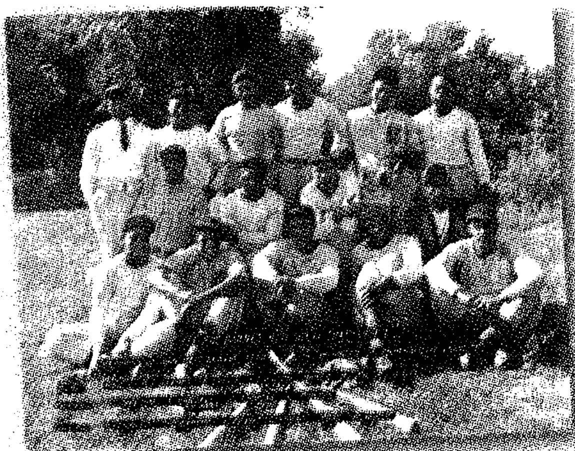
The significant contributions that the African American community has made to the development and stability of Champaign County is evident in many aspects of life. From business to the arts, to religion, this American heritage is alive and thriving. Through the years collections of papers, photographs, documents of individuals, families and organizations of the African-American community have been discarded or lost because there were no local programs to seek out and preserve such materials. Recognizing this fact, the Champaign County African-American History Committee, a volunteer committee under the sponsorship of the Early American Museum and the Champaign Park District, was organized in 1992 to work with local organizations and individuals from Champaign County and surrounding areas to help organize and preserve historical records dealing with the African American experience in Champaign County.

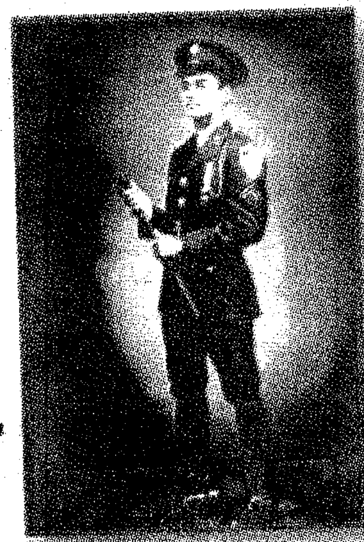
The Committee defined four areas of importance: (1) raising the public consciousness of the diversity and strength of African American contributions to Champaign County's and Illinois' heritage; (2) developing a brochure for the general public; (3) working with curriculum directors of schools to facilitate the integration of Champaign County African American history into the curriculum; and (4) securing space for storage of research materials and artifacts. The Committee publishes a biannual newsletter, *Through the Years*, which normally features an individual, a family, community group and institution; is involved in an ongoing project of collecting oral histories; and provides an exhibit at the yearly Champaign-Urbana Day for the Park District. The Committee has also provided an exhibit for a week-long event at the Douglass Center; worked with the UIUC Krannert Art Museum and University High School on a quilting exhibit; and with the Early American Museum in integrating Champaign County African American history into exhibits. Members have also conducted lectures and discussions at local schools.

Join us in preserving this heritage and keeping African American history alive all year. Just as a multitude of individuals are responsible for the many gains made by African Americans through the years, there are many thousands responsible for the survival of our culture, our tradition, and our history. We need your help today! The Committee meets monthly at the Douglass Center Annex. If you are interested in joining the Committee, donating or loaning materials, sharing or seeking additional information, please feel free to contact:

- Doris Hoskins
Archival Committee Chair
217·328·1987
- Cheryl Kennedy
Early American Museum
217·586·2612
- Barbara McGee
Champaign Park District, Douglass Annex
217·398·2572
- Nate Dixon, Champaign Park District, Bresnan
217·398·2550

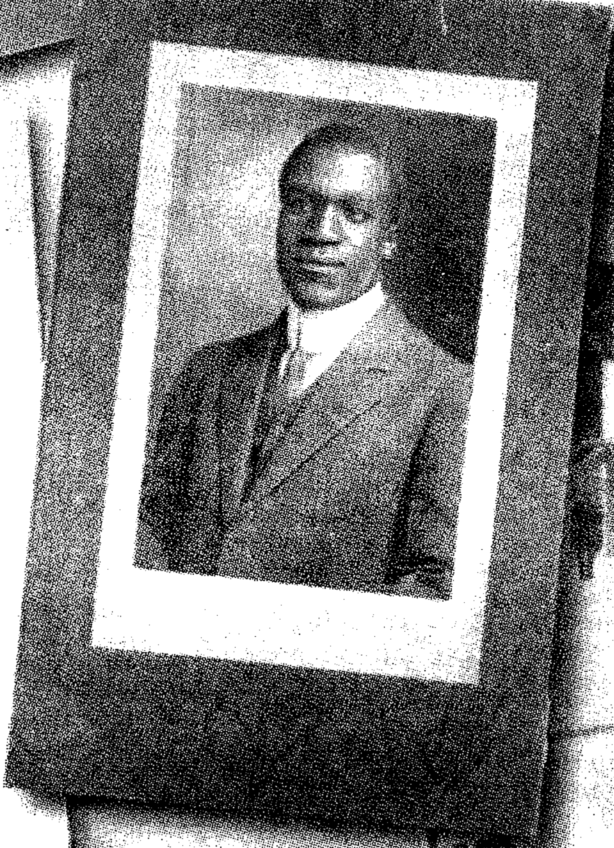
or any other member of the committee.

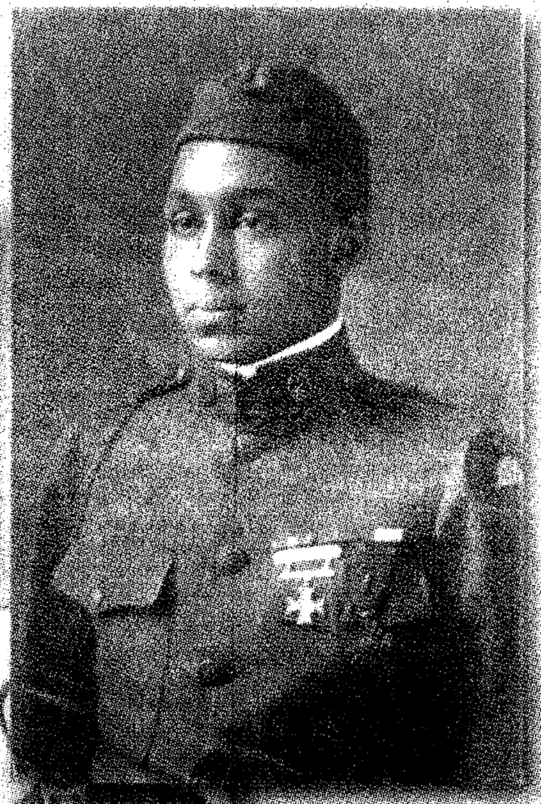




BLACK HISTORY

IN EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS





FEBRUARY 19, 2001

The News-Gazette®

Books, CDs and the Web can help with the unique challenges of researching black history

Alex Haley's book "Roots" is credited with spurring a phenomenal increase in interest in genealogy among whites and blacks after its publication in 1976. While the same basic research principles apply to both white and black ancestry, African-Americans need to deal with unique situations.

First of all, African-Americans should not assume their ancestors were slaves until after the Civil War. Many African-American families established their freedom in the first or second generation after arrival in the United States, according to William Crawford Samuel Adams in his book "Free Born: 350 Years of Eastern Shore African American History — The Adams/Beckett Family" (Heritage Books Inc., 2000). While researching his ancestry, Adams learned about the fascinating life of free blacks in colonial Virginia and Maryland, and his book includes examples of court documents from as early as the mid-1600s. Of 3.9 million blacks in the United States before the Civil War, there were more than 200,000 free blacks in the North and more than 287,900 free blacks in the South.

Professional genealogist Tony Burroughs has just published "Black

JOAN GRIFFIS

Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing The African-American Family Tree" (Simon & Schuster, 2001). This fun, easy-to-use guide provides step-by-step research methods. Although this work does not go into more advanced research methods regarding slave owners and researching in Africa or the Caribbean, it does illustrate how to find records created during the past 100 years, citing real case histories and addressing some of the challenges of African-American research.

In celebration of Black History Month, Heritage Quest has announced the bundled release of "Black Roots" along with a compact disc, African-Americans in the 1870 U.S. Federal Census, part of the World Immigration Series. This book-and-CD package provides a wealth of information on African-American immigrants and will enable any researcher to begin a search for black ancestry. Census data is included on more than 1.6 million black heads-of-household, including 1,900 who gave Africa as their place of birth. This CD also includes detailed maps and images related to Africa that can be included in a family history. The database can be searched on one or any combination of the following categories: surname, given name, age/birth year, sex, birthplace, county and locality. For example, a search for all the blacks in Illinois in 1870 resulted in 11,668 listings; Champaign has 92 records, each providing the above information along with National Archives Microfilm series number, roll and page so the microfilm can be checked. This bundled set can be ordered for $47.95 from Heritage Quest online at http://www.HeritageQuest.com or by calling 1-800-760-2455.

There also are many helpful sites on the Internet. Rated by Family Tree Magazine as one of the 101 Best Web Sites is AfriGeneas (African Ancestored Genealogy) at http://www.afrigeneas.com. This site is devoted to African-American genealogy and offers links to other pertinent sites, including census records, state resources and surname databases, as well as free census forms for the 1860 Slave Schedule and the 1860 Mortality Schedule.

Anyone interested in blacks in the Civil War should check United States Colored Troops In The Civil War at http://www.coax.net/people/lwf/data.htm. This site provides a wealth of material to read and appreciate.

A discussion of blacks in the Civil War would be incomplete without a mention of the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors project created in partnership with the National Parks Service, the Federation of Genealogical Societies, several other organizations and a host of volunteers who have been compiling a database of information about servicemen who served on both sides during the Civil War. The initial version includes the names and regimental histories of the African-American units in the Union Army. An overview of this project can be viewed at http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/info.htm.

A comprehensive list of other African-American Internet sites is at http://www.cyndislist.com/african.htm.

Contact Joan A. Griffis at 105 Poland Road, Danville, IL 61834 or e-mail at JBGriffis@aol.com.

Books delve into rich African-American past

THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

■ "Wonders of the African World," by Henry Louis Gates Jr., photography by Lynn Davis (Knopf, $24.95, paperback). "What is Africa to me?" Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen asked in the 1920s. Gates, the well-known scholar and writer, attempts an answer in this large-format companion to the recent PBS series, a chronicle of his journey through 12 African countries. In exploring African civilizations, he hopes to bridge the gap between past and present, to connect African-Americans with both their ancestors and their contemporary counterparts.

■ "Autobiography of a People: Three Centuries of African American History Told by Those Who Lived It," edited by Herb Boyd (Anchor, $15, paperback). Writers, activists, artists, educators. From Phillis Wheatley to Zora Neale Hurston to Maya Angelou, Frederick Douglass to Johnnie Cochran, Boyd has assembled a diverse chorus of voices to chronicle the African-American experience. The eyewitness accounts — drawn from slave narratives, autobiographies, journals, letters and speeches — sound a common theme of the struggle for freedom and self-determination.

In an excerpt from "Up From Slavery," Booker T. Washington writes of teaching in an Alabama shanty in the 1870s with a student holding an umbrella over his head when it rained. More than a century later, Bernice King notes that "education is still the key to our success, but we cannot teach that which we do not know ourselves."

■ "Mighty Rough Times, I Tell You," edited by Andrea Sutcliffe, and "On Jordan's Stormy Banks," edited by Andrew Waters (John F. Blair, Publisher, $7.95 each, paperback). These two collections of slave narratives are the latest editions to the "Real Voices, Real History" series. In the first book, 36 former slaves living in Tennessee in the 1920s and '30s recall their lives. A woman named Vergy acknowledges that the South may be a beautiful place but "picking cotton wasn't so much fun ... I was 4 years old when I was put on the block and sold."

The 28 narratives of former Georgia slaves recall similar experiences. "Bout the first thing I recollects is being put on the block and sold 'long with Granny and a young boy," says Fannie Coleman, who thinks she might have been 6 at the time.

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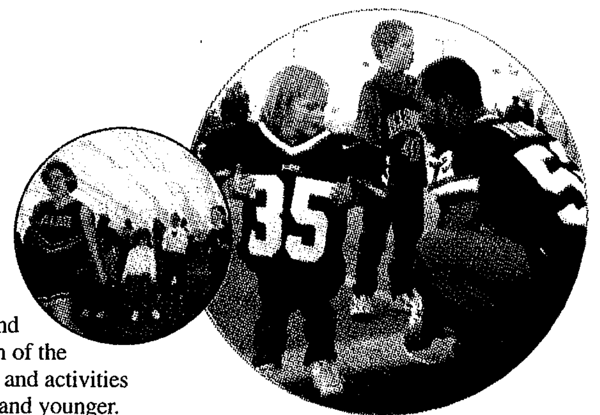

Come meet the Illini football team, coaches, cheerleaders and the Illinettes dance team. Each of the players will be hosting games and activities for kids in junior high school and younger.

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Slavery taints Illinois' history

By Michael Markstahler
For The News-Gazette

From the earliest days of Illinois' settlement by Europeans, slavery has been part of the state's past.

The first white settlers in Illinois Country were the French in the late 1600s. In 1720, Phillipe Renault brought the first African slaves to Illinois to work gold mines. No significant gold was found, but the slaves never left.

A treaty between England and France ceded Illinois Country to Great Britain in 1765. Slavery was then legal in the British Empire, so the change had little effect on the slaves in Illinois. If anything, their plight grew worse; France prohibited the separate sale of husband, wife or minor children. English law provided no such protection to keep slave families together.

Once Illinois Country became part of the Northwest Territory of the United States in 1787, slavery was outlawed by the territory's ordinance. But the territory's governor interpreted that ordinance as applying only to importing slaves. He said it was still legal to hold slaves in the territory.

Indenture system instituted

When Illinois Country became a part of the Territory of Indiana in 1800, slavery continued to be entrenched, although now it wore the guise of indenture.

The indenture system was a way for poor white immigrants to pay back those who were willing to pay for their passage to America. Strict limits were set on the years of service.

But this system became a way to perpetuate slavery under a different name. Slaves in the territory were made indentured servants. While white immigrants were traditionally indentured for 12 years, the indenture of black slaves was generally much longer. It became common practice to set the indenture of people of color at 99 years.

Statehood and slavery

Illinois was admitted to the Union in 1818. That admission did not go unchallenged, however. Rep. James Tallmadge Jr. of New York rose in the House of Representatives to denounce the Illinois Constitution because it reaffirmed the indenture system for "persons of color" and their offspring. One-third of the representatives of the northern states voted against Illinois' admission to the Union, citing the indentured servitude of blacks.

Attitudes toward blacks

In the 40 years leading up to the Civil War, even most abolitionists did not equate freedom for slaves to living free among whites. Some advocated the return of freed slaves to Africa or the colonization of Mexico. Most did not believe that blacks were equal to whites.

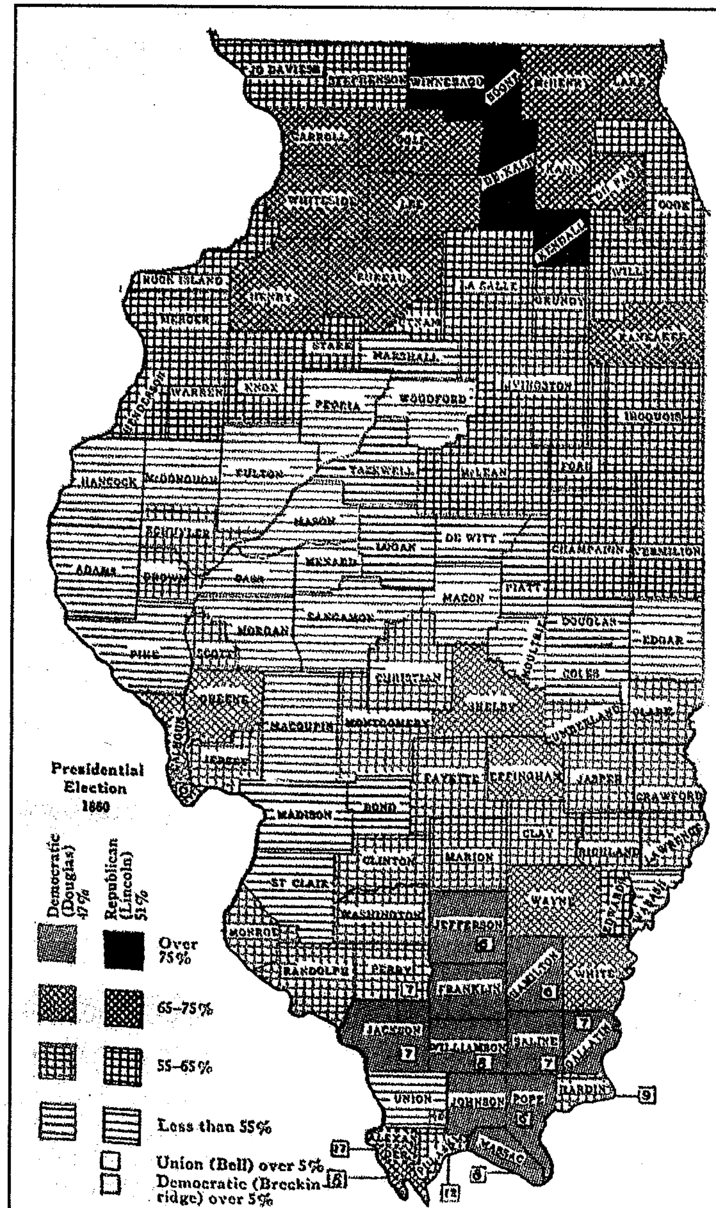

Photo from the book 'The Era of the Civil War'

In the 1860 presidential election, the southern part of Illinois voted overwhelmingly Democratic, against Abraham Lincoln and in favor of states' rights and slavery.

The majority of Illinois' population was from the South — slave states such as Virginia, the Carolinas, Kentucky and Tennessee. These settlers were called Butternuts because of

Please see SLAVERY, PAGE 13

Illinois narrowly remained 'free' state

By Michael Markstahler
For The News-Gazette

After Missouri was admitted to the Union in 1821 as a slave state, Illinois had slave states on its southern and western borders. Pressure built within the state to switch from a free state to a slave state, and a campaign was launched in 1823 to hold a convention to rewrite the Illinois Constitution.

The 18-month campaign was filled with violence. Finally, the state's voters rejected holding a new convention, 6,640 to 4,972.

But the seeming victory for anti-slavery forces was not so clear-cut. Most of Illinois' southern counties voted in favor of the convention: 82 percent of Gallatin County, 69 percent of Pope, 60 percent of Alexander, 66 percent of Jackson, 70 percent of Jefferson, 67 percent of Hamilton and 60 percent of Franklin. Only Union County in the south voted against the convention and against slavery.

Drawing a line east-west across the state at Marion County, the pro-slavery vote in the 11 counties to the south was 62 percent, while the free-state vote in the 19 counties to the north was 67 percent.

Illinois' fate was closely linked to the fate of the nation. In 1824, there were 12 free states — including Illinois — and 12 slave states. If the pro-slavery forces had been successful in Illinois, the balance of power in the U.S. Senate would have swung to the 13 slave states. The history of the United States might have played out very differently. □

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Slavery

Continued from Page 4

the color of the natural dye used for their homespun clothing. And in the view of most Butternuts, God intended blacks to be enslaved.

When the Civil War came, most of the rank-and-file soldiers filling the army of the Confederacy were not slaveholders. They were laborers, small farmers, men of the lower classes of Southern society. They believed the election of President Lincoln meant the freeing of the slaves and further competition at the bottom rung of the economic ladder. Illinois Butternuts felt a similar hostility.

New settlers, new ideas

Immigration patterns changed Illinois' position on slavery. The opening of the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes started the settlement of the northern half of the state. Railroads helped this along. The majority of the new settlers were from New England, Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio, all free states. New immigrants from Europe also were arriving; the Germans in particular were strongly anti-slavery. By 1850 the arrivals from northern states and Europe outnumbered arrivals from the Southern and middle states more than two to one.

This swing in population brought the majority of Illinoisans permanently into the anti-slavery camp. Laws began to change to match the changed attitudes.

In 1836, an Illinois court ruled that the children of indentured servants could not be required also to be indentured, thus making them free. In 1845, the Illinois Supreme Court declared indentured servitude illegal and freed the descendants of the original French slaves. Most slaves were freed in Illinois immediately after these rulings.

Continued discrimination

The end of slavery did not end discrimination, however. While the majority of Illinoisans were against slavery, most still thought of blacks as inferior and did not want them in their communities.

Article XIV of Illinois' 1848 Constitution stated: "The General Assembly shall, at its first session under the amended constitution, pass such laws as will effectually prohibit free persons of color from immigrating to and settling in this state, and to effectually prevent the owners of slaves from bringing them into this state for the purpose of setting them free."

The so-called Black Laws were finally passed in 1853 by the state Legislature. These laws required free blacks to record at the county seat of the county where they resided a certificate of freedom proving that they were not runaway slaves. They also had to record a description of their family members. When first entering Illinois, they were required to post a $1,000 surety bond against them becoming a public charge. These laws prohibited blacks from owning property, from voting, from serving on a jury or giving testimony in a trial. Blacks also were prohibited from attending publicly supported schools. Flogging was mandated for "lazy" or disobedient blacks.

And freedom was easily stripped away. Any white male in the state could seize any black found alone and unable to prove he had been legally freed. After one year, if the seized individual was not claimed as property, he could be sold as a slave. In 1853, a $50 fine was set for any blacks entering the state. Failure to pay the fine meant the black person would be sold at a sheriff's auction.

Michael Markstahler is a lifelong resident of Champaign County. History is his lifelong passion. He regularly researches and writes the history section of the Sesquicentennial Neighborhood Association Newsletter and is a regular contributor of materials to the Champaign County Archives. Recently he researched the early history of Champaign Schools.

Activist, mother reflects on quest for equality

BY MARY ALEXANDER
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY
AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY COMMITTEE

Looking at the past, I am filled with a sense of pride. Pride, I have discovered, is knowing that you have given your all to a worthwhile cause.

It was 1938 when I came to Champaign from the small Tennessee town where I had worked my way through high school and my first years of college.

I came with the idea that the opportunities would be prime and plentiful. But I discovered the same deep-rooted problems that I had left behind; that the plight of blacks was not restricted to my town or to the South.

African-Americans had a certain place in the community. They were the domestic workers, working harder and being paid less than their skills were worth. They had a certain place to sit in the theaters. There were only two public places where an African-American could sit down to eat — the ten-cent store and the Illinois Central Train Station.

In schools, black boys and girls were kept out of education's main stream. The opportunity to be recognized in school activities was not there; the honor to stand in front of their class as president was not their own; to see their faces in the newspaper in recognition for a worthwhile deed was an unreachable star. There wasn't a single black teacher in the area school system.

I was sickened by the state of the world. But I was moved into action as well. I was moved to try to make a difference.

In 1939, I joined the Council for Community Integration, an interracial organization. Their goal was to persuade the community to value individuals and make no distinctions because of race, creed or nationality.

Through CCI's efforts, housing was opened, schools were integrated and programs working with underprivileged children were organized.

But discrimination persisted. In 1958, I attempted to enroll my daughter in the Illinois Commercial College. I was told by the president that no African-Americans had ever been allowed to attend the day sessions, but that night sessions were open. The reason they gave for this was a hard fact of those times: The college catered mostly to the small towns, and admitting African-Americans would hurt their business.

Many would have graciously accepted this crumb thrown our way. Education was, after all, a luxury to many blacks at this time. But,

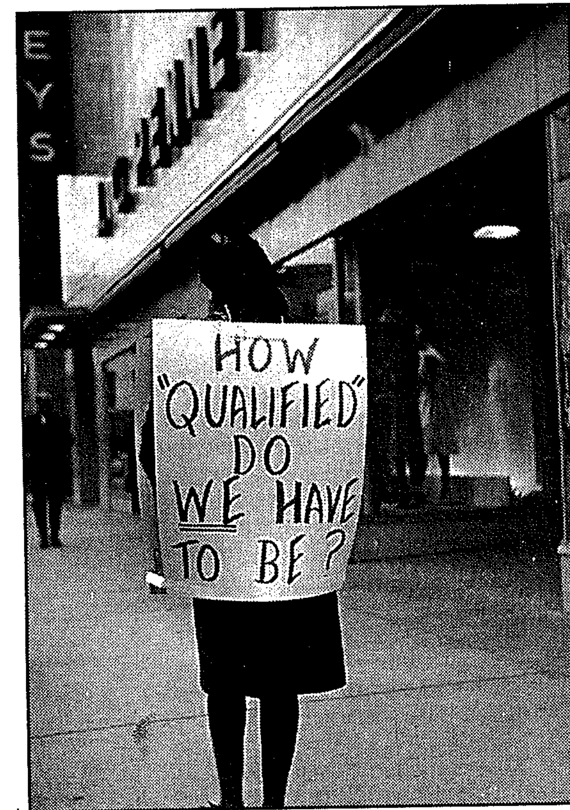

Photo courtesy of the Urbana Free Library

A woman pickets J.C. Penney in downtown Champaign in 1961.

as a mother and a black woman, I could not settle for anything less than the best for my daughter. She was worth it.

After many conferences and much pressure, the Illinois Commercial College opened its doors to blacks, and my daughter was the first to enroll and graduate from it.

In 1960, I co-founded the Champaign-Urbana Improvement Association. Headed by the Rev. J.E. Graves, the CUIA's basic purpose was to crumble the walls of segregation in employment, to seek a fair employment policy and to open avenues for blacks.

Our first project was to assemble pickets around a J.C. Penney store that had not hired a single black person. I organized a boycott, and after three weeks J.C. Penney opened its employment to blacks. Several businesses followed.

Mary Alexander has been active in many community organizations, including the Urban League, the Champaign City Human Relations Commission and the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging.

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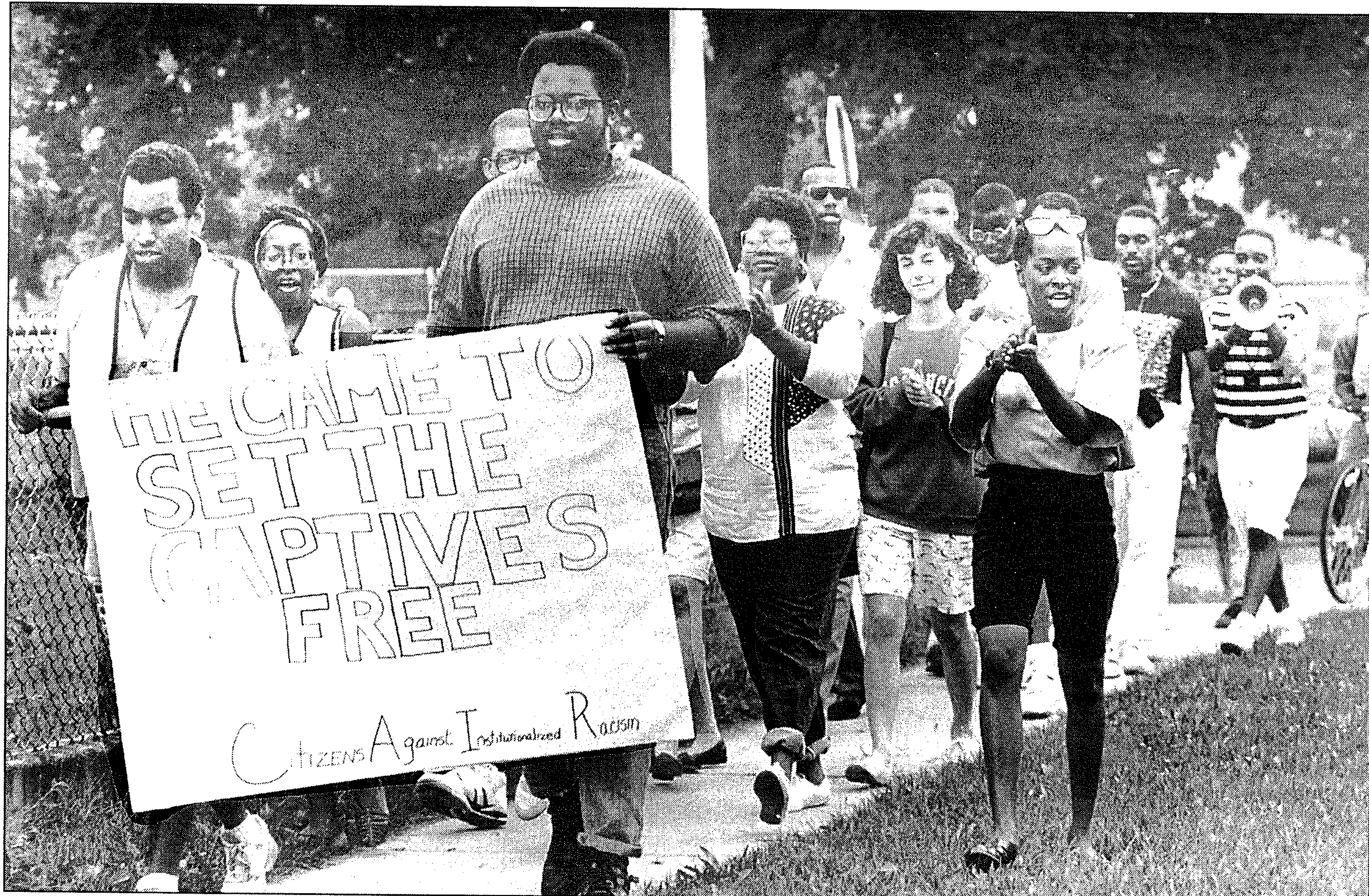

News-Gazette file photo

Civil rights struggles that began in the 1960s didn't end in that decade. Here, Rob Dawson, left, and Jeremiah Blount lead a march from the University of Illinois Quad to Douglass Park in Champaign. The September 1990 march focused on the treatment of blacks in Champaign-Urbana.

1960s a time of struggle for civil rights

By Anne Cook
News-Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN — In the 1960s — years of change that rocked the community and the country — there was no clear consensus among black community leaders about what agenda they should pursue.

Some focused on national civil rights campaigns, most notably the one led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Others, such as longtime activist and former Champaign City Council member John Lee Johnson, narrowed their focus to what was happening in Champaign and Urbana.

"I was not exclusively centered around opening Robeson's lunch counter to blacks," said Johnson, referring to a notable protest in the South.

"I focused on empowerment," he said. "We were powerless. We were not moving forward in the community coming to the table as equal partners."

Vernon Barkstall moved to Champaign in the middle of those troubled times. His welcoming experience: He lost the West Clark Street residence he wanted to purchase because of his race.

"Petty gangs and general malaise from within, and blatant racism from without, wreaked havoc on the black community," Mr. Barkstall wrote later of 1966, when he took charge of the local Urban League.

"Progressive blacks and their allies were faced with intransigence and other obstacles in every avenue of life," Mr. Barkstall said, citing blatant racism in housing, job services and schools in both communities.

Both communities scrambled to control growing unrest and hostility as the wrenching process to correct injustices played out.

Some landmarks in that struggle:

■ In November 1956, the Council for Community Integration was formed. Its early agenda: to step up integration in theaters, restaurants and hotels.

■ In April 1961, picketing continued for weeks at the new downtown Champaign J.C. Penney's store, which finally hired a black sales clerk; other retailers quickly followed suit.

■ In 1961, Kenneth Stratton was elected to the Champaign City Council, but his was the only vote cast for his proposal two years later for a fair housing ordinance. The council also defeated, at the same meeting, a proposal to ban employment discrimination at Burnham City Hospital.

■ In May 1964, protesters staged a 10-day sit-in at the local Board of Realtors office, and Gov. Otto Kerner promised to study civil rights leaders' complaints about housing practices.

■ In April 1968, King was assassinated, triggering riots at the University of Illinois, where students took over the South Lounge at the Illini Union. In the North End and other city locations, riots, unrest, demonstrations and boycotts grew in intensity and frequency for two years.

■ Against this background, in 1968, the fair housing ordinance came up again and passed in Champaign and then in Urbana.

That same year, the League of Women Voters published a report on the status of Champaign County blacks.

Among their findings:

■ "Housing gains made by some black families are largely illusory. The large majority are confined to a house that's old, overpriced, overcrowded and often below minimal standards."

■ "The problem of Negro unemployment and underemployment has come to be recognized as two-faceted. Racial discrimination on the part of the employer limits possibilities, and lack of preparedness on the part of the job-seeker limits possibilities."

■ "Black citizens feel that the Champaign Park District board should have moved long ago to solve problems at Douglass Center, including that of inadequate facilities."

■ "Public medical facilities in the county are very limited ... Most major medical services must be purchased, and for the estimated 50 percent of the Negro community with a family income less than $4,000, financing health care is a major problem."

Please see CIVIL RIGHTS, 14

History

Continued from Page 8

active part of his community.

Sports stars who made names for themselves included Warren Foulks, who played football for Sidney High School in 1904; William Earnest, a Homer High School star in 1915; Andrew Drake and John Pickens, Champaign High School standouts in 1921; and Taylor Thomas and Les Jamerson, stars at Champaign High School in the late 1920s.

In other notable sports events, the Red Sox, part of the old Negro League, were based at Champaign starting in 1940.

Blacks achieved another nationwide first in Rantoul in 1942 — when troops were still segregated.

That year the 99th Pursuit Squadron was formed and trained at Rantoul's Chanute Technical Training Center and shipped to Tuskegee Air Base, where the 278 squadron members became the first African-American pilots in U.S. military history.

In 1994, Vernon Barkstall, the Urban League head for whom one of Champaign's schools is named, wrote a News-Gazette editorial about his introduction to the community and changes he's seen since that day in 1966, a time when race relations had again become an issue.

Barkstall recalled his difficulties buying a house in the Champaign neighborhood he preferred, de facto segregation in the schools and lagging equal opportunity hiring in the community and at the University of Illinois — which only employed four black faculty members in 1966.

"So long as we allow racism and other obstacles to clutter the path to equal opportunity, society will be burdened with the necessity of doing for others what they could do for themselves, given fair opportunities," he wrote in 1994.

"The road has often been bumpy, but it has been a good ride," he said of the Urban League's work.

"I will soon get out of the catbird seat cognizant of the difficult road yet to travel but buoyed by the knowledge that there are a goodly number of people of all races out there who want to make Champaign County a better community."

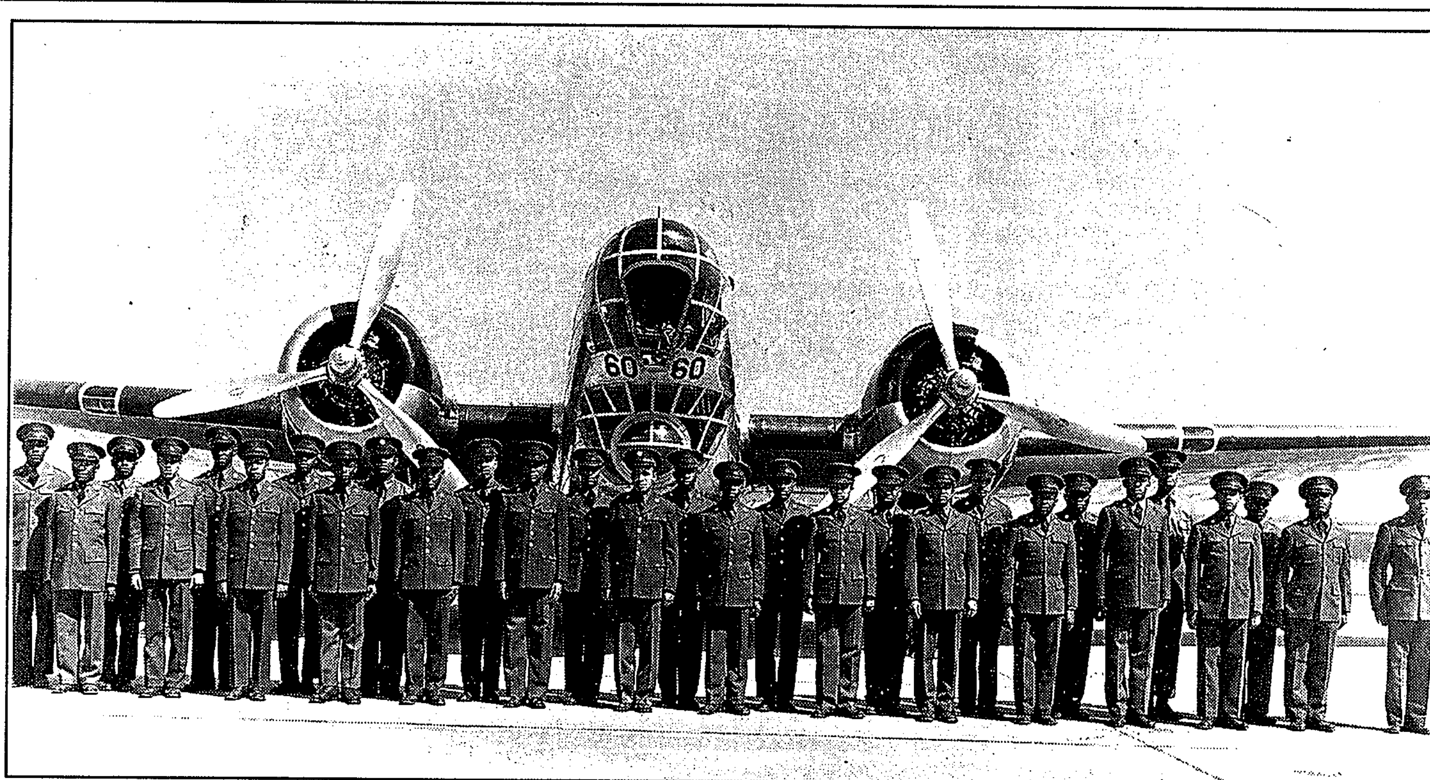

Photo courtesy of the Octave Chanute Aerospace Museum

On March 19, 1941, the 99th Pursuit Squadron was activated at Chanute. In 1942, the squadron moved to Tuskegee Air Base in Alabama, where its members became known as the Tuskegee Airmen. Chanute trained the first 278 African-American airmen in U.S. history.

Civil rights

Continued from Page 9

■ "Two elementary schools in Champaign, Lawhead and Willard, are all Negro. The white children living in those attendance districts attend Columbia, which is all white. There are five elementary and four secondary schools in both cities attended by both Negro and white students."

The troubled decade drew to a close in 1969 with a summer of shootings and riots in Champaign's black neighborhoods, calling statewide attention to the troubles here.

Some local residents went south in the '60s to join Freedom Rides to demonstrate their convictions and support for changes, but Johnson wasn't among them.

"I had real issues here in Champaign," he said.

Johnson and others like Roy Williams took their empowerment agenda to the UI, where they saw substantial inequities.

"We had more African students at the graduate level than we had black undergraduates," Johnson said. "Blacks were locked out of clerical jobs there, and they were locked out of union jobs. There was a whole lot of work to be done."

He said students who rioted there after the King assassination were venting their frustration at not getting financial aid, housing and other help commonly given to white students.

Johnson, Williams and other leaders who shared their vision drafted a series of recommendations and took them to campus administrators, who accepted them in the late '60s, putting the UI among the leaders in the land grant university system.

The campus opened its bowling, pool and other recreation facilities to community members on weekends, and campus leaders leaned on city and park district officials to make changes in favor of the black community.

Johnson said city officials were jolted out of their complacency by those UI changes and by the 1969 riots.

"They wanted to build an isolated wall around the black community and provide no services to it," he said. "We confronted the UI, and the UI confronted the communities."

The results were extensive tutoring programs, capital improvements at Douglass Center and other actions to improve the quality and equality of life for local blacks.

"We recognized issues at the grass roots," Johnson said. "We saw bigger problems than the right to sit at a lunch counter when we didn't have any money to spend there anyway.

"And there is a continuous commitment to complete that agenda, to provide safe, affordable housing, a quality education, equal opportunities in the workplace, to make government better, to lift the burden of the one-way bus assignment to integrate schools," he said.

"We're trying to finish what we started."

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A history of hardship and progress

By Anne Cook
News-Gazette staff writer

URBANA — The April 6, 1870, edition of The Champaign County Gazette recorded a landmark in the lives of the residents of the community who were then called "colored."

"Last Monday and Tuesday, the newly enfranchised colored citizens of our city voted with an earnestness and enthusiasm that augured well for the future," the story recorded.

That action initiated a new era for the area's African-Americans, many of whom had moved west after the Civil War looking for land and opportunities.

It also opened a chapter in the state's less-than-illustrious civil rights record.

Consider the early record of the state that sent Abraham Lincoln to Washington:

■ As the 1800s began, the U.S. Congress created the Indiana Territory, which included Illinois, and the council governing it quickly endorsed a system of long-term indentures, the equivalent of slavery.

■ By 1809, Illinois was made into a separate territory, due in large part to political leaders who wanted the state to join the Union as a slave state.

■ The 1810 Illinois Census counted 781 African-Americans living in the territory — 168 slaves and 613 living free.

■ By 1818, when Illinois became a state, slave interests lost their battle, and the constitution prohibited slavery.

But the civil rights struggle was far from over, and many African-American families can trace their roots to ancestors who were slaves imported to Illinois.

In 1837, abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton.

That same year, the General Assembly condemned abolition societies and sanctioned slavery in slave states.

As late as 1840, census-takers counted African-Americans as slave or free — 331 slaves and 3,598 free that year.

During that era, a small population of African-Americans made their home in Sargent Township in sparsely populated Douglas County. Records are few, but local historians believe the settlement was started either by freed slaves or slaves imported from another slave state to work.

In the summer of 1877, they all moved to Kansas for reasons not recorded. The only trace today is an engraved boulder on private land that says "Old Negro Cemetery 1840-1876."

The state's African-American residents officially and eloquently expressed discontent with their condition at an 1856 State Convention of Colored Citizens of the State of Illinois at Alton, where Lovejoy had been killed 19 years earlier.

They aired three chief complaints — they couldn't vote, testify against a white man or send their children to public schools.

They aired their protests against "those odious enactments now disgracing the statute books of this state, resting upon the moral, political and intellectual growth of the colored people like an incubus, paralizing our energies and destroying whatever of manhood there remains within us."

The proceedings, part of the Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project, are recorded at www.//lincoln.lib.niu.edu/

In 1863, the year Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Illinois sent its first, and the war's first, African-American regiment — the Twenty-ninth U.S. Colored Infantry — to battle.

Records researched by Robert Behrens show the ranks included five men from West Urbana: Dennis Jackson, George Johnson, William Kelley, Jerry Pinney and James Walker, who all enlisted Feb. 15, 1865.

An adjutant general's report on file at the public library at Quincy, where the 29th USCT was based, also lists these names: Daniel Murray of Vermilion and Oscar McClellan of Leroy, both discharged in 1865; Payton Colwell of Champaign City, who died at New Orleans in 1865; and J. Clemens or Clements of Homer.

Clemens' pension records say he died aboard the SS Wilmington in 1865 of "disease of the heart."

The roster also includes three men from Hope in Vermilion County: John Rae, Richard Miles and Thomas Mitchison, all discharged in 1865.

Elijah Gibbs, who moved to Champaign County in 1861, served in the famous 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, according to "From Salt Fork to Chicamauga," by Behrens, a Mahomet resident who died in 1998.

After the war, which took him to Fort Sumter, Gibbs returned to Champaign and lived at the corner of University Avenue and Fourth Street until he died on June 22, 1876, and was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery.

According to pension records, Gibbs was injured as his company assaulted the fort at Charleston some time late in 1863 or early in 1864 when he fell beneath the wheels of a cannon carriage.

He eventually died from those chest injuries, likely complicated by tuberculosis.

When the war ended, former slaves followed the railroads to East Central Illinois and other areas where there was land.

"Most farmed in the South, and they were looking for jobs to use these skills," said Doris Hoskins, a member of a Champaign County Forest Preserve District committee that's trying to preserve local black history.

"They settled in areas where land was available," she said.

The 1880 Census recorded 462 colored county residents, including substantial settlements in Homer and Sidney.

John Allen and his wife cleared land and raised 10 children in Sidney, and former slave George Smith, who escaped from his owner and joined the Union army, also settled there with his growing family.

By the time Smith died in 1911, he'd built a farming operation of 437 acres, a major holding in those days. His son, John Smith, expanded the family operation to about 600 acres.

The Smith family still owns 160 acres of the original family farmland, and a descendent, Harrieett Smith, still lives in the area.

Hard-working black residents made successful livings operating businesses like Clifford Jordan's barber shop, Harris Dixon's cab company, Shelton Laundry and Royal Cleaners.

Charles Phillips, an insurance man who campaigned for better housing and served on many committees, boards and organizations to accomplish that, also helped make Boy Scouts an

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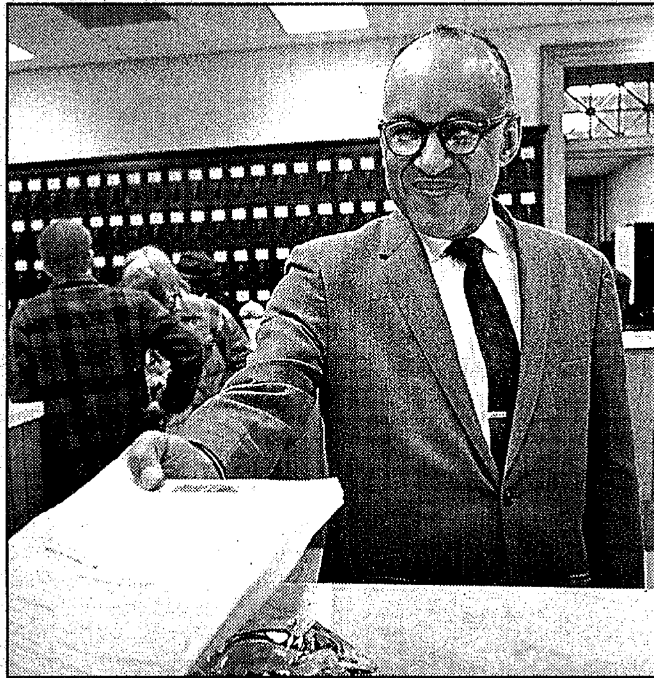

Photo courtesy of the Urbana Free Library

James Burgess files for office in 1971. He was elected Champaign County state's attorney, becoming the first African-American elected to county office.

Notable firsts

■ William Walter Smith was the first black graduate of the University of Illinois in 1900. He became a successful engineer.

William Smith

■ Dr. Henry Rowan, the first black physician in Champaign, began practicing on Walnut Street in 1914. He retired and was followed by Dr. Harry Ellis, who cared for the community for 22 years until he died in 1946.

■ Mae Hawkins was the first black teacher hired by Champaign schools in 1934. She was employed to teach black pupils at Lawhead School at a salary of $90 per month.

■ Louise Johnson was the first black teacher hired by the Danville district in 1935. During a return visit to Danville in 1993, she said she was hired "as an experiment" but was not treated differently than other teachers.

■ Al Rivers was hired as Champaign's first black police officer in 1935.

■ Al Alexander wasn't the first black deputy hired by the Champaign County Sheriff's Department, which didn't keep careful records in the early days. But he was one of its longest-serving employees — hired in 1946, retiring in 1978.

■ Taylor Thomas, the first black to be hired by Urbana schools in 1956, became the district's first black administrator in 1968 when he was named assistant principal of Urbana High School.

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

■ Kenneth Stratton was the first black elected to the Champaign City Council in 1962 or 1963.

■ Paul Hursey was the first black elected to the Urbana City Council in 1965.

■ In the 1960s, James C. Wilson was the first African-American track coach at the University of Illinois, serving under head coach Bob Wright. He was also an instructor in the Physical Education Department.

■ Jim Burgess, elected Champaign County state's attorney in 1972, was the first black county officer.

■ William Dye was Champaign's police chief from March 1975 to October 1982.

Photo: the Champaign African-American History Committee
Ruth Latham served six years in the Women's Army Corps. In 1954, she was assigned to Chanute Air Force Base as a dental hygienist and was the only black woman in that position.

Black History Month

In East Central Illinois

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Urbana woman works to collect threads of local black history

By Anne Cook
News-Gazette staff writer

URBANA — For years, Doris Hoskins has collected information about the day-to-day, people-to-people happenings in her neighborhood.

To accommodate her collection — and visits from her eight children and their families — Hoskins owns two side-by-side homes in Urbana near Provena Covenant Medical Center.

She knows exactly where everything is, but she's mastering computer skills and dreams of assembling all that information about the black families who made their lives in Champaign County into a book.

"History is history," said Hoskins, who will be 90 this year. "It's a thing with me. It's important, and people need to know."

Hoskins, other members of the black community — including Mary Alexander, Carrie Banks, Erma Bridgewater, Kathryn Humphrey, Estelle Merrifield, Mary Grace Thomas, Dorothy Moreland, CharLotte Nesbitt and Hester Suggs — and representatives of organizations formed the foundation for a Champaign County Forest Preserve District project to call attention to local black history.

The project started in March 1993 with an exhibit at the Douglass Center and evolved into a series of newsletters recording black community personalities and businesses.

Hoskins spends hours in the Urbana Free Library archives tracking down stories and names in old city directories, which she notes contained a lot more information than they do today.

"At one point, they put a C for colored after black families' listings," she said.

She's been an activist all her life, fighting for a job at the University of Illinois in the 1940s and for amenities for Dr. J.W. Hays Elementary School — now Martin Luther King Elementary School — in the 1950s.

Since she retired from the UI in 1974, she has continued to work with church and civic organizations and to compile and record community black history.

For her work, Hoskins was awarded the Illinois Humanities Council's Studs Terkel award, named for the famed Chicago broadcaster and author.

She has lived for 60 years in the same house where she raised her 10 children with her first husband, Lorenzo Wylie.

An Urbana High School graduate, Hoskins played piano with a local band when she was in high school and moved to Chicago after graduation to work. She met Wylie there.

A piano and an organ still stand in Hoskins' home. She doesn't play often because she's so busy.

"It's like the computer," she said. "You sit down and before you know it, an hour's gone."

Doris Hoskins

After her first husband died, Hoskins married Eugene Hoskins, a retired St. Louis chiropractor, in 1979. He died in 1989.

Hoskins' community activities were — and are — prodigious. One of which she is most proud: leading the UI Office of Non-Academic Personnel program to aggressively recruit African-American students.

Hoskins' dream is to see the history of her community recorded on videotape or in a book so all the work she's done collecting names and dates and stories won't be wasted.

"I don't like loose ends, and this is something that's not been done before," she said. ❑

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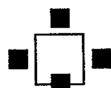

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Attitudes learned in youth big problem but not discussed

By MICHAEL MARKSTAHLER

My earliest years were on Fairview Avenue in Urbana, just across the street from J. W. Hayes School, now Martin Luther King. Goodwin Avenue was Urbana's racial dividing line in the early 1950s. No blacks lived east of Goodwin; a sprinkling of white families remained to the west. The first black family to come east across the unspoken line purchased a home on Hill in the fall of 1956. Within months our home was sold, and my family and I were moving to Champaign.

In 1957, we were settling into a new home in Garden Hills in Champaign. I finished the last few weeks of my second grade at Lottie Switzer School as construction on the new Garden Hills Grade School was still not completed.

Garden Hills subdivision in 1957 was all new, in fact, still being built. Darrel Ozier was putting up houses start to finish one every six days. Everyone lived there — from bartenders to plumbers to businessmen to professors to policemen — so long as they were white. At that time, the deeds to all of the homes in Garden Hills bluntly stated that no home could ever be sold to a "Negro."

At that time no one had air conditioning. During the summer months the men — almost all World War II veterans — would gather in someone's garage with the overhead door up. The mothers would gather in the mornings in someone's kitchen for coffee and in the afternoon and evening on someone's front concrete steps. If we weren't at the park, riding bikes or playing baseball, we kids were hanging around in someone's yard playing tag and the like. In the evenings, the fathers gathered in someone's garage and the kids were out front. I remember the adults talking about the few professor families who were uppity and never came out of their houses except to sit in their backyards.

As a kid the only adult males I knew were the fathers with fading military tattoos on their biceps, a beer in one hand and a Lucky Strike in the other. I presumed their assessment was correct about everything and specifically that something was wrong with the "pinhead" professors. Now I realize that it was class that was being spoken of — lower and middle. All of the guys in the garage were children of the '30s aspiring to be in the middle class. They knew class behavior when they saw it. They felt different from and threatened by those pinheads.

By the time I was 14 the monthly Ladies Home Journal, Look and Red Book, as well as television, were having their effect. Backyard patios were springing up; yards were being fenced; window and through-the-wall air conditioners were becoming common and front yards were empty. Everyone was learning the rules of the middle class.

Today I live on Vine Street in Champaign just west of downtown. This area is called the Sesquicentennial Neighborhood as it is Champaign's oldest and most historic, dating from the 1850s. It is a neighborhood that has the distinction of being the longest continuously integrated neighborhood in Illinois. For some undiscovered and very remarkable reason there never was a white exodus. The neighborhood today still remains stable, as it has for over a hundred years, at more or less 15 percent black and 85 percent white.

Gregory School, now apartments, was built in 1898 and was Champaign's only integrated grade school from the day of its opening until its closing in 1964. Blacks in the neighborhood knew that their children could get a good education equal to that of white kids at Gregory and to protect that opportunity, they policed their own, keeping certain types out of the neighborhood.

I am often amused by friends who refer to where I live as "the hood." Having learned the lesson growing up in Garden Hills in the '50s and '60s, I point out to them that most often people in the lower class hang in the front yards, the driveways or out by the front sidewalk. They often yell a greeting at friends passing by in cars or that they see down the street. And I point out that middle class folks tend to be found inside the house and out in the backyard, most often on their patios or deck, where they grill (rather than "Barb-B-Q").

I tell them I have decided to live in this neighborhood because I find it to be the most interesting, mixed by race, by class, by occupation, by ethnicity of any neighborhood in downstate Illinois. It is, in short, the most cosmopolitan of any in Champaign and Urbana.

Any house where you do not see people out in chairs in the front yard is likely a middle class home. It never occurs to those who think of this as the "hood" that the vast majority of the neighborhood might be middle class. Instead they are caught up by what they noticed is different from them. It makes them feel uneasy. Sometimes I point out that what they just might be seeing is their own class consciousness, perhaps even mixing up racial identity with class prejudice, and sometimes I do not.

Behaviors and attitudes we learned growing up — either lower class or middle class — and our lack of ownership of them just might be, as a community, our biggest problem, and the one thing no one wants to talk about.

Michael Markstahler is a developer, designer and a master renovator with a passion for local history.