

**The Contributions of Blacks
in Akron: 1825-1975**

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The Contributions of Blacks
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Problem.....	1
Statement of the problem.....	1
Significance and purpose of the study.....	1
Delimitations of the study.....	10
Review of the Literature.....	17
Academic aspects of black history	
instruction.....	18
A black history of Cleveland, Ohio.....	28
Histories of Akron, Ohio.....	30
Review of available sources of records	
relevant to the inquiry.....	35
Methodologies and Strategies.....	39
General Organization of the Study.....	41
Summary.....	42
II. AKRON'S BLACK RESIDENTS 1825-1899.....	43
Background Information.....	44
National movements in response to slavery..	45
Early white settlers in Ohio.....	55
Akron's Early Black Settlers.....	64

CHAPTER	PAGE
General information on Akron's black pioneers.....	65
Akron's involvement in national movements regarding slavery.....	69
Civil War Years Through Reconstruction.....	87
Akron's black civil war veterans.....	87
Early steps toward unification and independence.....	95
Post-Reconstruction Years to 1899.....	101
Economic opportunities.....	101
Black organizations to further black progress.....	103
Summary.....	110
 III. CHANGES IN RACIAL COMPOSITIONS AND RACIAL	
ATTITUDES: 1900-1919.....	112
The First Decade: 1900-1909.....	112
Civic concerns and political efforts.....	112
Self-help in Akron's black community.....	117
Early individual endeavors in Akron's black history.....	130
The Second Decade 1910-1919.....	133
Mounting racial hostility.....	134
Promotion of black consciousness and black culture.....	145

CHAPTER	PAGE
Minimal advancements despite oppression....	153
Summary.....	166
IV. RACIAL OPPRESSION AMONG AKRON'S BLACK	
RESIDENTS.....	171
The Third Decade: 1920-1929.....	171
Political and civic involvement of	
black residents.....	171
Economic conditions of Akron's black	
residents.....	176
The black social environment.....	185
The Depression Years.....	213
General conditions among Akron's black	
citizens.....	214
Individual gains: academics, athletics,	
and aesthetic accomplishments	220
Diversified black organizations.....	229
Summary.....	243
V. ADVANCEMENTS THROUGH EMPLOYMENT, CIVIC PRIDE,	
AND EDUCATION 1940-1959.....	249
A Decade of Hope: 1940-1949.....	249
Advancement through unity	249
Individual accomplishments.....	262
A Decade of Change: 1950-1959.....	281
Background information.....	281

CHAPTER	PAGE
Black progress.....	282
Individual accomplishments.....	293
Summary.....	305
VI. LOCAL RESPONSES TO NATIONAL ISSUES.	
1960-1975.....	308
A Depiction of America - The National Scene...	308
Local Responses to the Civil Rights	
Movement.....	311
Black Akronites protest.....	311
Fighting poverty in Akron.....	313
Black pride in Akron.....	332
Gains - Individual and Organized.....	336
Fields of specialization.....	337
VII. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	397
Summary.....	397
Conclusions.....	405
Recommendations.....	416
CLASSIFIED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	420
APPENDICES.....	445
Appendix 1.....	446
Appendix 2.....	462
Appendix 3.....	468
Appendix 4.....	478
Appendix 5.....	487

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

To date no historical study of the settlement, social development, and educational experiences of black residents in Akron, Ohio has been conducted. Therefore, the topic upon which research is being undertaken is the development of a general history of Akron's black residents from the founding of the city in 1825 to the present time.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

The importance of studying local black history is based on the same rationale as that which created the incorporation of Negro history into schools throughout the nation. In addition, there are some specific advantages for both educators and students who are educated in local black history. Ergo, in the present section of this paper the writer will focus on: 1) a presentation of background information relevant to the type of black history in textbooks prior to the 1960s; 2) the rationale for its present

inclusion, and 3) the particular advantages of a local black history.

Background information

The inclusion of information on black history in American textbooks prior to 1950 met with very slow and very limited progress. Most of the mention of black history in texts focused upon the fact that slavery existed in the United States; suggested that the Civil War was fought to set slaves free; and presented some token biographical sketches of Negroes of distinction--Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.¹

The presentations of black history in American texts were characterized by distortions, degradations, or omissions. Kane's research into minority treatment in textbooks revealed that, in 1949, the American Council on Education's study of teaching materials reached the following conclusions 1) the black American's position in contemporary society was largely ignored; 2) most references to blacks were prior to 1876 and perpetuated the stereotypes of a childlike, inferior group of people; 3) scientific data on man and race were lacking, and 4) illustrations showing blacks in American life were even more inadequate than the written material in the

¹Jack Abramowitz, "Textbooks and Negro History," Social Education 33 (March 1969) 306.

texts.² Other studies have yielded similar findings.³

Rationale for the inclusion
of black history in schools

For the past decade, however, the picture has changed. Recent literature is replete with articles that support the need for a comprehensive, balanced, and accurate treatment of black history in the curriculum and textbooks throughout the nation's schools. Although the history of Negroes has been the subject of several noteworthy works prior to the 1960s, the civil rights movement precipitated the incorporation of more accurate, representative Negro history into American social studies and history courses. Abramowitz commented in this regard.

Needless to say, these changes have not occurred because of any blinding light of revelation striking the publishers as if they were latter day Pauls on the road to Damascus. They are rather the happy result of the coming together in time and place of the "revolution" of our times and the painstaking research of the past three decades of such outstanding scholars, black and white, as W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Ralph Bunche, Herbert Aptheker, E. Franklin Frazier, John Hope Franklin, August Meier, L. D. Reddick, and others.⁴

Various perspectives from which to view the American racial past have collectively formed the rationale for

²Michael B. Kane, Minorities in Textbooks (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1970), p. 77.

³James A. Banks, Teaching the Black Experience (Belmont: Fearon Publishers, 1970), pp. 4-7.

⁴Abramowitz, "Textbooks," p. 306

including Negro history in the curriculum. Among a diverse set of reasons, three social reasons have been predominant: 1) the enhancement of the black student's self-concept; 2) the enlightenment of the white student in order to develop his understanding of Negroes, and 3) the promotion of improved race relations. Professional educators and educators in related fields can be effective agents of change in these directions if they are dedicated to assisting students gain an understanding of black history.

The need to develop a sense of pride and dignity within black Americans has been viewed as a necessary goal in order to undo the lingering damage that has been done to the black man's self-esteem since he arrived in America in bondage. For generations, the needless feelings of inferiority have stricken the lives of countless blacks who have become victims of "wasted potential." Recent books and media programs have focused on the positive aspects of the black man's contributions and thus have attempted to heighten his self-image. Hare has summarized this perspective

The cry for courses in black history and culture has arisen in a new black push for an invigorated collective ego-identity or group self-respect and self-direction. The quest for black consciousness and nationhood, in the absence of a territorial and political autonomy, must inevitably rest, as would any idea of nation or peoplehood, on a common sense of history and/or culture. This sense of pastness, or

collective destiny, in turn is viewed as a springboard to a new collective future.⁵

He has stated further that

. . . the teaching of black history and culture not only should seek to save black history and culture and all that is good therein, it should involve or integrate the student into his community, augmenting his functioning in the community and, indirectly in society and the world at large.⁶

Black history enables white students--as well as blacks--to gain new insights into their past by providing them with information previously omitted from their schooling. Thus they are rendered less "educationally disadvantaged."

Little has been written about white students' self-concepts in relation to black history, but Hare has cited Harrison's remarks that the white student also gains a healthier self-image set against a more realistic image of the black race; that

if it is wrong to deny the Negro a record of his past, it is equally wrong to cheat the white student who . . . is resentful when he realizes that he's only half educated in American history and half prepared for the American future.⁷

Although the struggle that blacks have had to

⁵Nathan Hare, "The Teaching of Black History and Culture in the Secondary Schools," Social Education 33 (April 1969):385.

⁶Ibid., p. 387.

⁷Ibid., p. 385, citing Charles H. Harrison, "Black History and the Schools," Education News, 21 October 1968, reprinted in Ebony, December 1968.

endure in the face of oppression has always been known to blacks, whites have been unaware of what it is like to be a minority member of a "democratic" society. Harlan has pointed out some essentially important reasons for studying black history as follows:

. . . it behooves us to study more closely than we have the Negro institutions built up behind the segregation wall--the family, church, business, mutual-aid, and even the low-life institutions like the numbers racket and the "pushers." On the "brighter" side of the coin, we need to study and include in our teaching about the Negro experience in America also his rich cultural contributions to America through the spiritual, jazz, the dance, and a rich Southern rural Negro folklore which has distinct African roots. The capacity of Negroes to survive in this society is worth study (italics mine).¹

Briefly stated,

The American Negro has been deprived of his heritage, his history, and his heroes. Equally tragic, the white American has been deprived of knowledge about, and understanding of, the Negro race and its past.²

The study of black history--for the improvement of the blacks' self-concepts and for the enrichment of the white students' understanding of Negroes--may also close the information gap necessary to communicate and thereby foster improved race relations. Viewed as such, this third benefit of black history is a hopeful consequence of the first two and together they form the stated rationale

¹Louis R. Harlan, "Tell It Like It Was Suggestions on Black History," Social Education 33 (April 1969):393.

²"How to Integrate Your District's Curriculum," School Management 12 (August 1968):20.

for studying black history in our nation's schools.

Advantages of local black history

All of the foregoing reasons which focus upon studying black history on a national level are also valid arguments for the inclusion and study of a local black history. It may even be argued that a local black history is even more important than a general history of black Americans because a local history would have several distinct advantages.

First of all, a written documented account of the historical contributions of local black citizens is preserved in writing and thereby becomes a permanent link to a past that is within the student's own environment.

Second, a written history becomes a valuable resource of information for the use of educators. Thus, it provides educators with new material from which to build lessons, makes them knowledgeable of black organizations and resource persons, and allows educators to be creative agents in the transmission of knowledge.

Third, if educators prudently utilize a written record of a local black history, a student should comprehend the knowledge that fills the void that previously existed. Hopefully it will have the effects upon a black student which Fenton envisioned, "He should be proud of what people like him [italics mine] have done in the past

and are doing in the present."¹⁰

It is the writer's opinion that a local black history can go one step further. A local black history should make a black child proud of what people like him have done in the past and are doing in the present in his presence. Students can identify with and be influenced by persons who reside in the community, and they can relate to events which have occurred in their surroundings once they are aware of their local history.

Fenton has asserted that a child can sometimes develop a more constructive self-image if he is made aware that people with whom he can identify have contributed constructively to the society of which he himself is a part.¹¹ Banks concurred, suggesting that "We validate our identity through the evaluations of those who are influential in our lives."¹²

Fourth, a local black history (or any local history) helps to educate a student as to what history really is--not a dull, monotonous textbook treatment of isolated facts and dates (as frequently taught)--but a living testimony of an account of the problems and solutions of

¹⁰Edwin Fenton, "Crispus Attucks Is Not Enough: The Social Studies and Black Americans," Social Education 33 (April 1969).397.

¹¹Ibid., p. 398.

¹²James A. Banks, "Relevant Social Studies for Black Pupils," Social Education 33 (January 1969) 69.

a collection of yesterdays and yesteryears.

Other reasons for the significance of a local black history, as it relates to professional educators and others who educate, include the following:

1. Educators, as well as students, gain a more balanced view of their local history
2. Educators gain new insights into the accomplishments of local Negroes
3. Educators and those in related fields become cognizant of the educational programs of blacks that exist outside of the school setting and within the black community

One final justification for the importance of researching and writing a local black history--specifically Akron's black history--is viewed by the writer as a possible response to some particular conclusions and recommendations of the Report of the Akron Commission on Civil Disorders regarding education in Akron. Among the Commission's conclusions were these

1. Segregation does exist in the city of Akron and de facto segregation exists in the schools
2. Racial isolation in the schools, whatever its origins, inflicts harm upon both black and white students and the entire social structure
3. As an American citizen the black student is

entitled to a first-class education. This expectation is precisely the one which white students have but are more likely to have fulfilled

4. The responsibility for equal, integrated, quality educational opportunity must be shared by the entire community; business leaders, professional people, clergymen, civic groups, and fraternal organizations as well as school officials, and this responsibility is not fully accepted at the present time

The Commission's recommendation that the writer considers most relevant to the selected topic is that

A requirement for educational excellence in our schools is a continuing revision of the curriculum to make it *relevant* [italics mine] to all classes and races of people served by the schools.¹³

Letters from civic leaders, black and white, who are "educators" in the broad sense of the word reflect their educational concerns and give testimony to the need for a local black history.¹⁴

Delimitations of the Study

This study is restricted to a historical search at the local level, limited geographically to the area surrounding Akron, Ohio and limited further to the years from

¹³Akron Commission on Civil Disorders. "The Report of the Akron Commission on Civil Disorders," Akron, Ohio, 1969, pp. 29-31. (Mimeographed)

¹⁴The letters are included in appendix 1.

the city's founding to the present. The focus of the study will be upon blacks who currently reside in or nearby Akron and blacks who have resided in the city of Akron at some period in their life.

An investigation into the effects of racial discrimination on Negroes, per se, will not be analyzed statistically in this study, nor will this study utilize a survey questionnaire-response technique. Readers who are interested in studying an analysis of the effects of racial discrimination and segregation in Akron are advised by the Akron Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to peruse and act upon the following reports:

1. Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, March 1968
2. [Report of the] Akron Commission on Civil Disorders, April 1969
3. The Justice Department's "Report to Mayor John S. Ballard on Police-Community Relations," January-March 1967
4. Little Hoover Commission Report, April 1974
5. Proposal for Upgrading Akron Inner City Schools, February 1969¹³

Ergo, the writer is primarily concerned in this study with ascertaining the positive contributions of Akron's Negro population toward the development of the

¹³Akron Branch of the NAACP, "Freedom Fund Dinner Souvenir Program," Akron, Ohio, 1974.

city for two reasons. First, the contributions of Akron's black Americans is an area of visible neglect--being most visible through its "invisibility" in the city's local history books.

The second reason for the emphasis on Negroes' positive contributions to the city's growth can best be explained in the words of Charles Wesley:

The history of a minority group has a distinct influence on group morale. It is an incentive to aspiration, ambition, and achievement, for after all, the history of a group is its good name, its reputation, its character, built over a span of years. Knowledge of this record cannot fail to inspire successive generations of young people, and to stimulate a worthy pride in an honorable inheritance.¹⁶

This paper will not investigate, in depth, any one aspect of any field other than history. More explicitly, this study will not be a study focusing solely on a given area, e.g., the literature, art, music, language, religion, politics, economics, or education of Negro Akronites. Each of these areas will be mentioned generally as each relates to the general history of Akron's Negro residents.

Clarification of key terms and concepts

For the purposes of this study, specific key terms and concepts will be limited to the meanings as defined herein:

¹⁶Russell H. Davis, Black Americans in Cleveland (Washington, D.C. The Associated Publishers, 1972), p. 1.

Education

According to Schultz, education refers to a process that goes on in society, not apart from it [and] is more than schooling. Cases of "education" are always taken to be cases of learning generally approved behaviors, habits, beliefs, or forms of knowledge.¹⁷

Educational setting

Schultz defined an educational setting as any formal (school) or informal (nonschool) situation in which at least one person is engaged in the activities of "teaching" one or more other persons in such a manner that the criteria for valid cases of "education" are being met.¹⁸

Educationally disadvantaged

The writer uses the term educationally disadvantaged in place of culturally disadvantaged, culturally deprived, or underprivileged. Whereas all people possess a culture, the term educationally disadvantaged more accurately describes those who are at a disadvantage in the educational system because of social and economic deprivation.

¹⁷Frederick M. Schultz, Social Philosophical Foundations of Education (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 6, 16.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 13.

Educators

Since education is not confined to schooling, the term educators includes not only teachers, but also incorporates Schultz's concept of "many ethnically, racially, or religiously different sorts of people, social processes, and social institutions."¹⁹

External analysis

Welter has used the term to refer to an approach to the examination of ideas wherein ideas are pursued in their relationship to events.²⁰

External criticism

Van Dalen has stated that external criticism is concerned with establishing the time, place, and authorship of the document and restoring the original form and language employed by the author.²¹

Internal analysis

A term used by Welter to refer to an approach to the investigation of ideas " . . . as ideas apart from

¹⁹Ibid., p. 14.

²⁰Rush Welter, "The History of Ideas in America: An Essay in Redefinition," in American Studies, ed. Robert Merideth (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968), p. 237.

²¹Deobold B. Van Dalen, Understanding Educational Research (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 184.

questions of their social origin or their social influence."²²

Internal criticism

Internal criticism was defined by Van Dalen as being concerned with ascertaining the meaning and trustworthiness of the data within the document.²³

Negroes

In this study the term Negroes is used synonymously with blacks, Afro-Americans, colored, or black Americans to mean American citizens who are members of the black race.

Official records

Van Dalen has used the term official records to include: legislative, judicial, or executive documents prepared by federal, state, or local governments, such as constitutions, laws, charters, court proceedings and decisions, tax lists, and vital statistics; the data preserved by churches, such as baptismal, marriage, financial, and board meeting records; the information compiled by federal and state education departments, special commissions, professional organizations, school boards, or administrative authorities, such as the minutes of

²²Welter, "The History of Ideas," p. 237.

²³Van Dalen, Understanding Research, p. 184.

meetings, reports of committees, administrative orders or directives, school surveys, annual reports, budgets, courses of study, class schedules, salary lists, attendance records, health records, safety and accident reports, and athletic records.²⁴

Oral tradition

Van Dalen has used the term oral tradition to describe myths, folktales, family stories, dances, games, ceremonies, and reminiscences by eyewitnesses to events and recordings.²⁵

Personal records

Van Dalen has suggested that diaries, autobiographies, letters, wills, deeds, contracts, lectures, notes and original drafts of speeches, articles, and books constituted personal records.²⁶

Pictorial records

Photographs, movies, microfilms, drawings, paintings, and sculpture were considered by Van Dalen as pictorial records.²⁷

Printed materials

Printed materials are those materials such as

²⁴Ibid., p. 180. ²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid. ²⁷Ibid.

printed programs, newspaper advertisements, and advertisements in souvenir programs.

Published materials

Published materials are viewed as pamphlets, leaflets, black newspapers, directories, books, periodicals, journals, local and out-of-town newspapers.

Relics

The writer uses the term relics to mean buildings, objects, statues, plaques, and awards which impart information about the past.

Schooling

Schooling is used in this study to mean education that takes place exclusively in a formal school system, public or private.

Review of the Literature

The importance of the study has been documented extensively in the first segment of this research. The concern in the review of literature is to provide the reader with information relevant to the selected topic. Thus, in this portion of the paper the writer will examine: 1) academic aspects of black history instruction; 2) the content of the black history of Cleveland, Ohio; 3) the content of local histories of Akron, Ohio; and 4) available records pertinent to a local black history

of Akron, Ohio.

Academic Aspects of
Black History Instruction

Teachers' attitudes

Since the "why" black history should be taught--the social importance of black history--has been discussed, attention will be turned to the educational aspects of the problem: instructors, content and methodology. In short, the "who," "what," and "how" will be reviewed.

It is the writer's opinion that the educator is the key element in the education of any person. It is an accepted fact that the principal educator in the traditional, formal school setting is the teacher. Consequently, the greater portion of the educational process is within the teacher's domain.

Instruction in black history, being an area of national concern since the advent of the 1960s, has met with varying degrees of success in terms of establishing the importance of the subject and instructional methodology. Less is known, however, about the teacher's attitudes and adherence toward teaching black history. As Guenther has pointed out

. . . While "how-to" and "need to" articles are plentiful, they have been based primarily upon descriptions of individual programs or suggestions for programs rather than upon research into existing programs.

It has been assumed that teachers are more likely

to initiate Negro history programs if they teach in the urban area and if they have Negro students in their classes. The degree to which they believe their community to be concerned with Negro history might also influence their decision to begin a program [italics mine]. These intuitive assumptions have not been validated, leastwise not on a large scale.²⁸

In recent years, a Missouri study was designed to address the above assumptions. Many aspects of the problem were researched and included: 1) the relationship between Negro history programs and the number of Negro students; 2) the relationship between Negro history programs and the type of community, 3) the relationship between Negro history programs and the teacher's perception of community concern; 4) the relationship between the type of community and the teacher's perception of community concern; and 5) the relationship between the teacher's perception of his community's concern and the number of Negro students in his class(es).

In that study the following conclusions were based upon the research findings:

1. Despite a legislative resolution, mandates by Missouri State Department of Education, emphasis in current social studies literature, and obvious injustices done to the Negro in American history, there were many teachers who had not initiated any form of a Negro history

²⁸John E. Guenther, "The Existence of Negro History Programs as Related to Community Concern for Negro History and Negro Enrollment," The Negro Educational Review 22 (January 1971):45.

program

2. Negro history programs occurred in urban schools, with black students in class, and where teachers felt their community was concerned with Negro history

3. Because many teachers had not responded to the need for Negro history, advocates of Negro history must develop some strategy to make teachers in nonurban, unconcerned white communities aware of the objectives to be gained from initiating a Negro history program ²³

The importance of the teacher cannot be overstated. Several educators have recently analyzed black history instruction in order to assess what the academic objectives of black history should be. Although opinions of educators differ as to what academic skills should be developed, most educators are in accord on the importance of the teacher as the key person in maximizing the successful instruction leading toward the development of those skills.

In a recent article, Banks addressed the issue of teacher's attitudes as being the critical focus in teaching black history, and he cited support from Cuban.

The teacher's attitude toward the black child, his perception of black history and culture, and his expectations for the child are more important than the materials and methods that he uses. As Cuban insightfully notes: "Less attention should be paid to additional books and courses . . . and more to the

²³Ibid., p. 51.

craftsman who will use the tools. Preachers of Black history know that the person is far more important than the material he uses."¹⁰

Elsewhere, Cuban has remarked that, ". . . the caliber of the teacher determines the success or failure of ethnic content."¹¹

Those educators who have examined the materials of instruction in black history have noted the obvious faults of textbook treatment of Negroes. Abramowitz, who has conducted enlightening research into textbook treatment of Negroes, has implied that given improved text materials, the responsibility for utilizing such materials still lies with the teacher. He asserted:

Textbooks still have a long way to go, but it is very possible that we have failed to face up to the fact that putting material into textbooks is no guarantee that it is going to get through to the pupils in the classroom.¹²

Have viewed the teacher's role as one which must be based upon both philosophical direction and commitment. His comments concerning the teacher's philosophy stated that,

. . . the teacher of black history and culture must also have a vision or picture of the kind of black history and culture black people want to build in

¹⁰Banks, "Relevant Social Studies," p. 69, citing Larry Cuban, "Black History, Negro History, and White Folk," Saturday Review, 21 September 1968, p. 65.

¹¹Larry Cuban, "Ethnic Content and White Instruction," Phi Delta Kappan 53 (January 1972) 273.

¹²Abramowitz, "Textbooks," p. 307.

America and the kind of society they wish to help America become in relation to themselves.³³

He cited Sloan's comments in regard to the teacher's sense of commitment to teaching Negro history:

Teacher Irving Sloan in an AFT booklet reviewing U S. history text's treatment of Negroes, had this to say. Only when we have teachers--as distinguished from texts--who are well versed in integrated history will our secondary students gain both facts and perspectives about the Negro in the history of our national past. This will come only as a result of specialized courses for teachers on the college level and a heightened sense of commitment by teachers about the importance of the subject.³⁴

It is the writer's opinion that Sloan's comments regarding secondary students is also applicable at the elementary level.

Finally, it has been stated that, "Ultimately teachers, not textbooks, must strike racism from the heart of the nation's curriculum."³⁵

While the above literature has been directed at teachers per se, it is essential to note that what has been said about teachers is appropriate to all "educators" if any effective positive changes are to occur.

Academic goals and purposes

Recognizing that regardless of the subject matter area there are academic needs to be met, literature

³³Here, "The Teaching of Black History," p. 387.

³⁴Ibid., p. 388.

³⁵"How to Integrate," p. 22.

relevant to the specific academic skills to be acquired in learning black history were explored. Most of the literature focused on the importance of acquiring critical inquiry skills.

In reference to recent attempts at curricular and instructional reforms in general, Cuban has remarked that the accumulation of factual knowledge has been secondary, as primary emphasis has been placed upon students' developing the skills of comprehension, analysis, and evaluation. Although he asserted that the social sciences, and history in particular, have been most resistant to changes, he acknowledged that,

As tardy and slow as changes have been, still some significant strides have been undertaken to introduce and sustain programs where children learn the skills of inquiry and apply them to new information.³⁶

Banks refined this broad goal of skillful critical inquiry and specified that the goal of Black history should be

to help students develop the ability to make reflective decisions so that they can resolve personal problems and, through social action, influence public policy and develop a sense of political efficacy³⁷

In addition, he perceived the acquisition of the skills of historical inquiry as one approach to helping students gain an understanding of history and being able to

³⁶Cuban, "Ethnic Content," p. 272.

³⁷James A. Banks, ed., Teaching Ethnic Studies (Washington, D.C.: National Council for Social Studies, 1973), p. 152.

generalize about the nature of history. He suggested further that throughout such an analysis, students should learn to recognize writers' biases, gaps in information, and difficulties that historians encounter in recording data from the past.³⁸

Banks has suggested that in addition to developing critical insights into the nature of historiography, black pupils need to learn to use critical inquiry skills to realistically appraise the social conditions which engulf their lives, e.g., the real reasons why they are poor, full of self-hate, and possess hostility that sometimes explodes in ghetto streets.³⁹

Through skillful instruction in critical analysis of controversial issues, Fenton believed that teachers were less apt to impose their values on students, and more likely to help each student to define his personal values clearly. He asserted that, otherwise, lacking such a personal philosophy, the individual has no recourse except his emotions when he must make up his mind about a controversial public issue.⁴⁰

Although Fenton expected that the goals for black students of social studies were similar to those for

³⁸Banks, Teaching the Black Experience, pp. 49-55.

³⁹Banks, "Relevant Social Studies," p. 68.

⁴⁰Fenton, "Crispus Attucks," p. 398.

students of any other race, he suggested that the peculiar position of blacks in America required a different set of priorities than those of suburban whites. Ergo, he outlined five sets of goals for black Americans based on the past and present: 1) the development of a positive self-concept; 2) the growth of a set of attitudes conducive to learning; 3) the development of a clearly articulated democratic value system; 4) the growth of skills required for learning; and 5) the development of inquiry skills, particularly at the high cognitive levels.⁴¹

Kirman acknowledged the fact that a well-developed sense of personal pride and a knowledge of one's background was essential, but he felt they were not enough for Afro-American children. He noted that, "The student must be a well-rounded individual, whose academic abilities complement his cultural and social development."⁴²

Methodology and black history instruction

General curriculum reform in social studies and history is underway as the preceding segment of this paper has indicated. But until curriculum reform is undertaken on a national level by dedicated teachers who are committed to including black history in their course of

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 397-98.

⁴²Joseph M. Kirman, "Dear Sir. . . .," Social Education 33 (May 1969), p. 502.

study, meaningful reform cannot occur. Inherent in this reform are changes in methodology related to the use of textbooks. Whereas Fenton has advocated encouraging teachers to depart from traditional textbooks,³ Abramowitz has pointed out problems related to both teachers and texts. He addressed the problem thusly

For if it is true that all the changes we make in the content of texts are voided by the failure of the teacher to properly develop Negro history, it is equally true that all our efforts to bring Negro history into texts are vitiated if the publisher prepares two editions of a text, one of which enables school districts to receive a lily-white version of history.⁴

Abramowitz has explained further that "star editions" of texts--texts in which all reference, or all favorable reference, to Negroes or other minority groups were excised--have existed for some time. In a study which he conducted recently to determine if "star edition" texts were still being published, he found that two publishing houses still issued such editions but qualified their practice by stating that this policy was required through past commitments and by contracts which were still binding.⁵

On the positive side, however, a recent development of which all book purchasers should be cognizant, is the

³Fenton, "Crispus Attucks," p. 399.

⁴Abramowitz, "Textbooks," p. 307.

⁵Ibid., p. 308.

publishing of "multiracial textbooks" which attempt, through illustrations of children with different ethnic backgrounds, to give a more representative outlook on America's racially mixed society. The NAACP makes available an annotated bibliography of 399 preschool and elementary multiracial texts, entitled, "Integrated School Books."⁶

However, specific methodologies for integrating the school curriculum call for the following procedures that extend beyond textbooks:

1. Correct distortions in present American history textbooks
2. Supplement information that is now lacking in courses
3. Fill in the Negro "vacuum" in areas other than history; for example, in reading, literature, art, music, science, and in the school library
4. Seek out extracurricular activities that will help make up for the deficits inherent in an all-white or segregated community⁷

Hare supported the need to move away from textbooks, directly lacking anyway, and utilize creative syllabi (produced often with student collaboration) and guidelines culled from the laboratory of life.⁸ Therefore, methodology and content are intertwined as the student actually

⁶"How to Integrate," p. 24.

⁷Ibid., p. 21.

⁸Hare, "The Teaching of Black History," p. 387.

lives what he is learning.

The need to utilize the community in place of the textbook received strong support from Hare who advocated the use of primary sources in a localized setting. Although his argument for such content and methodological approaches to black history was lengthy, it provided critical insight into the creative instructional processes needed, and thus it will be quoted almost in its entirety:

. . . the students are led to study first hand and raw sources, the contributions of the black race to American history and culture with special reference to the given community. There are, for example, many black persons living in a black community whose parents, let alone their grandparents, were either slaves or freedmen or soldiers in the Union Army or members of the ranks of black cowboys . . . who helped clear the American frontier westward. These individuals comprise an untapped fund of data on black history and culture handed down to them at fireside by their parents but now already fading away and destined largely to die with their generation. Many other types of community experts in some form of culture (such as jazz or blues music) could be utilized for classroom presentations of various kinds designed to enhance the student's knowledge as well as appreciations of the intricacies of black culture."

A Black History of Cleveland, Ohio

A search to date has led to the locating of one local black history, Russell Davis' Black Americans in Cleveland. The work is an extensive one which traced the social conditions surrounding the Negro settlement of Cleveland, Ohio from the surveying of the Western Reserve

"Ibid., p. 388.

in 1796 to the election and subsequent re-election of Carl Stokes as mayor in 1967 and 1969, respectively.

Wesley asserted in his introductory remarks that:

Negroes have been residents of Cleveland for more than a century and a half, their advent dating about a decade after the founding of the city. It is the purpose of this book to tell the story of this group and thus fill a void. Minorities in American cities are too often overlooked, and Cleveland is no exception. While this group has always been subordinate, both in numbers and in influence, it presents a surprisingly interesting history within the community. Of equal importance is the number of vigorous and unique personalities who faced intelligently the problems, social, civic, and political, which developed within the city.⁵⁸

In the early chapters of the book Davis focused on the issues of slavery, abolition, colonization, and the early settlers' quest for civil rights and their struggle against the Black Laws. The Civil War and the Negro soldier's participation in it; the establishment of early black churches; the beginnings of early black newspapers; and the growth of black political involvement were presented in detailed accounts in subsequent chapters.

A twenty-year span comprised of the decade prior to and after the turn of the century was given considerable attention (three chapters) in terms of political, economic, and social advancement through individual and organized efforts. In the remainder of the book the author traced the struggle of black Americans in Cleveland as they

⁵⁸Davis, Black Americans, p. 1.

entered into professional fields, governmental positions, cultural endeavors, public services, etc. over the next fifty years.⁵¹

Histories of Akron, Ohio

A number of local histories of Akron have been written since the city's founding in 1825. One of the earliest is Bierce's small volume, Historical Reminiscences of Summit County, published in 1854. In this brief work Bierce provided a concise, easily read history of every township in the county. The Negro population at that time was extremely small and no accounts were given in relation to their lives in Akron.⁵²

In 1881 Perrin authored The History of Summit County. The work is a voluminous one in which the author offered very detailed information on the history of various townships in Summit County. Its references to Negroes, however, were limited to a brief account of the operation of the underground railroad in Franklin Township.⁵³

Fifty Years and Over of Akron and Summit County,

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 7-414.

⁵²Lucius V. Bierce, Historical Reminiscences of Summit County (Akron: T. & H. G. Canfield, Publishers, 1854), pp. 3-8.

⁵³William H. Perrin, ed , History of Summit County (Chicago: Baskin and Battey, Historical Publishers, 1881), p. 634.

written by Lane and published in 1892, is a substantial work in which the writer provided very comprehensive, detailed information on the city's growth. The inclusion of material related to Negroes focused on the fugitive slave law and the underground railroad, and contained considerable data on John Brown's activities as an abolitionist. Akron Negroes who served during the Civil War were listed and a brief history of two black churches was presented.⁵⁴

The Centennial History of Summit County was written in 1908 by William B. Doyle, former mayor of the City of Akron. Doyle's book is a massive volume which presented detailed comprehensive accounts on all facets of the city's settlement and growth. Over half of the book is comprised of biographical sketches. Two black churches, their locations, and pastors were cited, and mention was made of the celebrated "Underground Railroad" that operated in Franklin Township.⁵⁵

In 1917 Olin wrote Akron and Environs, an extensive history which began with a few short chapters that introduced the city and described its geology and

⁵⁴Samuel A. Lane, Fifty Years and Over of Akron and Summit County (Akron: Beacon Job Department, 1892), Chapters 21 and 22, pp. 212, 405, 408.

⁵⁵William P. Doyle, Centennial History of Summit County (Chicago Biographical Publishing Co., 1908).

archaeology. Attention was then turned to tracing the history of the site upon which Akron came to be built.

Of the wealth of information provided on Akron, the author included chapters of substantial data on educational institutions, industry, churches, organizations and clubs, transportation, the press, and military matters. Comprehensive biographical sketches comprise about half of the volume. Mention was made of a few black churches: their names, locations, and pastors.⁵⁶

Cherry's The Western Reserve and Early Ohio is a small volume published in 1921 in which the author recorded accounts of the settlement of the Western Reserve. He devoted two chapters to topics related to Negroes: the Underground Railroad and John Brown, the abolitionist. Although Cherry's treatment of the Underground Railroad was more elaborate than any yet cited, the brief account of the Underground Railroad which was described in Perrin's historical account was also included in Cherry's description of the operation of the Underground Railroad activities in Franklin Township.⁵⁷

The authors of the Centennial History of Akron, written in 1925, provided information on the city's

⁵⁶Oscar E. Olin, Akron and Environs (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1917), pp. 175, 177.

⁵⁷P. P. Cherry, Western Reserve and Early Ohio (Akron: R. L. Fouse, 1921), pp. 309-29.

development during its first one hundred years. Brief references to the colored troops in the Civil War; anti-slavery sentiment in Akron; the Underground Railroad; and Akron's black churches then in existence, were included.⁵⁸

Kenfield's Akron and Summit County, a three-volume work published in 1928, contained chapters on the founding and growth of Akron, women's organizations, local industry, businesses, education, the professions, transportation, culture, etc., and provided a comprehensive history of Akron. The author devoted two chapters to two religious minority groups--those of the Catholic and Jewish faiths. Material on or related to Negroes was scattered and scant. Three Negro physicians were mentioned; several pages of data on John Brown were included; the same reference to the Underground Railroad as cited in Doyle's work was made in relation to Franklin Township's promotion of that means to freedom; and brief mention was made of the issue of slavery as it regarded conflicting faculty views at Western Reserve College in the 1830s.⁵⁹

In 1949 Allen's Rubber's Home Town was published. His work provided accounts of canal boat days, early

⁵⁸Herman Fetzer, James A Braden, et al., Centennial History of Akron (Akron: Summit County Historical Association, 1925), pp. 88-89, 577.

⁵⁹Scott D. Kenfield, Akron and Summit County (Chicago: Clarke Publishing Co., 1928), pp. 38, 54-58, 146, 503-4.

settlement, and the author focused several chapters on the rubber industry and its significance to the city's growth. While the narrative did not discuss the lives of Akron's Negroes, a few of the illustrations did include Negroes.⁶⁰

Unlike the other local histories Grismer's 1952 history, entitled Akron and Summit County, presented more information on social conditions that existed in the city's development in addition to the general historical data. The effects of Spanish influenza, prohibition, the depression, and sports, on the lives of Akronites were illustrative examples of Grismer's presentation of Akron's history.

His historical analysis of Akron's citizens included more references to Negroes than the preceding histories. Although his accounts were not detailed, Grismer described some of the conditions which Negroes faced throughout the city's history. In his earlier chapters, Grismer discussed the antislavery sentiments, effects of the fugitive slave law in Akron; and John Brown, the abolitionist. In a later chapter, he discussed the social, economic, and political plight of Negroes due to racial prejudice early in the 1900s. A reference to the the slum clearance projects and the need for improved

⁶⁰Hugh Allen, Rubber's Home Town (New York. Stratford House, 1949), pp. 19, 23.

housing for Negroes in the 1940s was also included.⁶¹

The local history written at the elementary school level, Klippert's The Akron Story, is one in which the author presented material on the schools, the industries, the churches, the pioneer days, and the Indians. The author made reference to Negroes in the discussion of slavery and the Underground Railroad, but she provided no information on Negro organizations or churches that existed in the year of the book's publication, 1959.⁶²

Review of Available Sources of Records Relevant to the Inquiry

In order to research a local black history, several available source materials will be examined. Diverse types of records exist in the following forms: official records, oral traditions, personal records, pictorial records, printed materials, published materials, and relics.

The official records known to be available are the minutes of the meetings and annual reports of the Akron Community Service Center and Urban League (ACSC&UL); the minutes of the meetings of Eta Tau Lambda Chapter of Alpha

⁶¹Karl Grismer, Akron and Summit County (Akron Summit County Historical Society, 1952), pp. 163-66, 402-3, 510-12.

⁶²Sara Klippert, The Akron Story (Akron Board of Education of Akron, Ohio, 1959), pp. 91-117 passim

Phi Alpha Fraternity; a report from the files on the Negro Twenty-five Year Club; and information compiled by a charter member of the NAACP, Miss Mary Holmes.

There are a number of citizens who have resided approximately fifty years in Akron and who would be most helpful in rendering eyewitness accounts of events which occurred during their lives. Among these residents are Mary Holmes, Emmer Lancaster, Amos Forman, Ednah Lewis, Edith Delaney Mitchell, Robert Dunbar, and Bertha Moore. Several families have ancestors who were among the early Negro settlers in Akron. The ancestors of Horace Murray, Mrs. Leon Love, Rollin Clayton, and Mrs. Lynetta Craig lived in Akron in the mid-1800s, and have passed on oral traditions to their descendants

Personal records have been kept by a number of Negro residents. These records include a written account of her family's history by Virginia Robinson; family and/or personal scrapbooks which are in the personal collections of Faith Robinson, Amos Forman, and Herman Poole; books relating to family members among the personal collections of Eskimo Bracken and Margaret McClain, journal articles, newspaper clippings, certificates, etc. in the personal papers of Katie Jackson, and original drafts of speeches by Mary Holmes in her personal files.

Buildings, trophies, awards, plaques, and statues constitute some of the relics that help to tell the

history of black Americans in Akron, Ohio. Such remains are too numerous to give an account of here. However, two examples of those who have had tribute paid to them through the dedication of relics in their memory were Arthur Snell, for whom a plaque was erected at the County Safety Building, and Horace Stewart, for whom Stewart Primary School was named.

A slide presentation of the programs of the Akron Community Service Center and Urban League; early data on microfilm; and photographs from black families' personal collections comprise the types of pictorial records available.

Printed materials which provide available information are found in the form of printed programs of various events throughout Akron's history, newspaper advertisements, and advertisements in printed programs or directories.

Pamphlets, leaflets, Black newspapers, directories, books, journals, periodicals, the local newspaper, and historical journals are a source of published data and provide a wealth of information to educators. Two directories are of particular value: The Akron Negro Directory and A Directory of Black Clubs and Organizations in Akron, Ohio. The former directory is over thirty years old and was compiled by A. Kingsberry through a personal canvass and through information given by civic and public

organizations, namely: The University of Akron, Akron Police Department, municipal and county authorities, and the Akron Colored Community Center and its affiliated organizations.⁶³

The latter directory is a very recent publication (1974) which was a joint venture of two black organizations, the Akron Community Service Center and Urban League and Eta Tau Lambda Chapter (the Akron chapter) of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. Their combined efforts, according to William Threatt, represented another attempt by both organizations to be of service to the Akron community and to have "an instrument that will strengthen the Black community in its quest for unfettered opportunity and growth in Akron, Ohio."⁶⁴

The local newspaper, the Akron Beacon Journal, and black newspapers which included Akron news--the Ohio Informer and Cleveland Call and Post--have considerable data on Akron Negroes. Early newspaper accounts in the Summit Beacon published articles that related to the issues of slavery, abolition, colonization, and Ohio's Black Laws.

⁶³A. Kingsberry, comp., The Akron Negro Directory (n.p., 1940), p. 3.

⁶⁴Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and Akron Urban League and Community Service Center, A Directory of Black Clubs and Organizations in Akron, Ohio (Akron Rebar Reproductions, 1974), p. i.

Methodologies and Strategies

Historians do not assume that relics and oral accounts are authentic or that records are necessarily genuine. Therefore, the writer will use the methods of historical criticism to investigate each source prior to writing.

In the course of the inquiry at hand, the sources of data will be subjected to both external and internal criticism. In terms of external criticism, events, physical edifices, and relics will be traced to determine if they could have been in existence at the time stated in written and/or oral accounts; authorship of documents will be investigated to determine if the work is actually that of the author; manuscripts will be examined to determine if they are originals or copies, and if works are undated, attempts will be made to ascertain dates.

Internal criticism of oral accounts or written documents will focus on determining: 1) whether or not personal biases enter into the accounts; 2) if the words and phrases used possess the same meanings today; 3) if, based on some prior knowledge of the person being interviewed, he or she speaks seriously, sarcastically, humorously, etc.; and 4) if persons' names, the names of places, buildings, etc., are spelled correctly.

Interviews will be scheduled with persons who are believed to be able to give credible eyewitness accounts

of the events that occurred during their lifetimes.

In addition to the external and internal criticism of documents and/or oral accounts, the writer will also subject the ideas presented in the study to external and internal analysis.

In a discussion of the dilemma that arises in the writing of intellectual history, Welter has made a distinction between the two approaches of external or internal analysis suggesting that

Pursuing internal intellectual history, scholars have . . . tended to lay primary emphasis on major philosophical concepts, on literary and philosophical techniques of analysis, on the study of ideas for their own sake. Pursuing external intellectual history, they have stressed the content of popular beliefs, sociological and ideological modes of analysis, description rather than close study of public opinion. . . .⁶³

Welter explained further that although there are scholars who do not observe the distinction in their writings, it has become customary to classify historical scholarly works either as the "history of ideas" or as "intellectual history" depending upon which methodology is practiced--internal or external analysis. He specified that:

Usually a work in the history of ideas is just that: an extended analysis of a single idea or cluster of ideas in its successive formulations, treating it in virtual isolation from other aspects of history . . . On the other hand, a work in intellectual history usually assumes the preeminence of the general

⁶³Welter, "The History of Ideas," p. 237.

historic process, and it treats the ideas it deals with as functions of that process. In other words, intellectual history attempts the study of history-in-general in its specifically intellectual aspects.

As relates specifically to this study, the writer will utilize aspects of both methodologies. External analysis will be employed in the examination of the ideas surrounding the social issues--at the national, state, and local levels--which influenced and governed the lives of Akron's black populace. The principal beliefs that were forces in shaping the policy, practices, and laws which affected the treatment and development of Akron's Negroes will be analyzed and documented.

Internal analysis will be focused on the particular idea that education is a process that occurs in an educational setting which can be either within a formal school or in an informal environment. Specifically, the writer will subject to internal analysis the idea that the education of Akron's blacks has occurred through their families, churches, organizations, and agencies, as well as--and possibly more than--in the formal school setting.

General Organization of the Study

The writer has been concerned in Chapter One with the presentation of an overview of the study wherein:

1) the problem was stated and its significance to

⁶Ibid., pp. 237-38.

"educators" was noted; 2) delimitations and clarifications of terms were presented; 3) literature relevant to the study was reviewed; and 4) methodologies and strategies to be used in the conduct of the research were defined. Attention will now be turned to the balance of the study.

In Chapter Two, the national and state issues that were of consequence to the lives of Akron's black Americans from 1825 to 1899 will be examined.

The writer will study the effects of the changes in racial composition upon the citizens' attitudes toward Negroes from 1900 through 1919 in Chapter Three.

The struggle of Akron's black citizens to resist the prevailing racial oppression in the years from 1920 to 1939 will be researched in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Five, the efforts of Akron's black residents to advance through education, employment, and civic pride from 1940 to 1959 will be investigated.

In Chapter Six, local response to national issues from the civil rights movement to the present will be explored.

The writer will summarize the study; present conclusions based on the findings, and offer recommendations in Chapter Seven.

Summary

The problem as stated in this study was for the writer to develop a general history of Akron's black

residents from the founding of the city in 1825 to the present time. Therefore, the writer detailed the significance and purpose of the study to indicate its worth. An investigation of the national black history instruction prior to and following the civil rights movement and the specific advantages of a local black history were presented to support the writer's contention that such a study would be valuable.

The delimitations of the study were set; clarification of key terms and concepts were presented; and literature relevant to the study was reviewed. The writer investigated relevant literature concerning 1) the academic aspects of black history instruction, 2) a local black history of Cleveland; 3) local histories of Akron; and 4) available records which could be utilized for writing the history of Akron's black population.

Methodologies and strategies involved in the course of the inquiry were provided which indicated that four approaches would be used External and internal criticism of records and/or oral accounts would be conducted, and ideas presented would be subjected to external and internal analysis.

The organization of the study summarized the general outline of the first chapter and stated the topic for each chapter in the balance of the study.

CHAPTER II

AKRON'S BLACK RESIDENTS. 1825-1899

Background Information

To undertake the development of Akron's black history and to reduce it to written form is to attempt to relate an objective account of a people's lives based on scattered and fragmented data. Few early records were kept because the conditions under which many blacks had to exist frequently demanded that living in secrecy was their only alternative to slavery or death.

In order to understand Akron's early black residents, it is important to know the type of environment in which they settled shortly after the city's founding. Thus, it is necessary to investigate the conditions that existed in the nation and early Ohio prior to 1825. The lives of Akron's black and white settlers were inter-related, and the life styles blacks adopted were dependent upon two main factors: 1) national movements that developed as a response to slavery, and 2) the diverse sentiments of Ohio's white pioneers toward Negroes. Each of these factors will be examined in depth.

National Movements in Response to Slavery

The Colonization Movement

During the period that Negroes were settling in Akron, a colonization movement was taking place throughout the nation. Although its origins date back to the late 1780s, several earlier proposals to implement colonization had met with defeat.¹ Several years later, however, a free Negro sea captain, Paul Cuffee, who recognized that the lives of free blacks were restricted and that the opportunities in America were very limited, began to work toward making colonization a reality. By 1815 he transported and established thirty-eight blacks on the west coast of Africa.²

Subsequently other colonization efforts gained momentum and on 28 December 1816 the American Colonization Society, a governmental organization, adopted its constitution and its official name. The American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of These United States.³ The specified purposes for the formation of the

¹Charles H. Wesley, ed., International Library of Negro Life and History In Freedom's Footsteps (New York Publisher's Co., Inc. under the auspices of The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1968), pp. 156-57.

²Carter G. Woodson, The Negro In Our History, 8th ed. (Washington, D C. The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1945), pp. 283-84.

³Accounts vary as to the date of the organization

organization were

"for . . . collecting information" and assisting the federal government in formulating and launching a colony in Africa, "or such other places as Congress shall deem most expedient."

These early colonization efforts appeared to be one solution to the "problem of free Negroes." Some blacks, realizing the hardships they had to endure even as freemen, saw colonization as a means toward a better life. Whites sought colonization, however, for very different reasons, few of which were directed toward helping Negroes. One account of white support of colonization suggested that:

. . . some whites believed free blacks threatened the institution of slavery. But not all who favored colonization did so for that reason. Some favored colonization either because they were convinced that blacks could never adjust to Western civilization, or because they believed that returning blacks would take Christianity and civilization to Africa. Some whites in the North thought a decrease in the number of blacks would make it easier for them to find jobs.³

As the movement progressed, many free blacks from Southern states accepted the idea of colonization, but northern Negroes, never fully supportive of the movement,

of the American Colonization Society. While Wesley cited the year as 1816 in Wesley's International Library: Freedom's Footsteps, p. 162, Davis noted the year as 1810 in Davis, Black Americans in Cleveland, p. 9; and Johnson set the year of its organization as 1817 in Johnson Publishing Co., Ebony Pictorial History of Black America, vol. 1: African Past to Civil War (Nashville: Southwestern Co., 1971), p. 186.

²Wesley, International Library Freedom's Footsteps, p. 162.

³Johnson, Ebony Pictorial, p. 186.

became bitterly opposed to its implementation. In 1817 leading free black men in Philadelphia, who supported the view of total abolishment of slavery, denounced colonization and urged its rejection on the grounds that it granted "benefits" to those who did not ask for them and "benefits" which were actually considered "injuries" by blacks.⁶

Despite black opposition, the movement was successful for approximately ten years. However, with the advent of militant abolitionists in 1831, colonization as a solution to "the Negro problem" began to lose its effectiveness. Because of problems within the American Colonization Society; dissatisfaction among the colonists in Liberia; and declining support of the colonization movement, the demise of the American Colonization Society began in the decade prior to the Civil War.

The Antislavery Movement

Another national movement which was occurring at the time that blacks were settling in Akron was the anti-slavery movement. Its advocates were both black and white persons who denounced the evils of slavery.

The movement had its roots early in the nation's history, as blacks agitated for action against slavery

⁶Alice D. Adams, The Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery in America (Cambridge Radcliffe College, 1908, reprint ed., Gloucester, Mass. Peter Smith, 1964), p. 202.

prior to the Revolutionary War, and whites lent support to their efforts. An illustrative account of the early cooperation in the antislavery struggle stated that a group of slaves in western Massachusetts petitioned a local Committee of Correspondence for assistance in obtaining their freedom in 1775. The response of the whites was related thusly:

The white inhabitants convened shortly after receiving the petition and resolved, "That we abhor the enslaving of the Negroes in this country and whenever there shall be a door opened, or opportunity presented for anything to be done for the emancipation of Negroes, we will use our influence and endeavor that such a thing may be brought about."⁷

During the same year, the first American abolition society, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, was founded in the month of April. Antislavery sentiment actually dates back to the late seventeenth century, however, when a group of Quakers delivered an attack on slavery at Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1688.⁸

As the movement to abolish slavery gained support, both blacks and whites began to organize to espouse their antislavery positions. While the white abolitionists employed a moderate approach and worked toward gradual and peaceful emancipation, blacks were becoming vocal and regarded self-help and unity as imperative.

⁷Wesley, International Library: Freedom's Footsteps, p. 82.

⁸Woodson, Negro in Our History, p. 97.

The contrast in the white moderate and black self-help approaches to the antislavery issue can be seen in the following accounts:

They [whites] sent petitions to state and national legislatures urging the abolition of the domestic and foreign slave trade and the gradual abolition of slavery itself. Frequently, they bought slaves in order to free them. They tried to mount campaigns to persuade their fellow citizens to boycott the products of slave labor. They assisted free Negroes in finding employment and attempted to educate the blacks. In 1787, the African Free School was formed and sponsored by the New York Manumission Society.⁹

Before the Revolutionary War, slaves had brought actions in court against their masters for the freedom which they regarded as their right even before the "unalienable rights" of men. During the war and afterward, blacks petitioned state and local governments to outlaw the slave trade and to begin moving toward emancipation.¹⁰

The early abolitionists' efforts were supportive of both colonization and abolition and most of the anti-slavery activity was conducted through the press. Publications in the form of newspapers, pamphlets, and books were distributed throughout the nation and were often burned or otherwise destroyed by those who maintained a proslavery posture.

In spite of the movements to rid the country of slavery, the "peculiar institution" became more firmly entrenched in the South and colonization efforts

⁹Wesley, International Library: Freedom's Footsteps, p. 103.

¹⁰Johnson, Ebony Pictorial, p. 198.

overshadowed the antislavery movement for a short time. The 1830s witnessed a different perspective of slavery, however, as the abolitionists became more militant and based their antislavery sentiments on moral and religious grounds. The doctrine of colonization was denounced as whites joined with blacks in opposition to deporting Negroes to settle in colonies on foreign soil.

The names of David Walker, William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth came to be well known as black abolitionists, while such white men as Benjamin Lundy, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Arthur Tappan, and John Brown became major antislavery activists.¹¹

The movement which continued until the outbreak of the Civil War was successful in gaining white sympathizers because of the initiative and involvement of blacks who had resolved to determine their own futures. The Ebony Pictorial History of Black America indicated that-

Participation of blacks in the antislavery movement was a critical factor in its success. Many whites who objected to slavery only on vague principle became actively involved in the struggle after meeting black movement leaders. Blacks were among the most effective abolitionist orators, and white abolitionists often introduced black agents to white audiences to show what blacks could attain if given the opportunity.¹²

¹¹Ibid., pp. 198-212, passim.

¹²Ibid., p. 221.

Escape from slavery movements

Resistance to slavery followed varying forms, two of which have been examined--the colonization and antislavery movements. One further form of resistance was frequently paramount--escape.

Amidst the colonization and antislavery movements, slavery flourished. The helpless Negro was the victim of brutal and unmerciful treatment and the only alternatives to such inhuman existence were death or escape. Though many slaves chose the former, the option of escape offered the only ray of hope. The tone of slavery and the ordeals and encumbrances involved in attempting to escape were described as follows:

One of the most widespread forms of slave protests was escape. Most slaves ran away on the spur of the moment--often after a particularly cruel beating--without any particular geographic knowledge of where they had been and where they were going. They were usually caught, or returned voluntarily after a few days of starving and after recognizing the futility of the undertaking. But there were also numerous slaves who spent years carefully planning an escape and who waited patiently for the most propitious moment to carry out their plan. Many of them succeeded, some by relying on their own resourcefulness, others by linking up with the Underground Railroad--a widely cast network of aid stations set up by whites and black abolitionists for the specific purpose of helping slaves escape. Estimates regarding the number of slaves who reached freedom through various manners of escape vary widely, ranging from forty thousand to one hundred thousand.¹³

By 1793, the same year in which Eli Whitney

¹³ Ibid., p. 128.

invented the cotton gin, the first Fugitive Slave Law was enacted to legislate the return of escaped slaves. Controversy over the interpretation of the law soon ensued for some American statesmen felt that each state was responsible for returning fugitive slaves, while others believed that the federal government should enforce its own law.

According to Siebert, portions of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 made the following provisions:

It provided for the reclamation of both fugitives from justice and from labor. Its sections dealing with the latter empowered the owner, his agent or attorney to seize the fugitive and take him before a United States Circuit or District Court within the State where the arrest was made, or before a local magistrate in the county where it occurred. The claimants' testimony, or an affidavit from a magistrate of the State he came from, must certify that the fugitive owed service as claimed. . . . Anyone hindering his arrest, or rescuing or harboring him after notification that he was a fugitive from labor, was liable to a fine of \$500.¹⁴

Although the law was enacted to curtail the flight of slaves toward freedom and to assist slaveowners in regaining their slaves, it left free blacks defenseless because

The law did not provide Negroes with trial by jury, and conviction required only the master's oral testimony or an affidavit certified by a magistrate of the state from which the slave was said to have fled.¹⁵

¹⁴Wilbur Henry Siebert, The Mysteries of Ohio's Underground Railroad (Columbus. Long's College Book Co., 1951), p. 3.

¹⁵Johnson, Ebony Pictorial, p. 232.

As stringent as the law was meant to be, conflict over its meaning, accompanied by antislavery sentiment, made it difficult to enforce. Slaves continued to escape and the Underground Railroad came to be the main vehicle towards freedom. Differing accounts of the Underground Railroad--its origins, its legendary character, and its historical events--have been written.¹⁶

The organized efforts of the Underground Railroad had penetrated the South by 1819 and by the 1830s the movement was widespread, operating in violation of federal law.

The Underground Railroad lines began on Southern plantations and ran in the West--either to the Ohio or upper Mississippi River--or to points in the East, through Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Because there was a great deal of danger involved in its operation, the slaves generally traveled at night. "Conductors" transported them in farm wagons, covered wagons, and carriages to "stations" spaced ten to twenty miles apart. There fugitives would eat, rest, and prepare to move onward.

The need for a more stringent law was obvious at the close of the 1840s. Runaway slaves were on the increase and uncooperative northern states passed their

¹⁶See Wesley, International Library: Freedom's Foot-steps, p. 186; Siebert, Mysteries of Railroad, pp 1-330, Larry Gara, The Liberty Line (Lexington: University Press, 1961), pp. 1-194; Johnson, Ebony Pictorial, pp. 226-32.

own Personal Liberty Laws to prevent slaveholders from demanding the return of escaped slaves. Thus, a new law was decreed--the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, a stronger law which required Northern citizens to return runaway slaves to their owners. Federal officers were offered a fee for captured slaves and persons assisting slaves in escaping could be imprisoned for six months and fined one thousand dollars.¹⁷

The enactment of such a restrictive bill, contrary to its intention, served as a catalyst in increasing the number of runaway slaves. The need for secrecy was foremost as is suggested in the following passage.

Word of the progress of passengers was passed along the "grapevine telegraph" to stations further on. One secret message, mailed by a "conductor" to the next "stationmaster" in 1859, gave needed information to those who knew its purpose: "By tomorrow evening's mail, you will receive two volumes of 'The Irrepressible Conflict' bound in black. After perusal, please forward." . . .¹⁸

Systematic efforts and cooperation were needed to operate the railroad, and the combination of courage and organization on the part of former slaves, free Negroes, and white supporters developed into what was "probably one of history's most intricate networks of conspiracy."¹⁹

¹⁷Johnson, Ebony Pictorial, p. 234.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁹Wesley, International Library Freedom's Footsteps, p. 251.

The names of fugitive slaves John Mason, Elijah Anderson, Josiah Henson, and Harriet Tubman, stand out as leaders in the Underground Railroad. In addition, Jane Lewis, a black woman of New Lebanon, Ohio, was known for her heroism in regularly rowing escaping slaves across the Ohio River.²⁰

Northern free blacks assisted in the movement by raising funds, providing shelter and transportation for fugitives, and helping to organize the railroad's network. Among the better known for their work with the Underground Railroad were Robert Purvis, William Still, David Ruggles, Frederick Douglass, J. W. Loguen, Martin Delaney, and Lewis Hayden.²¹

Monies needed to support the operation of the railroad were raised by Quakers, vigilance committees, philanthropists, conductors, and other Underground Railroad workers.

Early White Settlers in Ohio

Diverse sentiments toward Negroes

In researching the settlement of Negroes in Ohio in its early days, Wilson suggested that

In order to appreciate the attitude toward the negro²²

²⁰Johnson, Ebony Pictorial, pp. 230, 232.

²¹Ibid., p. 232.

²²The word "Negro" has not always been capitalized

in Ohio, it is necessary to know something of the background of the people who comprised the population of the state in its embryo form as a part of the Northwest Territory.²³

Wilson's account detailed how the diverse populations which settled in the various parts of the state held varying attitudes toward Negroes, which in turn affected blacks.

Two groups of Scotch-Irish people migrated to Ohio. The element coming from the southern states of Virginia and Kentucky established homes in the southern part of the state while those from Pennsylvania and the Middle States dispersed themselves in various parts of Ohio. Although the Scotch-Irish were generally united in their opposition toward slavery and regarded the issue as economic rather than moral, they differed in their attitudes toward free Negroes. The southern Scotch-Irish did not want Negroes residing in Ohio; the Scotch-Irish from Pennsylvania and the Middle States had not been involved in slavery and felt its introduction into the state would create economic problems. Ergo, the latter group's attitudes toward

by many writers. Moon stated that W. E. B. DuBois, "as much as any single person . . . was responsible for converting 'negro' into 'Negro.' Month after month, he campaigned in the pages of The Crisis for recognition of the designation as a proper noun with the capital N." (Henry Lee Moon, comp., The Emerging Thoughts of W. E. B. DuBois [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972], p. 37).

²³Charles J. Wilson, "The Negro in Early Ohio," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly 39 (October 1930):721.

Negroes were rather moderate. Although they did not favor slavery for themselves, they were not opposed to other states having slaves if it did not interfere with their lives.²⁴

The New England delegation that settled almost exclusively in the Western Reserve or around the Muskingum River comprised a very important group in early Ohio. Being of a Puritan background, these pioneers were opposed to slavery on humanitarian and moral grounds.²⁵

Those New Englanders who inhabited the Western Reserve were of particular importance in affecting the lives of the Negroes who established homes in Akron, for it was in the Western Reserve territory that Akron was eventually founded in 1825.

A brief history of the Western Reserve indicated that it earned its name in a rather interesting fashion. During the Colonial Era of American history, royal grants were made to the colonies on the eastern seacoast giving to each of them western territories which had only vaguely defined boundaries. Following the Revolutionary War and the formation of the Federal Union, several states ceded their claims to these western lands, for their overlapping and conflicting boundaries could have become controversial issues. The United States government thereby acquired the

²⁴Ibid., pp. 722-24.

²⁵Ibid., p. 724.

land and organized it into the Northwest Territory in 1787.

The state of Connecticut, upon relinquishing its claim to its western lands, in September 1786, reserved a portion of that land and the "reserved" portion came to be known as the Western Reserve. The purpose of putting aside a part of the land was twofold: 1) the western portion--the "Fire Lands" or "Sufferer's Lands"--was given to Connecticut's citizens who had suffered substantial losses during the war, and 2) the eastern half was dedicated to Connecticut's school fund.²⁶

Little is known about the black man's first contact with the area upon which Akron came to be built, but Davis indicated that a black man in the surveying party of Moses Cleaveland helped to survey the Western Reserve and did come as far as the site of Cleveland.²⁷

The New Englanders who eventually settled in the Western Reserve had a tradition of being humanitarians and worked toward the elimination of slavery. They were not alone in their sentiments for the Quakers held similar, if not stronger, views. According to Wilson, the Quakers who settled in Ohio were divided into a northern and southern

²⁶The Western Reserve is shown on Maps 1 and 2 in appendix 2. In Fetzer Centennial History, p. 63 and Grismer Akron and Summit, p. 31.

²⁷Davis, Black Americans, pp. 5-6.

branch, but regardless of the region from which they had emigrated, they were united in their opposition to slavery. The majority of Quakers settled in the central and southeastern counties of the state, and it was from this group of settlers that the strong Ohio Abolitionists of the 1830s and 1840s evolved.²⁸

In sum, the early white settlers in Ohio were a heterogeneous population who expressed both proslavery and antislavery views. Wilson, however, suggests that Ohioans were united in their opposition to slavery.²⁹ Moreover, little unification existed among them on the advisability of admitting blacks into the state as freemen.

Ohio's Black Laws

Due to the combination of diverse feelings toward the presence of free blacks in Ohio and the influence of the more populous southern Ohio element, legislation eventually was enacted which was intended to restrict Ohio's black population. Black Ohioans, although free, were not allowed to vote, and thus had no voice in the government.

Because southern men from the river counties of Ohio were opposed to the very presence of Negroes in Ohio,

²⁸Wilson, "The Negro in Ohio," p. 726.

²⁹See Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 164; Wilson, "The Negro in Ohio," p. 726.

they wished to prevent their migration into Ohio and to persuade those free Negroes residing in the state to move elsewhere. Their desires reached fruition when the "black code" of 1804 came into existence.

Among the sections of an act to regulate black and mulatto persons, written into the Ohio law of 1804, were the following provisions:

Section 1. Be it enacted by the general assembly of the state of Ohio, That from and after the 1st day of June next, no black or mulatto person shall be permitted to settle or reside in this state, unless he or she shall first produce a fair certificate from some court within the United States of his or her actual freedom, which certificate shall be attested by the clerk of said court and the seal thereof annexed thereto by the said clerk.³⁰

Section 5. That every black or mulatto person who shall come to reside in this state, with such certificate as is required in the first section of this act, shall, within two years, have the same recorded in the clerk's office, in the county in which he or she means to reside, for which he or she shall pay to the clerk twelve and a half cents, and the clerk shall give him or her a certificate of such record.³¹

Other sections legislated that blacks had to enter their names and the names of their children on records at the clerk's office; that citizens were not permitted to hire colored persons unless they produced a certificate of freedom; that persons harboring or secreting or preventing owners from taking their slaves were to be punished, that

³⁰Ohio, General Assembly, Acts of a General Nature, vol. 22 (Columbus: P. H. Olmsted, 1824), p. 335.

³¹Ibid., p. 336.

owners of slaves could apply to the associate judge or justice of the peace to claim their slaves; and that persons were not to remove Negroes without proving property.³²

Feeling a need for even more restrictive legislation against Negroes migrating into Ohio, the legislature in 1807 enacted further laws to amend the former law.

Section 1 of the law of 1807 read

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Ohio, That no negro or mulatto person shall be permitted to emigrate into and settle within this state, unless such negro or mulatto person, shall within twenty days thereafter, enter into bond with two or more freehold sureties, in the penal sum of five hundred dollars, before the clerk of the court of common pleas of the county in which such negro or mulatto may wish to reside, (to be approved of by the clerk) conditioned for the good behavior of such negro or mulatto, and moreover to pay for the support of such person, in case he, she or they should thereafter be found within any township in this state, unable to support themselves, and if any negro or mulatto person shall migrate into this state, and not comply with the provisions of this act, it shall be the duty of the overseers of the poor of the township where such negro or mulatto person may be found, to remove immediately, such black or mulatto person, in the same manner as is required in the case of paupers.³³

Although the first several sections of the act applied to Negroes entering the state, the status of all blacks who resided in the state was considered by whites as subordinate as is evident in Section 4 of the act, which stated that

³²Ibid., pp. 335-36.

³³Ibid., pp. 336-37.

. . . no black or mulatto person or persons shall hereafter be permitted to be sworn or give evidence in any court of record, or elsewhere, in this state, in any cause depending or matter of controversy, where either party to the same is a white person, or in any prosecution which shall be instituted in behalf of this state against any white person.³⁴

Wilson discussed the results of the legislation of 1807 from its negative and positive standpoints. The negative effects of the law being that: 1) the Negro could be brutally mistreated without recourse; 2) if the Negro could receive a trial he would probably appear before an all-white prejudiced jury; and 3) because he was denied the ballot he could not force a redress of his grievances. The positive effects indicated that the laws helped to solidify the abolitionists' sentiments. Summarizing the status of the Negro in regard to the "black codes," Wilson asserted.

Although the "black codes" were not immediately enforced, they presented a basis for potential rank injustice, and inasmuch as they were not repealed until 1849, a free negro in Ohio was not really "free" until approximately a decade before the Civil War.³⁵

Further legislation was enacted through the years, some which aided blacks and other legislation which was aimed at preventing abolitionists from helping blacks. In 1819, an act to punish kidnapping went into effect and

³⁴Ibid., p. 337.

³⁵Wilson, "The Negro in Ohio," p. 766.

provided some protection for free blacks.³⁶ It was later repealed and a similar act was enacted in 1831 which, in sum, prohibited the seizing of a free black or mulatto person with the intent to transport him out of the state; required that a person must establish proof that a black or mulatto person is his property before transporting him out of the state; and provided that any person violating this act could be imprisoned for three to seven years.³⁷

As abolitionists became more militant, however, resolutions were presented in 1836 which suggested in part that the state of Ohio had no power to legislate on the subject of slavery and great forbearance should be used in the discussion of subjects which prove disturbing in their nature, or injurious to the peace and quiet of the country.³⁸

By the time that some of the Black Laws were repealed in 1849, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was enforced and blacks continued to feel the sting of discrimination in Ohio.

A summary of the conditions existing around 1825

³⁶Ohio, General Assembly, Acts of a General Nature, vol. 22, p. 338.

³⁷Ohio, General Assembly, Acts of a General Nature, vol. 29 (Columbus: Olmsted and Ballhache, 1831), p. 442.

³⁸Ohio, General Assembly, Acts of a General Nature, vol. 34 (Columbus: James B. Gardiner, 1836), p. 657.

indicated that the national movements of colonization and abolition, along with attempts to escape from slavery, were occurring in Ohio at the time that blacks settled in Akron. As Negroes migrated to Ohio to escape slavery, they encountered--and had to abide by--the Black Laws passed by hostile, white Ohioans who opposed blacks residing in their presence. Although the laws were not heavily enforced throughout the state, Negroes suffered under the very existence of such laws. Because the Ohio settlers in the Western Reserve were opposed to slavery on humanitarian grounds, the blacks who made Akron their home were somewhat more advantaged in terms of being in less hostile territory. Such was the state of racial affairs when Akron was founded in 1825.

Akron's Early Black Settlers

The records on early black settlers are scant and fragmented for a variety of reasons 1) escaping slaves had to live in secrecy; 2) free blacks had little protection against the Fugitive Slave Law; and 3) records on blacks were not considered of particular importance. To construct the history of Akron's Negroes in the very early years, therefore, obviously requires some conjecture. The available records that do exist provide some information on two important aspects of black history, namely:

- 1) general data on the residents, and 2) Akron's

involvement in the national movements in response to slavery.

General Information on
Akron's Black Pioneers

The city had a unique development for there actually existed two Akrons prior to the spring of 1836. General Simon Perkins and Paul Williams had originally founded Akron in 1825. At that time the village of Akron was located in Portage County and the town plat was recorded in Ravenna, the county seat, on 6 December 1825.³⁹ Several years later an adjoining village, called Cascade, came into being. Founded by General Perkins and Dr. Eliakim Crosby, the town was platted and recorded in Ravenna in 1833. Subsequently, the name Cascade was changed to Akron, and thus two Akrons existed. In order to make the distinction between the two, the original Akron was called South Akron, and the former Cascade became known as North Akron.⁴⁰

A great rivalry existed between the two villages, sometimes erupting in violence. However, in the winter of 1835-36, the two Akrons jointly petitioned the General Assembly for an Act of Incorporation which was passed on

³⁹Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 81.

⁴⁰The two Akrons are shown on Map 3 in appendix 2. In Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 97.

12 March 1836, and the two villages of Akron became one.¹

In the city's infancy, the black population was almost negligible. The 1830 census indicated that there were only five free colored persons residing in Portage Township.² Akron remained a part of Portage County for fifteen years, until Summit County was created in 1840.³ By that year, Akron's black population had increased to a figure somewhere between twenty and forty. The sixth census reported a total of twenty⁴ while the Akron Negro Directory placed the number of blacks at thirty-nine.⁵

The first black birth in Akron has been reported to be that of Augustus W. Rowe, born on 10 December 1830.⁶ However, census information indicated that Rowe was born in Tennessee and placed his age at thirty-seven in the

¹Olin, Akron and Environs, p. 66.

²U.S., Bureau of Census, 1830 Population Schedules, Ohio, vol. 13, File Microcopies of Records in the National Archives, Number 19, Roll 138, Fifth Census of the United States.

³A map of Summit County, Map 4, is included in appendix 2. In Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 129.

⁴U.S., Bureau of Census, Sixth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1841), p. 332.

⁵A. Kingsberry, Akron Negro, p. 15.

⁶Ibid.; Akron Beacon Journal, 21 October 1973, p. H11.

year 1880.⁴⁷

One of the earliest black families to reside in Akron was the family of Edward and Sarah Smith who came to the city in 1836. Smith had been a barber in Columbus, Ohio for approximately twenty years prior to coming to Akron. Because Columbus had an abundance of barbers, Smith migrated to the developing city of Akron where he opened a shop. Combining his business savings with the income from his properties in Columbus, Smith purchased a lot on East Market Street. On this property the family erected two buildings--one a frame home for themselves and the other a building which they rented for business purposes.⁴⁸

The black population grew in the 1840s as is indicated by the 1850 federal census figure of seventy-three blacks in Akron.⁴⁹ Among Akron's black pioneers were the families of: James Darnell, Sarah Smith (widow of Edward Smith), Mansfield Parcham, David Berry, George Miller, John Knight, Tamer Ann Cooper, David Johnson, John McGill, Hannah Williams, John Dunning, James Reynolds, Caroline Bell, Henry Cramer, Alexander Gaines, Shubard Field, John

⁴⁷U.S., Bureau of Census, Ohio Population Schedules, vol. 60, Roll 1068, Microcopy Number T-9.

⁴⁸Lane, Fifty Years, p. 583.

⁴⁹Kingsberry, Akron Negro, p. 15.

Brooks, and James Worthington.⁵⁰

Very few of the early black settlers owned property during this time, but records show that the real estate values of four of the black families were assessed thusly: Sarah Smith's property, 2,000 dollars; David Johnson's property, 100 dollars; Hannah Williams' property, 300 dollars; and James Worthington's property, 500 dollars.⁵¹

The enactment of a stricter Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 undoubtedly affected the black population in Akron in two ways; that is, fewer Negroes came to reside in Akron, and many of the black Akronites fled to settle in Canada. The 1860 census figures reflected the gravity of the situation, reporting only twenty-four black residents in Akron that year.⁵² Among the blacks who did reside in the city during the decade prior to 1860 were Jane Lennon, Rebecca Knight, Xina Edwin, and the families of Elisha Huse, John Brooks, and Tamer Ann Cooper.⁵³

According to a series of newspaper articles

⁵⁰U.S., Bureau of Census, Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy Number 432, Roll 732.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Kingsberry, Akron Negro, p. 15.

⁵³U.S., Bureau of Census, Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy Number 653, Roll 1039.

published in 1973, the ancestors of other black families did migrate to and settle in Akron in the 1850s. Among these were Joseph Dandridge, Frank Hailstock, and James Morrison. Some of the descendants of Dandridge, Hailstock, and Morrison who currently reside in Akron are Mrs. Lynetta Craig and Mrs. Thelma Williams, granddaughters of Joseph Dandridge; Horace Murray and Edward Hailstock, grandsons of Frank Hailstock, and Mrs. Leon Love, James Morrison's granddaughter.⁵⁴

Little is known about the occupations of the early black settlers, but available records show that prior to the Civil War most black men were listed as laborers. Three black males were identified as barbers and one blacksmith, mason, sailor, and boatman were reported.⁵⁵

Akron's Involvement in National Movements Regarding Slavery

The Colonization Movement

The movements that existed nationally were mirrored in various forms on the local level in Akron. Although records are insufficient to prove that Akron's black citizens were involved in the colonization movement of the American Colonization Society, it is possible that blacks

⁵⁴See Akron Beacon Journal, 25 October 1973, p. B15, Akron Beacon Journal, 22 October 1973, p. A17, Akron Beacon Journal, 21 October 1973, p. H11.

⁵⁵U.S., Bureau of Census, Seventh Census, 1850 Microfilm.

in the Akron vicinity could have aided the cause. A newspaper article in 1851 told about three young colored men of Cincinnati who planned to go to Liberia as emigrants to remain in that republic and to lay the foundation of the proposed colony of Ohio in Africa. The article, signed by David Christy, agent for the American Colonization Society for Ohio, specified that:

Being intelligent and well educated young men, the Ohio Colonization Committee have assigned to two of them, the duty of examining and reporting the facts in relation to the best point in the newly purchased territory for the establishment of our Ohio colony. A considerable number in different parts of the state, are proposing to emigrate, and the work now begun, will need to secure its success, the prompt and energetic support of the friends of the cause. . . .⁵⁶

In a similar way, it can only be speculated that in 1852, blacks in the Akron vicinity may have attended the State Convention of Colored Persons--a convention of delegates from the Colored People of the State. When the meeting convened in Cincinnati, several views regarding colonization were espoused. The president, J. M. Langston of Oberlin, spoke strongly in favor of some scheme of colonization; William H. Day, a graduate from Oberlin, was opposed to a general emigration plan, but would not discourage those individuals who chose to colonize Africa, the West Indies or elsewhere; and C. H. Langston of Columbus decidedly favored emigration to some territory on

⁵⁶Akron Summit Beacon, 22 January 1851.

the American continent where blacks could exist as a self-governed nation. Though differing on their views concerning colonization, all who spoke appeared to be in agreement on the "opposition to specific measures of the . . . Colonization Society, maintaining that its promoters were not true friends of colored people."³⁷

Although Akron's early black settlers may have attended meetings regarding colonization, it is an extremely remote possibility that any of them actually went to colonize Liberia, for an 1853 newspaper article stated that a chartered vessel which planned to sail for Liberia had received applications for passage from 178 persons, only one of whom was from Ohio. The price of passage and six months support in Liberia was sixty dollars per person, which attracted the blacks from the southern states, but at this point in time did not entice many of those who were freemen in the North.³⁸

Some evidence that blacks in Akron were concerned with the issue of colonization does exist. At the close of the 1850s the Summit and Medina Counties Convention of the People of Color convened when the house was called to order by J. H. Brooks of Summit County. William B. Hailstock and A. T. Payne served as secretaries. A discussion

³⁷Ibid., 28 January 1852.

³⁸Ibid., 9 March 1853.

of colonization ensued which brought forth ten resolutions. Three, which follow, reflect the temper of the persons in attendance. They read

Be it resolved:

That the immediate emigration to Central America or some South American provinces, is the only way that we can ever hope for the elevation of our own posterity.

That the insults and prejudices of the whites toward us have frequently alienated our feelings from our native country, and have dispelled all feelings of patriotism from their bosoms, and that we regard all white men as our enemies who do not prove themselves otherwise.

That our sincere thanks be tendered to the great and good men of our country who are laboring so arduously and assiduously for our oppressed and down-trodden race.⁵⁹

The Antislavery Movement

It was the antislavery movement, however, which attracted more attention in the Akron area than did efforts toward colonization. The humanitarian spirit prevailed among many and the protests against slavery were forceful.

As early as the 1830s abolitionists were confronted with problems concerning their antislavery protests. Several northerners sympathized with the southerner's position even though not owning slaves themselves. Incidents which occurred at Summit County's Western Reserve College in Hudson, Ohio exemplified the conflicting

⁵⁹Akron Summit County Beacon, 5 January 1859

sentiments on the slavery question in 1833.

Rev. Charles B. Storrs, the institution's first president,⁶⁰ became a fervent abolitionist after meeting another influential and dedicated abolitionist, Theodore Weld, in 1832.⁶¹ Storrs, who held profound views against slavery and spoke out openly on the subject, fell into disfavor among several of the faculty and board members who were proslavery advocates. Because many of the students were from families who were from the southern portion of the state and had southern backgrounds, the enrollments and endowments dropped markedly. A resolution was passed thereafter condemning the promulgation of radical views. Not until Storrs' death, and the resignation of faculty members who supported him, did the disharmony cease.⁶²

One of the most fiery abolitionists during the early years of Akron's growth was John Brown, who resided for a time in the city in the 1840s. Lane, Cherry, Kenfield, Klippert, and Grismer have provided accounts of his

⁶⁰Cherry cited Dr. Henry M. Storrs as being Western Reserve College's first president in Western Reserve, p. 324; Davis in Black Americans, p. 12 and Grismer in Akron and Summit, p. 164 reported the first president's name as Charles B. Storrs, and papers in the "Wilbur H. Siebert Manuscript Collection," Box 110, Columbus, Ohio Historical Society referred to the first president as Charles B. Stowe.

⁶¹Davis, Black Americans, p. 12.

⁶²Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 164.

antislavery activities for which he became famous.⁶³

Brown grew up in Hudson, Ohio, site of Western Reserve College, and is said to have drawn a large part of his inspiration from the teachings of the college's first president, Storrs. He lived in Hudson for about twenty years, moved to Pennsylvania for several years, and returned to Ohio in 1833, settling in Kent.

Brown became involved in the sheep and wool business around 1840 and eventually came to Akron in 1844. He was provided with a frame house which still stands at Diagonal and Copley Roads. Employed by Colonel Simon Perkins, son of the general, Brown later formed a partnership with him and the firm of Perkins and Brown was established. They had a successful business for some time until escalation of prices, on Brown's part, caused the firm to suffer substantial losses and thus dissolve.

Ruined financially, Brown went to New York and resided there for several years, during which time he became greatly concerned over the slavery issue. By 1855 he participated in border warfare in Kansas and soon became a leader in the antislavery movement in the state, carrying out raids on the proslavery forces.

In 1856 Brown came to Akron and held several

⁶³See Lane, Fifty Years, pp. 586-92, Cherry, Western Reserve, pp. 324-30; Kenfield, Akron and Summit County, pp. 54-58, Klippert, The Akron Story, pp. 91-93, 115.

meetings which resulted in his obtaining a building in which he stored rifles, shotguns, revolvers, pistols, and other forms of arms and ammunition. The building, which was known as John Brown's Arsenal, was located on Broadway, just north of Exchange Street.⁶⁴

In December of that same year Brown spoke in Akron at the Empire Hall. An article on that event related that Brown, a former Akron resident who was well known for his participation in the Kansas troubles, addressed an audience on "the affairs in that unhappy territory."⁶⁵

Three years later Brown was convicted of treason and sentenced to be hanged for his activities at Harpers Ferry. On the day of his execution, 2 December 1859, the citizens of Akron mourned. Flags were flown at half-mast; bells were tolled, the court of common pleas adjourned; and stores and businesses closed in respect for the martyrdom of John Brown.⁶⁶

A portion of a letter which Brown wrote in response to correspondence from his close friend, Mr. Lora Case, follows. Written moments before his execution, it exemplified the type of man he was. It read

My Dear Sir--Your most kind and cheering letter of the 28th of November, is received. Such an out-burst

⁶⁴Cherry, Western Reserve, p. 325.

⁶⁵Akron Summit Beacon, 17 December 1856.

⁶⁶Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 166.

of warm hearted sympathy, not only for myself, but also for those who have no helper, compels me to steal a moment from those allowed me in which to prepare for my last change, to send you a few words. Such a feeling as you manifest makes you shine (in my estimation) in the midst of this wicked and perverse generation, as a light in the world, and may you ever prove yourself equal to the high estimate I have placed upon you. . . .⁶⁷

While John Brown was an active abolitionist throughout several states over a period of decades, the organized abolitionist movement felt its effects in Akron around 1850 when citizens met to discuss their interests in a proposed new constitution for Ohio. The Summit Beacon reported on a meeting to be held for that purpose:

The undersigned citizens of Summit County, anxious to do something if possible, towards securing to our disfranchised countrymen of color, the rights of suffrage, under the new constitution, propose that a convention be held at Akron on the 19th day of Feb., inst. at one o'clock P M. to take into consideration this and other matters pertaining to the rights of men.

Carlos Smith, H. S. Carter, Jothan Blakelee, Ira P. Sperry, Wm. C. Oviatt, F. H. Wright, F. W. Upson, John Lane, D. F. Bruner, A. G. Babcock, George Robbins, Lewis Arner, J. S. Carpenter, James M. Hale, G. N. Abbey, G. J. Ackley, D. P. Randall, C. W. Palmer, J. C. Berry, George Dow, Josiah Hains, John Davis, John B. Harrison, Marvin Williams, George Bowden, I. C. Pendleton, H. A. Hitchcock, Grant B. Turner, Austin Babcock, P. G. Somers, Albert G. Mallison, Joseph Cole, and Warren Lane. There were other names received, but they were too late for insertion.⁶⁸

After a few meetings to organize and set up committees, several resolutions were made which revealed the

⁶⁷Lane, Fifty Years, p. 591.

⁶⁸Akron Summit Beacon, 13 February 1850.

committee's undisputed stand against racial discrimination and which ably expressed their indignation toward injustice. Two resolutions will be cited to illustrate their feelings. They read:

Be it resolved:

That the editor of any political paper in this county who is not willing or has not the moral and political courage to advocate the incorporation into the anticipated new constitution of Ohio, a clause enfranchising the colored population of our State, is totally unworthy of the confidence and support of the freemen of Summit County.

That a law should be passed in the state forbidding to slave catchers the use of our jails, and punishing with fine and imprisonment any of our citizens who should be found aiding in catching or sending back fugitive slaves.⁶³

Following their meeting, the Summit County abolitionists received a letter of encouragement from William H. Day, the well-known black leader in Cleveland, wherein he related his admiration and respect for their efforts to secure for blacks their right to vote. He expressed in eloquent words the hope and frustration that he felt and said in part:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune
Omitted, all the voyage of our life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures. . . .

. . . On Lake Champlain under Commodore McDonough,
my father fought in blood up to his ankles, to gain
for me rights of which I am now deprived by law. And

⁶³Ibid., 27 February 1850.

though he carried to his grave the marks of the battle, what did they avail him? What has it availed his children? . . .⁷⁰

Along with the abolition movement there was a general humanitarian movement underway throughout the nation. Common issues were concerned with the underprivileged, women's rights, temperance, peace, and other reforms. Noted blacks, Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Sojourner Truth participated in these movements. When a Women's Rights Convention convened at Stone Church in Akron on 28 May 1851, Sojourner Truth was present. It was at this convention that she delivered her now famous address.⁷¹ Although the Summit Beacon did not report her address, it made the following acknowledgment:

The "bright, particular stars" of the convention, aside from the worthy home circle, were Mrs. Coe of New York, Mrs. Swisshelm of Pittsburgh, Mrs. Gage of McConnellsville, . . . and a number more whose names we are not familiar with. An old colored lady from Massachusetts, nearly six feet high, once a slave in New York, who boasts the somewhat singular name SOJOURNER TRUTH, won upon all by her quaint utterance of good hard sense at intervals during the sittings of the convention⁷²

A portion of her speech which captivated the audience follows

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Great American Women's Speeches, Caedon Records, Inc., 1973, Side Two, Sojourner Truth (c. 1797-1883) "Ain't I a Woman?" (Convention in Akron, Ohio 28-29 May 1851) read by Claudia McNeil.

⁷²Akron Summit Beacon, 4 June 1851.

That man over there say that women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man--when I could get it--and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?⁷³

That there existed a humanitarian mood on the part of many white citizens in Akron was also reflected in their reception of a theatrical production of Uncle Tom's Cabin--a play with an antislavery theme based on Harriet Beecher Stowe's book. Whereas the Kinney and Company's American Dramatics Company presented the play in Akron's Union Hall without incident,⁷⁴ a Negro preacher was imprisoned under sentence of ten years for the possession of a copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin in the state of Maryland.⁷⁵

Escape from slavery movements

The Fugitive Slave Law did not prevent slaves from attempting to escape. The brutality of slavery was severe enough that it alone motivated blacks to become freedom bound. Because of Ohio's geographical position and the fervor of its settlers for abolition, it was the chief

⁷³Johnson, Ebony Pictorial, p. 204.

⁷⁴Akron Summit Beacon, 12 April 1854.

⁷⁵Akron Summit County Beacon, 7 October 1857.

center of Underground Railroad activities.⁷⁶ Hundreds of blacks traveled through Ohio as they made their way to Canada.⁷⁷

One particularly descriptive account of a fugitive slave's escape to freedom was reprinted in the Summit Beacon in 1856. Taken from the Trenton State Gazette, it renders a tale which was typical of the unsung black heroes of that time. Entitled "A Remarkable Incident," it is cited in full because it is representative of what those fugitives who passed through Akron may have endured; serves as an illustrative example of the black man's struggle to survive; and mirrors the sympathy with the antislavery view prevalent in Akron at the time.

A few nights since there passed through this city, on the railroad bound for Canada a family of eight fugitive slaves. One of these--the leading spirit of the whole--was a woman sixty years of age, a bold, courageous, prompt and energetic woman. Two years ago she was living as a slave in the South. She was the mother of six children, all of whom she had seen torn from her arms when old enough to be useful, and sold away from her. One day she overheard her master bargaining with a . . . driver, who desired to purchase for the far South, her grandson, a boy of some fifteen years old. Stung to the quick by this design of stripping her of the last of her kindred, she instantly resolved on flight.

The same night she started with her boy for the North. Night after night they traveled by the North star--the only guide the helpless fugitive knows in making for the land of Freedom and one that deceives him not, since it is fixed in the heavens. After long

⁷⁶Johnson, Ebony Pictorial, pp. 226, 228.

⁷⁷Ohio's Underground Railroads are shown on Map 5 in appendix 2. In Siebert, Mysteries of Railroad.

and painful wanderings they arrived in Canada.

Here this heroic woman hired herself at wages. Two months ago with purse well filled she started back to the residence of her old master at the South Here, alone, she concealed herself in the thickets, a fugitive from Freedom--cared for, however, by the few trusty souls to whom she revealed the dangerous secret of her presence in the land of bondage. After remaining there some two weeks, she collected seven of her children and grandchildren and started with them for the North. Long and slow and anxious was their journey. The same unerring star shone faithfully from above upon their midnight pathway. By day they lay by, concealing among the thickets of the country, through which they made a beeline for the North. No toil discouraged, no danger dismayed this heroic woman. Many times the party suffered to the verge of starvation. She cheered them onward--she was their only "guide," their counselor and friend."

Worn down with the hardships of this perilous journey, with garments torn to shreds and fluttering in the breeze, with shoes worn into fragments, without hats or bonnets, this heroine conducted her party to the house of a friend. Word was immediately passed around among some of the good souls who dwell there as the salt of the earth, that eight fugitives were concealed in a garret and destitute of means of further progress. The word was followed by the deed. All necessary means were instantly provided for their safe transmission to the North, and the train which passed through this city on the same night, carried the whole party toward the home of their leader in Canada, where they have by this time undoubtedly arrived

We doubt if a similar instance of devotion to friends and kindred is on record. It required a daring mind to ever conceive the idea of going back to the scene of bondage and encountering the hazard of discovery in the lion's den. But nothing short of the [sic] that heroism which under other circumstances has made men immortal, was needed to put into execution an enterprise so full of difficulty and danger. Such spirits, if any, not only deserve to be free but are fitted to enjoy the largest liberty.⁷⁸

The citizens in the city of Akron were probably as involved in assisting fugitives as they were in the

⁷⁸Akron Summit Beacon, 21 November 1855.

antislavery movement. The Centennial History of Akron asserted that:

Akron--like the rest of the Western Reserve--shared with its parent New England the most violent sentiments against slavery. During the Fifties one artery of the Underground Railway system led through Akron, and there were stations here and in other parts of the county.⁷⁹

One of those known to be an operator in Akron was Zebbes Stout who lived about five miles south of the city. He was a Yankee farmer who made the last run from his receiving place to Cleveland. Another of the operators in the Akron area was Sidney Edgerton, who later became a governor of the Montana territory. He operated the Underground Railroad in Tallmadge, Ohio, where his home was one of the stations. Edgerton came to live in Tallmadge in the spring of 1844, attended Cincinnati Law School in 1846, and at one time practiced law in Akron.⁸⁰ The names of Dr. Joseph Cole of Akron, Dr. Amos Wright of Tallmadge Township, and John Hall of Springfield are also cited as being conductors in the Akron area.⁸¹

The position of Akron's abolitionists expressed furor against injustice and was verbalized repeatedly as to which the following incidents will attest.

Because of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850,

⁷⁹Fetzer, Centennial History, p. 88.

⁸⁰"Siebert Manuscript Collection," Box 110.

⁸¹Siebert, Mysteries of Railroad, p. 270.

reactions were evoked which resulted in a request for a public meeting to be held on 16 October 1851 for the purpose of taking into consideration what course of action was deemed necessary in regard to that law. The strong feeling of disfavor towards the law and the commitment to aid blacks is reflected in the following words.

The strange infatuation which led to the enactment of a law so inhuman and unjust, should be dispelled forever. There is no occasion for alarm among the colored citizens of this section. An attempt to drag any of them into slavery could be made here only at the peril of life.²

One week later similar remarks were echoed

Public feeling is here moved to its very depths and will find utterances in resolves strong and earnest. The pains and penalties of the law have no terror for our citizens. They can not be made to divest themselves of their humanity. The fugitive from Slavery will not be turned away empty from their doors, nor can they be made supple instruments of the South in his reclamation. . . . Its heartless provisions have aroused a feeling of abhorrence toward the "peculiar institution" that requires such legislation for its support which would render perilous the mission of the slave catcher in this section.³

Meetings in Bath, Cuyahoga Falls, and Trumbull County created like responses.⁴ Yet, blacks in Akron lived in constant fear of the effects of the Fugitive Slave Law. Their fears were not unwarranted for in 1854 an attempt to capture Jim Worthington, a black barber, and

²Akron Summit Beacon, 16 October 1851.

³Ibid., 23 October 1851.

⁴See Akron Summit Beacon, 30 October 1851, 6, 20 November 1851.

transport him to the South brought to full realization the emotional stress under which blacks were forced to live. Historians Grismer and Lane have given full accounts of the episode and a 1973 newspaper article also reported the story.⁸⁵

Grismer noted that on 17 May 1854, slavecatchers came to Akron in an attempt to capture Worthington by producing a phony warrant for his arrest on counterfeit charges. Worthington was denied the opportunity to talk with his attorney, General Lucius V. Bierce, and was forced to accompany the "officers" to the train depot. Abolitionists Eleazer Sackett, Christopher Wolcott, and William Upson helped to alert the townsmen and arrived at the train station in time to thwart the slavecatchers' scheme and demand Worthington's release. A near riot was prevented.

Lane provided a much more detailed account and suggested that Worthington attributed his plight to the fact that his wife betrayed his secret and was thus partially responsible for the slavecatchers' attempts to capture him. The newspaper account inaccurately set the date at May 1857, but otherwise reported similar information as related in Grismer and Lane's accounts.

⁸⁵See Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 165-66, Lane, Fifty Years, pp. 580-82; and Akron Beacon Journal, 24 October 1973, p. C1.

After Worthington's escape, the Summit Beacon stated that he had resided in Akron about twelve years. His prior residence and whether or not he was in fact a fugitive or former slave was unknown.⁶⁶ The mood of the community towards slavecatchers was expressed in a portion of that account:

It is the impression of many here that he was a slave but they are not for taking a point of so much importance for granted. The time never has been when a peaceable citizen could thus be smuggled away from Summit County into Slavery. . . . Worthington is now in all probability beyond the reach of the Slave-hunter; but whether he is or not, it will not be well for either Southern or Northern men to come again into this community on such an errand.⁶⁷

Lane related how other fugitives were alarmed after the narrow escape of Worthington and thus moved to Canada. He cites the particular case of Mrs. Sarah Smith who left Akron and joined the Canadian colony after having resided in Akron for eighteen years. According to Lane, many other local blacks left Akron and moved to Canada

. . . either because they were escaped slaves, or because, having been born free, but with colored skins, they were fearful of being kidnapped into slavery, as had in several well authenticated instances, already been done.⁶⁸

The concern of Akron's black leaders was obvious

⁶⁶Grismer noted that it was learned later that Worthington's former owner had pulled strings to have his runaway slave returned, in Akron and Summit, p. 166.

⁶⁷Akron Summit Beacon, 24 May 1854.

⁶⁸Lane, Fifty Years, p. 583.

for they held a meeting later that year and invited the colored citizens of Akron and vicinity to attend. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the best methods of preventing the friends of the nation from betraying others into slavery. Signatures of J. H. Brooks, W. Halestock [sic], Moses Jones, Robert Hurse, George Jackson, and David Manse accompanied the article.⁸⁹

Escaping fugitives continued to travel to Canada in the years preceding the Civil War. Brief accounts of fugitive slaves passing through Akron were reported in the late 1850s. One account noted that two fugitives considered valuable chattel passed through Akron in pursuit of freedom under difficulties.⁹⁰ The second implied the fear expressed by a fugitive who passed through the city on his way to Canada asking nothing except to be shown the road. The tension and pressure of the deplorable conditions existing for runaway slaves were made manifest in the article which continued

One of the most painful things noticeable in a fugitive is his constant suspicion and distrust. He never is secure, never feels confidence in those who befriend him. The dread of pursuit or betrayal is ever in his mind. He is as wary as if he tho't himself still in the enemy's country, liable to capture.⁹¹

The strain under which blacks lived in the 1850s

⁸⁹Akron Summit Beacon, 6 December 1854.

⁹⁰Ibid., 16 April 1856.

⁹¹Akron Summit County Beacon, 5 May 1858.

was very acute. Yet in spite of their hardships, blacks took time to engage in cultural discussions. An article in an edition of the Summit Beacon in 1856 stated that the colored citizens of Cuyahoga Falls and Akron held a discussion at Union Hall in which they debated the question, "Who has suffered the most at the hands of the white man-- the African or the Indian?" The reporter concluded the article with the comment, "What would have been the result if the Indian had been permitted to argue his own case we cannot say, but as the discussion stood last week it was a draw. . . ." ²²

Civil War Years Through Reconstruction

The paucity of records on blacks in Akron from the years 1860 to 1877 restricts the information to a discussion of Akron's black Civil War veterans and the progress Negroes made toward being united in order to become independent.

Akron's Black Civil War Veterans

As the nation grew more divided on the issue of slavery, the alienation climaxed in the outbreak of the Civil War. Akron responded immediately to the call and the first companies recruited were A and B, Akron Union

²²Akron Summit Beacon, 16 April 1856.

Light Infantry and Company C, Akron Buckeye Infantry.⁵³

No black men were in these companies, however, for as Wesley points out.

Colored citizens in several parts of the state offered their services as soldiers, but these offers were consistently refused during 1861 and the first part of 1862.⁵⁴

In order to provide the military background of Akron's black Civil War veterans, a brief history of Negro soldiers in Ohio follows.

It wasn't until 17 July 1862 that Congress authorized the President to "accept persons of African descent for war services for which they were competent."⁵⁵ Approximately six months later the first successful movement in the North to utilize black troops was initiated on 26 January 1863 when Secretary of War Stanton empowered Governor John A. Andrew of Massachusetts to raise volunteer companies for duty in Massachusetts and elsewhere. Such volunteers could enlist for three years and could include those of African descent. The regiment, comprised of those of African descent, was to be known as the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteers.⁵⁶ Thus blacks who may have enlisted from Akron during the early years of the

⁵³Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 167.

⁵⁴Charles H. Wesley, Ohio Negroes in the Civil War (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1963), p. 22.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 24-25.

Civil War probably joined the Fifty-fourth Regiment.

With the appointment of John M. Langston as agent for recruitment in Ohio and the Midwest, the enlistment of colored men progressed. Langston, a well-known black attorney and a prominent figure in convention activities among colored people, was influential among blacks. His task, however, was a most difficult one because "a major obstacle to recruitment was that colored soldiers were paid less than white soldiers."⁷ As Wesley indicated:

It was not until June 15, 1864 that Congress adopted an act providing that colored soldiers would receive the same pay, uniforms, arms, equipment, rations, medical and hospital attendance and emoluments (other than bounty) as white soldiers.⁸

Records did not always distinguish where black enlistees were assigned during the early days of the Civil War. Thus, some of Ohio's black recruits who served in the Massachusetts regiment may not have been identified as coming from Ohio. Governor Tod recognized this problem and requested that Massachusetts' Governor Andrew keep the colored men of Ohio in separate companies and record their names, ages, and place of residence so that Ohio would have "the full benefit of all enlistments from the State and the recruits themselves the benefit of the State associations to the same extent nearly as if organized into

⁷Ibid., p. 27.

⁸Ibid., p. 35.

a State regiment."⁹⁹

Although Governor Tod had opposed the acceptance of blacks in Ohio for military service in 1861 and 1862, by 27 May 1863 he appealed to Secretary Stanton to be given the authority to raise a colored regiment. Stanton replied positively, stating that "it was the design of the Department 'to raise colored troops wherever it can be done,' but he thought that Governor Andrew of Massachusetts should go on with his plans. . . ."¹⁰⁰

Not until 1 November 1863 was an Ohio Negro regiment called into service by the War Department--the name of the regiment being the Fifth United States Colored Troops. Its active participation in expeditions throughout various locations in the states of Virginia and North Carolina were well known and it distinguished itself particularly at the Battle of Petersburg.¹⁰¹

By 11 January 1864 a second black regiment, the Twenty-seventh United States Colored Troops, was organized at Camp Delaware. This regiment fought from the Rapidan to the James in May and June 1864, participating in the siege of Petersburg and Richmond, and in the mine explosion at Petersburg on 30 July 1864.¹⁰²

Several honors were accorded both Negro regiments.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 39.

It was officially reported that the Twenty-seventh Regiment had "distinguished itself for unsurpassed gallantry and good conduct upon the battlefield." The Fifth Regiment, along with several other regiments, had the word "Petersburg" inscribed on its banner for its gallantry in capturing the enemy's works and guns, and had the further distinction of having the words "New Market Heights" inscribed on its colors for the same reason.¹⁰³

There were also hundreds of unassigned recruits from Ohio who were credited to several Congressional districts. Although their number is unknown because of insufficient records, it is known that many were assigned to the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, Forty-fourth, and Seventy-second Regiments of the United States Colored Troops, as well as the Fifth Regiment of the United States Colored Heavy Artillery.¹⁰⁴

Available records on Akron's black Civil War veterans are limited. The Akron Negro Directory listed James Robinson, Moses James, Owen Hailstock, Frank Hailstock, John W. Brooks, Absalom H. Brooks, Washington Martin, and James Morrison as those who enlisted from Akron in the Union Army in 1861.¹⁰⁵ The foregoing history of Ohio's Negroes in the Civil War indicated, however,

¹⁰³Ibid. ¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Kingsberry, Akron Negro, p. 13.

that Negroes were not recruited in the North until 1863.

Lane provided some background information on the Fifth United States Colored Infantry and cited the names of Akron's black Civil War veterans and the regiment to which they were credited thusly:

Absalom H. Brooks and John W. Brooks (sons of our former well-known colored citizen John H. Brooks), Gustavus Edington (nephew of Mrs. Washington Martin), orderly sergeant of Company F, and Owen Hailstock.¹⁰⁶

Frank M. Hailstock was reported as serving in the Twenty-second United States Colored Infantry and Moses Jones¹⁰⁷ and James Morrison were cited as performing duty in the Twenty-seventh United States Colored Infantry.¹⁰⁸

The Centennial History of Akron did not list the black Akronites who served in the Civil War, but it did present an unofficial list of the names of the battles in which the Fifth Regiment of the United States Colored Troops participated, namely: New Kent C. H., City Point, Fort Darling, Petersburg (3 battles), New Market Heights, Fair Oaks, Sugar Loaf Hill, Federal Point, and Wilmington.¹⁰⁹

Following the close of the Civil War, both Morrison and Hailstock returned to Akron. Morrison met and married

¹⁰⁶Lane, Fifty Years, p. 405.

¹⁰⁷Lane, in Fifty Years, reported the name as being Moses Jones rather than Moses James as listed in the Akron Negro Directory.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 408.

¹⁰⁹Petzer, Centennial History, p. 577.

Emily Hailstock, a resident in "Old Germantown" (currently East Akron), in 1865. Approximately four years later the Morrisons purchased property on Livingston Street, which was a part of the Benjamin Coddington Allotment. There the descendants of the Morrison family resided until October 1972, when the city began to purchase their land for highway construction.

The Morrisons celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary one year before Emily Morrison's death in 1916. Four years later James Morrison expired. Mrs. Leon Love, Morrison's granddaughter, is a current resident of Akron.¹¹⁰

Hailstock, like Morrison, married soon after his return from military service, and he and his wife, the former Hattie Turner, reared several children at their residence on Furnace Street.

It was while working at Goodrich that Hailstock learned the blacksmith trade at which he worked for many years at Akron's City Shop on Spring Street. The last fifteen years of his life, however, were spent as a parking lot attendant at the courthouse.

Hailstock was an active participant in political organizations and an original member of the Silver Leaf Lodge of the Masons. He spent many days touring area

¹¹⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 21 October 1973, p. H11.

schools, making countless speeches. In 1927 Hailstock passed away leaving two children, Harry, father of Edward Hailstock; and Elizabeth, mother of Horace Murray. Hailstock and Murray are both currently residing in Akron.¹¹¹

Another Civil War veteran, Alvin Smith, came to Akron after the end of the war in 1865 and resided in the city most of his life until his death in 1948.

Smith was born on 15 October 1843 in a little cabin in Fleming County, Kentucky. At the age of nineteen, after being sold as a slave for \$760.50 on an auction block, he ran away to join the Union Army, managing to escape from Kentucky into Ohio by crossing the Ohio River. Following his discharge from the service, Smith came to Akron where he learned and worked at the plastering trade.¹¹²

For two years he searched to find his mother, brothers, and sisters who had been living in secrecy in Kentucky, not knowing that they were free. Upon finding them, Smith brought them to Akron and took up residence on Hazel Street.¹¹³ He became a member of the Masonic Lodge and John Fulton Post No. 272 of the American Legion. Smith frequently participated in Akron's Memorial Day

¹¹¹Ibid., 22 October 1973, pp. A16-17.

¹¹²Ibid., 14 April 1948.

¹¹³Interview with Rollin Smith and Rollin K. Clayton, 879 Dover Ave., Akron, Ohio, 7 November 1974.

parade.¹¹⁴

As the Civil War neared its end, the population of Akron had increased to the extent that on 21 January 1865 Akron became a city. Although the 1860 census had shown a marked decline in the number of blacks, the total population by 14 December 1864 had surpassed five thousand enabling the village of Akron to be eligible to advance to a "city of the second class."¹¹⁵

Early Steps Toward Unification and Independence

The few blacks who resided in Akron during this period were beginning to make progress in terms of becoming independent economically, socially, and politically. As early as 1861, William D. Stevens, father of the black philanthropist, George Stevens, purchased property on Main Street, which later became a portion of the land on which the current Main Branch of the Akron Public Library was erected.¹¹⁶

Illustrative examples of other early black land-owners and the years in which they purchased lots are: Washington Martin, 1863; Tamer Ann Cooper (whose property was located where the current Board of Education's

¹¹⁴Akron Beacon Journal, 11 October 1948.

¹¹⁵Olin, Akron Environs, p. 67.

¹¹⁶Summit County Deed Records, Book 42, p. 212.
Akron, Ohio.

Administration Building stands), 1864; James and Emily Morrison, 1869; Frank Hailstock, 1869, Smith Dandridge, 1873; and Isham Smith, 1874.¹¹⁷

Residential patterns indicated that most blacks resided in the area of North Broadway, North High, and Furnace Streets.

The need for unification and spiritual strength undoubtedly influenced some of Akron's black citizens to join together and form their own church. Throughout Ohio, churches excluded Negroes more often than they admitted them thus causing blacks to establish separate churches or to sit in the "Negro gallery"--separate pews for colored persons.¹¹⁸

Akron's first black church was established in 1866 when a small group of Negroes began to meet in private homes or halls in order to worship. Although they had no money, they held steadfastly to a dream of having their own building in which to worship. Their dream was realized in the late 1860s or early 1870s and their first house of worship was the old Perkins [School] building which had been abandoned. The building was purchased and moved via the Ohio Canal to a site near West Exchange

¹¹⁷Summit County Deed Records, Books 45, p. 623, 49, p. 523; 67, p. 458, 69, p. 456, 87, p. 11, and 94, p. 63. Akron, Ohio.

¹¹⁸Wesley, Ohio Negroes, p. 7.

Street.

Founders of the church were listed as Brother Prince, Frank Morrison, Isham Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Hailstock, Mr. and Mrs. Levi Pinn, and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Lancaster.¹¹⁹

Conflicting records exist as to the original pastor of the church. One record named the Rev. Joseph Armstrong as the first regularly appointed pastor and named him as one of the founders. Another record cited Rev. Warm Cypert as the first pastor of the then Zion Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church.¹²⁰ Lane listed several ministers as being among the early pastors of the church, notably: Rev. P. R. Anderson, five years; Rev. Charles H. Docket, one year; Rev. A. B. Mathews, two years; Rev. P. R. Anderson (second time), one year, Rev. J. H. McMullen, one year, and the Rev. George Cliff (present minister at the time of Lane's writing, 1891)¹²¹

As the years passed the church membership increased and by 1882, through the assistance of the Ladies Home

¹¹⁹Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church One Hundredth Anniversary Brochure (Galion United Church Directories of Ohio, 1966); The Akron Beacon Journal, 21 October 1973, p. H11, cited James Morrison as being one of the founders, and the Akron Beacon Journal, 22 October 1973, p. A17, specified that Frank Hailstock was another of the founders.

¹²⁰Wesley Temple One Hundredth Anniversary Brochure.

¹²¹Lane, Fifty Years, p. 212.

Missionary Society and Hon. George W. Crouse,¹²² a lot was purchased on South High Street and a small building erected for the congregation's services.¹²³ Lane's account of the history of the church presented contradictory data in this regard, stating that the old house used for worship was moved to the new site.¹²⁴

As the decade of the 1860s ended, the number of Negroes had increased to 196.¹²⁵ While no blacks were known to be professionals during these years, they did work at varying occupations. Most blacks performed jobs as unskilled laborers, but a few had learned a trade. Occupations available to blacks at that time included: barbers, tailors, hairdressers, boatsmen, whitewashers, hod carriers and preachers.¹²⁶

Blacks were beginning to become self-sufficient economically, and were organizing socially. They also saw the need to become politically oriented. The Negroes'

¹²²A portion of a legal transaction involving the Hon. George W. Crouse and the A.M.E. Zion Church is included in appendix 3.

¹²³"Historic Sketch of Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church in Akron, Ohio." Brochure among the records of the church.

¹²⁴Lane, Fifty Years, p. 212.

¹²⁵Kingsberry, Akron Negro, p. 15.

¹²⁶Andrew J. Hall, comp., Hall's General Directory and Business Guide of the City of Akron (Akron Lane Canfield and Co, 1868), pp 41-114 passim.

increasing awareness of the importance of being politically organized resulted in the formation of a black Grant and Wilson Club in 1872. Little data is available about the organization which was established in support of President Grant and his vice-presidential nominee, Henry Wilson. It is known, however, that there were also white Grant and Wilson Clubs.

The black Grant and Wilson Club's first meeting convened at Hanscom's Block, Howard Street, and resolutions were adopted which expressed the association's purpose and objectives. Those holding office were: William Hall, president, J. H. Brooks, vice president, and N. C. Lewis, secretary. The business committee was composed of D. H. Greene, W. A. Green, and W. Benford.¹²⁷

Although the rights of the black population in Akron had been protected for several decades by those who had a humanitarian bent, those sentiments were not endorsed statewide. The post-Civil War amendments to the United States Constitution--specifically the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, designed to better the lives of Negroes--were met by opposition throughout the state, but were eventually ratified.¹²⁸

The proclamation of the enactment of the Fifteenth

¹²⁷ Akron Summit County Beacon, 14 August 1872.

¹²⁸ Davis, Black Americans, p. 84.

Amendment on 30 March 1870, guaranteeing the citizens of the United States the right to vote, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, was a giant step toward blacks' progress and was therefore cause for celebration on the anniversary of its ratification for several years thereafter.

An account of celebration activities in Akron on 30 March 1874, stated that approximately one hundred people attended the exercises held in Temperance Hall, Miller's Block, on East Market Street. Governor Edgerton, a former Underground Railroad operator and former Akron attorney, was speaker of the day. The account reported on his address thusly:

He spoke of the African race as it was while in bondage and as it is now, encouraged them to go forward; to study, to work and make themselves good citizens. He spoke of their enterprises in the most flattering terms, related to them incidents of the war, and delivered a speech that should have been heard by everyone of our citizens whether black or white. His speech was well received by his hearers and brought forth frequent and loud applause.¹²⁹

Progress among blacks was sometimes impeded by the death of the breadwinner or by family illnesses. The maladies at that time--which antedated significant advances in medicine--caused deaths to occur at relatively early ages. Among those diseases contributing to the expiration of Akron's citizens during the post-Civil War

¹²⁹Akron Daily Beacon, 30 March 1874.

years were consumption, cholera, whooping cough, and scarlet fever. Illustrative cases of Akron's black residents who died from those diseases between 1866 and 1876 were three adults ranging in age from twenty-five to thirty-four and three children between the ages of one day to one year and five months.¹³⁰

Post-Reconstruction Years to 1899

The years which followed the Reconstruction Era leading up to the turn of the century witnessed some small but significant developments in the history of Akron's black population. This segment of the paper focuses on two aspects of blacks' growth: economic opportunities and the emergence of more black organizations to further black progress.

Economic Opportunities

Employment opportunities were very limited for Negroes, for blacks had little education. George Stevens, a young black, was the only Negro known to have attended Buchtel College.¹³¹ Subsequently, Stevens was afforded

¹³⁰ See Loretta St. John, Marilyn Welsh, and Jane Woods, comps., Summit County Deaths, 1866 to 1872, vol. 1, 1972, pp. 29, 49, Loretta St. John and Marilyn Welsh, comps., Summit County Deaths, 1872 to 1876, vol. 2, 1972, pp. 1, 7, 31, 51.

¹³¹ Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Buchtel College, 1877-78, Akron, Ohio (Akron: Beacon Publishing Co., 1878), p. 12.

the chance to work as a machinist apprentice. Still later, other ventures and opportunities enabled Stevens to accumulate a fortune after he left Akron and passed for white.

By the late 1870s most Negroes were employed as plasterers, domestics, laborers, porters, cooks, expressmen, engineers, and teamsters.¹³² There were a few isolated cases of blacks who worked as tailors, dress-makers, and hairdressers.¹³³ Paton Johnson (spelled variously as Payton and Patton in different city directories) was employed as a janitor at the Broadway School in the late 1870s.¹³⁴

Although blacks were residing in various parts of the city, most Negroes lived in the area of North Broadway, Furnace, North High, Cuyahoga Streets, etc. Some black residents lived in the vicinity of the current City Hospital and what is now known as Central Akron.

Black businesses were few during the last decades of the century. However, the fact that Negroes were

¹³²Atty. Emmer Martin Lancaster suggested that during this period of history expressmen were similar to deliverymen; engineers were steam engineers who operated boilers; and teamsters were men who drove a team of horses.

¹³³N. H. Burch and Co., Akron City Directory, 1877-78 (Akron: N. H. Burch and Co., 1877).

¹³⁴N. H. Burch and Co., Akron City Directory, 1879-80 (Akron: Tribune and Germania Printing House, 1879), p. 164.

making some progress in this area was attested to by:

1) the fact that Henry Pickett and Charles Alexander's Excelsior Whitewashing Company had opened; 2) two bathroom businesses--Chavis and Hamlin, as well as Martin and Brown--were in operation; and 3) black barbers were pooling their resources to form their own shops and employ other black barbers. Martin and Dangerfield, and Hamlin and Hale were two of the black barbershops in existence. As black enterprises prospered, the businessmen began to advertise and were listed in the business section of the city directory.¹³⁵

As the decade of the 1880s began, blacks continued to work in the occupations previously mentioned and a few were also engaged as brickmasons, tilemakers, moulder's helpers, hostlers, and coachmen.¹³⁶

Black Organizations to Further Black Progress

The black population had increased to 278 by 1880¹³⁷ and Negroes found the need to establish another church, one of a different denomination. Lane's history of Akron

¹³⁵A portion of the business directory listing some of the black barbers (in the 1879-80 Akron City Directory) and Pickett and Alexander's ad (in the 1883-84 Akron City Directory) appears in appendix 4.

¹³⁶U.S. Bureau of Census, Ohio Population Schedules, vol. 60, Roll 1068, Microcopy T-9, and vol. 61, Roll 1069, Microcopy Number T-9.

¹³⁷Kingsberry, Akron Negro, p. 15.

indicated that Shiloh Baptist Church was believed to have been organized in the early 1880s. Having no house of worship of its own, the members met in a hall on Howard Street where a Cleveland minister, Rev. Cheatham [sic], officiated every other Sunday. The congregation was very small having a membership of only twenty-five persons and a total of forty Sunday school members, including both students and teachers.¹³⁸

In the last decade of the century, the population of Akron's Negroes increased from 451 to 525,¹³⁹ and a small yet meaningful increase in black organizations occurred. Negro citizens were engaging in significant dialogue directed toward self-help and black independence. It was not surprising then that another black church was organized in 1892--Second Baptist Church.

Beginning as a mission, the small congregation met in the home of John T. Black and was recognized as a church in 1893. The first minister was Rev. Cheatham [sic] who came from Wadsworth and pastored the church for one year. It was recommended by Rev. Cheatham [sic] that Rev. R. A. Jones, who worked in Wadsworth at the time, be ordained and called to pastor the growing church. Rev. Mr. Jones became the minister in 1893 and continued to

¹³⁸ Lane, Fifty Years, p. 212.

¹³⁹ Kingsberry, Akron Negro, p. 15.

serve his congregation until 1941.¹⁴⁰

Second Baptist was founded with a membership of only eighteen persons. Among the early officers were the deacons: Beverly Mann, Robert Johnson, John T. Black, J. R. Green, and Louise Christian; and the trustees: James R. Byrd, John C. Coleman, Moses Pollard, J. D. Johnson, and T. T. Johnson. The church treasurer was J. D. Coleman and Thomas T. Johnson served as clerk.¹⁴¹

Throughout the history of Afro-Americans, churches have been very important institutions, for it was within the church that black people could not only feel spiritually uplifted, but could also gain the necessary leadership skills and become better informed and educated. Information on the capabilities and progress of the Negro were being addressed continually in the decades that followed the black man's emancipation. This much debated subject was the topic of discussion in several of Akron's churches both black and white. The churches' pastors, visiting ministers, or educators frequently spoke to the congregations on the black man's status in America.

Late in 1891 Zion A M E. Church was favored with the appearance of "Broad Axe" Smith, a well-known black

¹⁴⁰Interview with Rev. Stanley Lynton, current pastor of Second Baptist Church, Akron, Ohio, 15 December 1974.

¹⁴¹Leon Gordie, Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity (Akron Eureka Printing Co., 1922), p. 12.

editor and speaker from Pittsburgh. He addressed the congregation on the topic of Negroes' progress and problems, calling for black pride, a need to use the economy wisely; and the unification of black people in their efforts to gain their rights.¹⁴²

Similarly, a Rev. D. S. Orner of Savannah, Georgia visited another of Akron's black churches, Second Baptist Church, approximately three years later. He spoke to its congregation on "The Negro's Progress and Future Destiny." The well-educated black minister talked for over two hours encouraging blacks to be politically independent. A brief abstract of his speech was printed in the local newspaper, a portion of which follows

We have always thought that our remedy lay in politics, but experience has proven that neither party will protect us after it has secured our vote. I sometimes wonder whether I live in civilized America or in darkest Africa. . . . Save your money and get all the education you can and cultivate your best character and you will be bound to be recognized.¹⁴³

The racial question was addressed in some of Akron's churches early in the 1890s. One minister, Rev. C. J. Tanner of the High Street Church of Christ, preached a sermon, "What Shall We Do with the Negro in the United States?" which elicited a series of sermons by Rev. W. A. Cypress, minister of Zion A.M.E. Church. A newspaper

¹⁴²Akron Beacon and Republican, 7 November 1891.

¹⁴³Ibid., 8 September 1894

account stated that Rev. Mr. Cypress "spoke from factual data 'which he obtained after an exhaustive study of the subject and his statements were warranted upon figures and statistics obtained.'"¹⁴⁴

Although the church was one of the strongest black-institutions and served to meet spiritual, as well as some social and educational needs, blacks also established lodges and other clubs to satisfy their diverse objectives.

As early as 1891 Negroes had organized the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Summit Lodge No. 3190. Lodge meetings were held weekly at 122 South Howard Street, and officers were J. Gross, Noble Grand; R. W. Hughes, Vice Grand; F. Hamlin, Treasurer, and W. Dickson and J. Douglass held two other offices.¹⁴⁵

The Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (in America) was a national organization founded in 1843 by Peter Ogden and other free Negroes,¹⁴⁶ and by 1895 had a membership of approximately 111,000.¹⁴⁷

Another early black organization, the Colored

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 27 November 1893.

¹⁴⁵Burch Directory Co., Akron City Directory, 1892-93 (Akron: Beacon Job Department, 1892).

¹⁴⁶Wesley, International Library: Freedom's Footsteps, p. 176.

¹⁴⁷Albert C. Stevens, ed. and comp., The Cyclopedia of Fraternities (New York: E. B. Trent and Co., 1907), p. 250.

Voter's Secret Society, composed of a number of Akron's colored voters, was reported to have met in the black Odd Fellows Hall on 13 March 1891 with thirty of the society's representatives present. Robert Gray delivered a speech on the "unity of the colored race" which is said to have contained some valuable pointers. An estimated 250 colored voters were reported to be influenced by the voter's organization and supposedly followed that body's dictates.¹⁴⁰

The Colored Masons, Silver Leaf Lodge No. 47, Free and Accepted Masons was established in Akron by 1892. It met weekly, convening in a hall over 101 East Market Street. The Worshipful Master was Samuel Bell, and other officers included John Coleman, Senior Warden, Christopher Bailey, Junior Warden; C. T. Alexander, Secretary; and James Morrison, Treasurer.¹⁴¹

Early in 1894 another black organization, the Union League Club, held its first public meeting in its hall over the Star Clothing Company on South Howard Street. Frank Darnell explained briefly that the purpose of the club was to advance the colored men of Akron, educationally and politically.

The principal speaker was John A. Botzum who had

¹⁴⁰ Akron Beacon and Republican, 13 March 1891.

¹⁴¹ Burch Directory Co., Akron Directory, 1892-93, p. 32.

traveled to and spent considerable time in Africa. His address on the "Condition of the Colored Race in Africa" drew a comparison between the conditions of black Africans and black Americans, indicating that the latter had made rapid advancement in this country. Several other speeches by Rev. Mr. Cypress, William Hopkins, F. Hamlin [believed to be Frank Hamlin], and R. Jones [believed to be Richard Jones] provided interesting discourse. Charles Williams offered remarks on the rapid advancement of the colored race in America--socially, religiously, and politically.¹⁵⁰

Later that year when some of Akron's black citizens were accused of a crime involving assault and arson, the Union League Club called a "rousing meeting" at the black Odd Fellows Hall to publicly contest the allegations; denounce and condemn lawlessness; and to call for an investigation by the proper authorities, newspapermen, and a committee of the Union League Club. Resolutions were adopted and speeches were made by some of Akron's leading black citizens, notably N. C. Lewis, William Branch, Richard Jones, Will Hall, Thomas Datcher, James Robinson, and R. W. Hughes. Charles Williams, George Simpson, Joseph Dandridge, and N. C. Lewis were selected to comprise the investigating committee to assist in the

¹⁵⁰Akron Beacon and Republican, 14 March 1894.

implementation of justice.¹⁵¹

Summary

The environment in which blacks settled in Akron in 1825 was influenced by both national and state sentiments regarding the issue of slavery. National movements in response to slavery sought to treat the "Negro problem" and the problems inherent in slavery in diverse ways. Colonization, antislavery efforts to abolish slavery, and attempts to resist slavery through escape were the predominant movements prior to the Civil War.

Diverse feelings existed concerning both slavery and freemen in Ohio which resulted in the enactment of the "Black Laws" to regulate the lives of blacks and mulattos. Akron, being situated in the Western Reserve, was favored with the humanitarian spirit that prevailed among the strong abolitionists whose views were opposed to slavery, and whose position also sought to protect blacks who were free.

Akron's early black residents were limited by their educational levels and by the opportunities that were open to them. The black population was extremely small in 1830--five persons--and had increased to only seventy-three in 1850. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 undoubtedly affected the small number of blacks who did reside in

¹⁵¹Ibid., 17 September 1894.

Akron, for by 1860, Akron's black population had decreased to twenty-four.

Many white Akronites and the city's few black residents were involved in the antislavery movement. The Underground Railroad passed through Akron and fugitive slaves were successfully assisted in their flight to Canada in the years preceding the Civil War. Less successful were the local efforts toward colonization which mirrored the largely unsuccessful attempts throughout the Northern states.

Black men from Akron enlisted in the Civil War once blacks were permitted to serve. Following the war's end some of the veterans returned to the city, married, and reared families whose descendants currently reside in Akron.

Still suffering from limited educational and economic opportunities, Akron's black residents saw the need to organize themselves socially, politically, economically, and educationally. Black churches were founded, a few black businesses merged, two black political clubs were formed; and black organizations were established for the purpose of advancing the city's black citizens. Such was the development of black history in Akron from 1825 to 1899.

CHAPTER III
CHANGES IN RACIAL COMPOSITION AND
RACIAL ATTITUDES: 1900-1919

The First Decade: 1900-1909

By the turn of the century, Akron's total population had reached 42,728 and Akron's Negro population--525--constituted less than two percent of that total. Although the black population remained small, blacks, nevertheless, continued to be conscious of their particular needs in a society which had not absorbed them, nor considered them as equals. Thus, in the first decade of the twentieth century Akron's black residents were involved in political, civic, social, and educational efforts--either collectively or individually--to improve their conditions. Adequate records to explain their total experiences during those years are lacking, but the available records give some indications of the development that occurred at that period in Akron's black history.

Civic Concerns and Political Efforts

As the century began the city witnessed a riot which left the town in flames and called for all civic-minded persons to fulfill their individual and personal

responsibility to help establish and maintain peace and order. Although several historians have written accounts of the event,¹ Grismer's account will be cited herein.

On 20 August 1900 the citizens of Akron became incensed when a six-year-old girl allegedly was criminally assaulted by a Negro, Louis Peck, who had recently arrived from Paterson, New Jersey and had found employment in a downtown saloon. On the following day, Peck was captured, imprisoned at the city's prison, and reportedly confessed to the crime.

Grismer noted that:

The afternoon newspapers--one printed in red ink--screamed out the story, greatly exaggerated in all its sordid details. Accepting the news at its face value, the town began seething with wrath. Said a leading professional man in a downtown store, "I'll be one of a crowd to go over and take him out of jail and hang him up." No one protested.²

Fearing that Peck would be lynched, that afternoon Sheriff Frank Kelly secretly took Peck from the jail and transported him to Cleveland's jail. Later that day, an angry mob gathered at the building which combined City Hall and the prison. Thinking that Peck was inside, the mob stoned the building and attempted to break down the

¹See Grismer, Akron and Summit, pp. 298-301, Doyle, Centennial History, pp. 83-100, Olin, Akron and Environs, pp. 306-7, C. R. Quine, comp., The Akron Riot of 1900 (n.p., 1951), pp. 1-23; "Official Souvenir of the Opening of the Mayflower Hotel," Akron, Ohio, 1931, pp. 62-63.

²Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 298.

doors. Their actions were answered by shots from policemen who were within the building. As the policemen fired out into the crowd, stray bullets killed a ten-year-old male spectator and a four-year-old child--who with her parents were passers-by.

The enraged crowd demanded that Peck be surrendered and a committee of six was granted permission to search the building. Although a lull followed for a few hours thereafter, the fruitless search had heightened the mob's anger, and shortly before midnight a crowd gathered in front of the city building. Armed sufficiently with guns, ammunition, and dynamite, some two to three hundred rioters blasted down the walls of City Hall, shot through doors and windows, smashed electric lights to prevent their actions from being seen, set fire to nearby Columbia Hall; and fought the firemen's efforts to extinguish the blaze by cutting their hoses and driving them back.

The mob dispersed near dawn and by 7:00 A.M. the militia, which had been called in to restore order, had started to arrive. Company C of the Eighth Regiment, arriving from Canton, was followed two hours later by nine companies of the Fourth Regiment from Columbus.

Martial law was declared and on Friday afternoon Peck was secretly returned to Akron and placed on trial. Mob spirit still prevailed and soldiers stood guard outside the courtroom. Unrepresented by counsel, Peck

pleaded guilty in court proceedings that lasted only twenty minutes. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to the penitentiary in Columbus.

Peck's case, as well as the cases of the rioters, was prosecuted by County Prosecutor Reuben M. Wanamaker. Forty-one men and boys were indicted. While six men were sentenced to the penitentiary, six others were sent to the Mansfield Reformatory. Imprisonment at the county workhouse and payment of fines constituted the other penalties. One youth was sent to Lancaster Reform School.

Two days after the outbreak of the riot a letter was sent to the editor of the Akron Beacon Journal from R. B. Heath, a colored citizen, who apparently believed in Peck's guilt. He expressed his sentiments about Peck and appealed to the white citizenry not to judge all blacks by Peck's behavior. He asserted.

. . . I don't have any sympathy for a brute that will commit such a crime as did Peck and I think justice should be meted out to him in the very severest terms. While I do not believe in violence, I feel very indignant at the matter myself and I hope that all good moral thinking white people will not blame nor discriminate against the better class of our race in the city for what one brute does . . . We do not uphold such outrages and we should not be blamed for what another does.'

Many Akronites, however, felt that Peck had not received a fair trial and that his "confession" had been obtained through intimidation. Thus, a movement to grant

¹Akron Beacon Journal, 23 August 1900.

Peck's release began shortly after he began to serve his life sentence. Although the movement was blocked for years, on 6 May 1913, Peck received an unconditional pardon by Gov. James Cox on the recommendation of members of the state board of administration and former Warden E. T. James.

At the conclusion of his account of the case, Grismer noted:

In granting the pardon, the governor stated that his advisors had concluded that there were grave doubts about Peck's guilt and that the Negro had been given little chance to establish his innocence.⁴

Approximately six months later the colored voters of Akron met at AME Zion Church for the purpose of forming a permanent organization to assist them in securing some representation in the city's government.

The black voters noted that although the black vote was in great demand by the political parties, the elected politicians never shared the spoils of their office with Negroes. Ergo, the colored voters organized to lend their support only to the party which would give them some representation in the city government.

Officers who headed the new body were Hobart Parrish, president; Frank Hamlin, vice president, I. C. Pollard, assistant secretary; and George Brown, treasurer⁵

⁴Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 301.

⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 5 April 1901.

Self-Help in Akron's Black Community

Black organizations-- social, civic, and religious

During the first ten years of the century, several black benevolent and secret societies came into existence. By 1901 the Daughters of Jerusalem and the Grand United Order of True Reformers, Supreme Fountain No. 1211 had been founded in Akron. A brief history of the former organization indicated that the Daughters of Jerusalem, Ida May Council No. 12 was established in September 1901 by Sister Natalie Chapman Littlejohn.⁶ No records were found on the establishment in Akron of the latter organization.

A 1905 newspaper account, which reported on a convention of the Daughters of Jerusalem held in Akron, provided some historical insights into their national association.⁷ It was an outgrowth of the American Mysteries organization and the auxiliary women's organization entitled the Daughters of Zion. Both organizations were formed in antebellum days and their membership was composed of both black and white people who worked to help slaves escape to Canada by way of the Underground Railroad. The Daughters of Jerusalem, dating back to 1865,

⁶"Festivity Celebration of the Daughters of Jerusalem," Akron, Ohio, 1964

⁷Akron Beacon Journal, 14 September 1905.

was composed entirely of colored people, principally women.

By 1905 there were forty to fifty councils in existence throughout the United States and eleven councils in Ohio. The society had established a home (although not yet in use) for aged colored women who were members of the organization. Akron's Mary J. Pickett was a national officer--messenger of the Grand Lodge--and was one of the trustees of the home for the aged.

The Grand United Order of True Reformers (G.U.O.T.R.) was an early fraternal society which worked to eliminate slavery and to uplift the black man.⁸ A brief account of its program was summarized in an Akron Beacon Journal article which reported on an address to the organization by its chief, W. R. Griffin, at Akron's Second Baptist Church.

Griffin recounted the history of blacks in America and then told how Negroes had progressed in the G.U.O.T.R. having paid \$1,500,000 to the sick and \$714,378.25 to the widows and orphans. The society had also employed four hundred men and women daily.⁹

By the end of 1902, a new organization, the Loyal Legion of Labor, was in operation in Akron and other

⁸Wesley, International Library Freedom's Foot-steps, p. 116.

⁹Akron Beacon Journal, 24 June 1902.

cities. Its purpose was to better race relations and to further the educational, protective, and industrial interests of the colored race in general. Headed by Prof. E. W. Mitchell, founder and supreme master of the organization, blacks in Akron were organized in a way in which they had never before been organized.

Mitchell was not only successful in aiding and organizing Akron's black population, but he also succeeded in enlisting the cooperation of some of Akron's leading and influential white citizens. Among them were: Col. George T. Perkins, Hon. George W. Crouse, O. C. Barber, Charles Baird, H. B. Camp, P. E. Werner, R. P. Marvin, Dr. A. B. Church, John Lancaster, Judge A. C. Voris, Judge E. W. Stuart, and Mayor Doyle.

Headquarters for the Akron office of the Loyal Legion of Labor were located at the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) Temple. However, the organization had offices throughout the state.

To assist the Loyal Legion of Labor financially, Andrew Carnegie offered it several thousand dollars if the association could raise an equal amount at the offset. Further support came when the Loyal Legion of Labor was offered the old female college at Hillsboro, Ohio to be used as its national headquarters. The offer was virtually a gift of fifty thousand dollars conditioned upon the college being equipped and operated under the

plans submitted by the organization.¹⁰

Approximately six months later, the first annual convention of the Loyal Legion of Labor was held at Silver Lake, Ohio with seventy-five delegates present. Mayor Kempel welcomed the organization to the city and complimented it thusly

Your order is a noble one. It recognizes that the essential thing in the make-up of a man is mind and not matter or color, or previous condition of servitude.¹¹

A stirring address on "The Political and Social Status of the Negro" was then presented by Clarence Watson from Doylestown.

The convention's educational sessions were held at the First Congregational Church where Hon. George H. White of Washington--the last black man to hold a congressional office (at that time)--was to be the featured speaker. However, due to a sudden death in the family, White sent Mitchell a telegram stating his regrets that he could not appear.

A reception for the delegates was held at Second Baptist Church at the conclusion of the convention.

Toward the end of the decade, two more black secret societies were established in Akron, the Colored Knights of Pythias, Odessa Lodge No. 9 and the Improved Benevolent

¹⁰Ibid., 27 December 1902.

¹¹Ibid., 9 July 1903.

Protective Order of the Elks of the World (I.B.P.O.E. of W.), Delta Lodge No. 149. Both organizations were founded around 1908.

Little information is available about the early history of the Colored Knights of Pythias. However, sources indicated that some of the early members were Frank Lancaster, Bob Dandridge, Charles Jenkins, Charles Rideout, Michael Woolridge, John Clark, High Mountain, and Lawrence Black.¹²

More information existed regarding the history of the Negro Elks. The Delta Lodge No. 149 was organized in Akron in May 1908 with a membership of thirty-one persons. Only two of the original members' names were available, R. L. Prince and M. O. Woolridge. The small group of men joined together for the purpose of practicing the precepts and principles of the order, namely Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love, and Fidelity

Eventually Delta Lodge No. 149 was able to fulfill one of its long-term desires--to have a home of its own. After years of hard work, property was purchased on the corner of Broadway and Bluff Streets at a cost of five thousand dollars. Subsequently the mortgage was burned

¹²Interview with Ben Dominic and Atty. Emmer Lancaster, Akron, Ohio, 26 January 1975.

in a ceremony at the Akron Armory.¹³

The Elks organization has been reorganized twice since it began, but it has continued to be an active association in the black community.

A black church was also founded in 1908, Bethel AME Church. (Its name was changed thirty-three years later to St. Paul AME Church.) A group of seventeen persons, who were former members of the AME Zion congregation, constituted the original members, namely: Mr. and Mrs. William Keller, Mr. and Mrs. Isham Smith, Mr. Richard Robinson, Miss Susan Crawford, Mr. and Mrs. John Walker, Miss Fonzetta Walker, Mr. Avery Douglas, Mrs. Ida Dillard, Mrs. Barbara Rogers, Miss Ada Rogers, Miss Bessie Douglas, Mrs. Julia Williams, and Mr. and Mrs. John Clark.

The church was organized on 18 September 1908 in the parlor of Grace Methodist Church of East Market Street. Subsequently, a hall was rented on South Howard Street for worship services. The Akron mission was made part of a circuit with Canton, Ohio and Rev. H. F. Fox served as pastor for two years.¹⁴

¹³"Souvenir Program of the I.B.P.O.E of W. Convention, 1951," Akron, Ohio, 1951.

¹⁴"Condensed History of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church," Akron, Ohio, 1975, p. 1.

Attempts to solve the "Negro problem"

Until recent years the presence of the Negro in America had been thought of and termed America's "Negro problem." Both whites and blacks discussed the problem of the Negro in America early in the nation's history and various schemes to deal with the problem had been devised, i.e., colonization, segregation, assimilation, "separate but equal" treatment, education, etc. However, the problems inherent in slavery and those related to the free black man in America continued well after the Civil War and the Reconstruction Era had ended. Therefore, continued discussions of the "Negro problem" were frequent in the early years of the century and Akronites, like people in other cities throughout the nation, endeavored to solve the problem.

In a meeting at Second Baptist Church in Akron in 1902 the colored lecturer, G. F. Richings, presented what an Akron Beacon Journal reporter described as "one of the best things of its kind ever presented to an Akron audience."¹⁵

Richings showed pictures of Negro colleges, banks, merchants, and contractors--colored people involved in all sorts of business enterprises and educational institutions. Of particular note were his pictures of Tuskegee Institute

¹⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 7 January 1902.

and the work being done by Booker T. Washington.

Richings spent approximately four days in Akron, two days making his presentation to audiences at Second Baptist Church and two days repeating his program for audiences at AME Zion Church.

Two years later Booker T. Washington made an appearance in Akron when he addressed a state Christian Endeavor convention. Washington occupied Suite 205 at Buchtel Hotel during his short stay.¹⁶

He spoke to predominantly white audiences at First Baptist Church and another Akron church. The general theme of his address was the advancement of the Negro in education and civilization.

Highlights from his speech indicated that Washington compared blacks with the other races and suggested that it was the severest test possible to compare Negroes with white Americans, because if the Negro should catch up with this country's white population there should be none ahead of him.

He discussed the Negro's advancement and his motivation to work asserting that through contact with whites and education in their homes, schools, and churches, blacks have had their minds awakened and strengthened. He maintained that southern Negroes are not an idle people,

¹⁶Ibid., 1 July 1904.

but a people who want education for their children and a people who want land, houses, churches, books, and papers. He said, in sum, that Negroes want the highest and best in our civilization.

Washington then acquainted his listeners with some statistical information regarding Negroes. He declared that with all of his disadvantages, official records showed that the Negro had blotted out 55.5 percent of his illiteracy since gaining his freedom. Washington compared the American Negro's illiteracy rate of 44.5 percent (after only forty years of freedom) with that of: 1) the African Negroes, 95 percent of whom were illiterate; 2) the Spaniards, 68 percent of whom remained illiterate after years of civilization and opportunity; 3) the Italians who had an illiteracy rate of 38 percent; and 4) the average South American country's illiteracy rate of 80 percent.

In support of the advantages and opportunities Negroes have gained from education, Washington stated that not a single graduate of Hampton or Tuskegee Institute could be found in any jail or penitentiary.

He closed his address on Negroes with the following points for consideration:

No one has a right to pass final judgment upon the moral status of a race unless he has visited the homes, the intellectual gatherings, the schools, and the churches where he can observe something of the higher life of that people. Our moral progress must

not be judged by the man on the street.

It must not be forgotten that we are as proud of our race as you are of yours, and the more progress we make in education, the more satisfaction do we find in our own homes and social circles ¹⁷

A little over a year later Akron's Negroes heard an address by Rev. J. M. Riddle, D.D., at the Northern Ohio Colored Baptist Convention in which he reminded them that the future for Negro Baptists and the race is what they make it. Rev. Dr. Riddle stated further that Negroes should use all of the forces at their command for their upbuilding.¹⁸

While some speakers who discussed the "Negro problem" addressed the race's progress, there were others who were critical of blacks. Typical of the diverse opinions were those represented in newspaper articles which appeared in the Akron Beacon Journal throughout 1906 and 1907.

While an editorial lauded Prof. Z. W. Mitchell for his work among his race, a later article reported that James Douglass--a Negro--criticized his race (at a meeting at AME Zion Church) for not taking sufficient interest in their country. A few months later a news article appeared wherein blacks were debased by whites, and early the next year an account indicated that blacks were commended by a

¹⁷Ibid., 27 June 1904.

¹⁸Ibid., 20 October 1905.

black minister.¹⁹

Several addresses in 1909 dealt with the "Negro problem." Early in that year Rev. R. A. Jones, the pastor at Second Baptist, addressed the Men's League of the First Universalist Church on the subject of "The Negro and the Church." In referring to the Negro's advancement, he stated that:

. . . the negro's advancement should not be measured by the height to which the white people had attained after many hundred of years. Instead it should be measured from the depths from which the colored race had come.²⁰

Rev. Mr. Jones viewed education as the only real solution to the "Negro problem," for through education, he said, the self-respect of the colored man would then be aroused.

A few weeks later the paper which Rev. Mr. Jones had presented to the men's organization of the First Universalist Church appeared in the Akron Beacon Journal. An excerpt from the text, which showed the nature of the "Negro problem," follows:

A story is related of a family in the west that owned a donkey which was too old to do any kind of work. How to get rid of this burden was a puzzle they could neither sell nor give him away, and owing to the good service rendered by him they had not the heart to kill him. One day the farm hands were digging a well on the place. When it had been sunk some

¹⁹Ibid., 18 May, 27 November, 31 December 1906; 16 March 1907.

²⁰Ibid., 12 January 1909.

thirty feet the men were called to dinner. During their absence the old donkey walked too near the edge of the well and it caved in with him. The family was somewhat elated over this accident and exclaimed, "We have gotten rid of the donkey at last, for we cannot get him out of the well, so we will bury him and dig another." When the men began to shovel dirt on him he would, with great vigor, shake it off and tramp it under foot. This process was continued until the donkey tramped his way to the top of the well, walked out, and went to grazing with the rest of the stock.

The negro is in the pit. He has had the dirt of slavery, ignorance, superstition, fanaticism, poverty, inferiority and minority thrown upon him by the so-called superior race, but the negro like the donkey in the story with his brawny muscles and acute intellect, is shaking off all this trash which was intended to bury him, tramping it under his feet, making them stepping stones by which he reaches the plain of prosperity, intelligence and noble manhood.²¹

The foregoing discussions have focused on addresses that have been directed toward the "Negro problem" in general as it existed throughout the United States. However, the "Negro problem" encompassed more than educating Negroes and "explaining" Negroes to the white race. It was a complex problem in which all Negroes were judged and treated the same and thereby it created and perpetuated new problems. Two incidents which were specific to Akron serve as illustrative examples to show how blacks, stereotyped as a class, responded to such treatment.

As blacks began to come from the South there were many who were not prepared for the adjustment to urban life styles and no civic attempts had been made to help Negroes make those adjustments. Thus, many of the

²¹Ibid., 2 February 1909.

newcomers became involved in crimes. The blacks who were residents of Akron and had been law-abiding citizens did not condone criminal acts any more than white citizens did and took action to show their sentiments.

In 1909 the Men's Club of Second Baptist Church expressed their feelings against the coming of "undesirable" blacks to the community and formulated a resolution which stated

Be it resolved that we, the Men's Club of Second Baptist Church and citizens, desire that it be known that we are not in sympathy with this class of men and women who are constantly being brought up in our courts for committing crimes and various offenses and that we stand ready as a club and good citizens to cooperate with our officials of the city in bringing about a better condition by assisting in giving all the information that we can to bring these peopole [sic] to justice and that we are not in favor of being lenient with them when found guilty of these misdemeanors any more than with any other race.²²

The second incident, reported in a 1908 newspaper, related to an incident that occurred at a resort in the Akron area.

In correspondence sent to Silver Lake, colored people reserved a cottage. Subsequently, when the Negroes arrived and entered the Silver Lake Dance Hall, a heavy curtain barrier was erected which left the eight black couples half of the floor while two hundred white couples were forced to crowd into the other half.

The account concluded that the blacks were not a

²²Ibid., 21 May 1909.

bit abashed, the more people to watch them, the more they danced.²¹

Early Individual Endeavors in Akron's Black History

Black professional men

As black organizations grew, black individuals also advanced, and as far as can be determined Akron had its first black physician by 1901 and its first black attorney four years later. They were Dr. Ferdinand Simpson and his younger brother, Atty. Harrington Simpson.

The background of the two men can only be conjectured from available records, but based on that data, their past was constructed as follows.

George Simpson, their father, came to Akron around 1879 and resided at 122 Livingston Street. He was employed as a janitor at the Academy of Music for a short time before working at Taplin, Rice, and Co. for approximately seven years. In 1892 Simpson found employment at Rubber Works and his son, Ferdinand, worked at C. M. Ginther. In 1894 Ferdinand joined his father at Rubber Works.

One year later the elder Simpson transferred to Goodrich and was employed there until his death in 1914. Ferdinand Simpson continued to work at Rubber Works for

²¹Ibid., 14 August 1908.

approximately three years and then left to study medicine.

George Simpson's younger son, Harrington, graduated from high school around 1897 and began to work at Rubber Works in 1898. The next year he joined his father at Goodrich and worked there for about three years

In the meantime, Simpson's elder son, Ferdinand, had graduated from the Western Reserve University Medical Department; had satisfactorily completed the Ohio State Board Examination;²⁴ and had obtained his license to practice medicine in Ohio on 29 June 1900.²⁵

Four years later Harrington Simpson graduated from Western Reserve Law School. He satisfactorily met the state requirements and was admitted to practice law in Ohio on 22 June 1904.²⁶

²⁴No state medical examining board existed until 1896, and the new M.D., prior to that time, need only hang out his shingle and start practicing. In 1896, the Board of Medical Examination and Registration, State of Ohio was established. Later the name was changed to Ohio State Medical Board. Doctors who were already practicing were permitted to continue conditioned upon their registering with the Board. A. S. McCormick, The History of Medicine in Summit County (New York: Hobson Book Press, 1946), p. 31.

²⁵A copy of Dr. Ferdinand Simpson's registration which authorized him to practice medicine in Ohio is included in appendix 3.

²⁶A copy of Atty. Harrington Simpson's certificate and his registration card, which is on file in the Ohio Supreme Court's Clerk of Court's office, are included in appendix 3.

An early black athlete

According to a 1974 newspaper account a professional football player, "Doc" Baker, played for the Akron Indians in their 1907, 1908, and 1909 seasons. He reportedly dropped from sight for about a year and returned to play several games in 1911.

Little information existed about Baker at the time of that article. However, it was known that he played for the Indians at the old Sherman Street Field before he turned professional and played at Nolan Park Field.²⁷

That account speculated that "Doc" Baker was probably the first black professional football player in the nation. However, a 1975 newspaper article reported that further research revealed that although Baker played for the Akron Indians in 1906, Charles W. Follis of Shelby (Ohio) played professionally in 1904.

Additional data from that research provided more information on Baker. He was reared in the Children's Home and acquired the nickname "Doc" from a white physician who befriended him and taught him to be his aide. In addition to playing for the Akron Indians, Baker also played for the Akron Tigers, joining that team in 1911.²⁸

²⁷Akron Beacon Journal, 17 February 1974, Magazine Section, pp. 14-15.

²⁸Ibid., 2 March 1975, Beacon Magazine, pp. 5, 7.

The Second Decade· 1910-1919

As the city entered the second decade of the century, it began to experience rapid industrial growth in the form of the expansion of the rubber industry. Goodrich, Goodyear, and Firestone were the dominant rubber firms by the end of 1912²⁹ and they were making sizable capital gains.

Able to attract labor cheaply and being strong competitors, the rubber companies expanded magically and Akron ceased to be known for its mowers and reapers, its clay products, or its clay industry. According to Grismer, "It became known as Akron, the Tire City, the Rubber Capital of the World."³⁰

The advent of World War I gave added impetus to Akron's industrial development as huge orders for products needed for warring nations--food, clothing, munitions, etc.--began to pour into the United States. Jobs were plentiful, wages soared, and factories were working overtime.³¹

As the nation's economy prospered, automobile production skyrocketed. Concomitant to the boom experienced in the automobile industry was the boom in the tire industry, and Akron experienced a prosperity unlike any it

²⁹Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 336.

³⁰Ibid., p. 341.

³¹Ibid., p. 376.

had known in its earlier history.

One of the effects of the city's industrial growth was naturally an increase in its population. In the ten-year span from 1910 to 1920, Akron's total population soared from 69,067 to 208,435 and the influx of southern Negroes resulted in Akron's black population increasing eightfold--from 657 to 5,580.³² Such a substantial increase brought about several changes for the city's black residents: 1) mounting racial problems; 2) growth in the promotion of black consciousness and black culture; and 3) increased advancement despite oppression.

Mounting Racial Problems

Overt racial hostility

The combination of Akron's newcomers--European immigrants, southern whites, and southern Negroes--created unprecedented racial problems in the city. In a discussion of the problems that ensued, Grismer has noted that during these years an unusually high percentage of Akronites were native-born, but approximately ten thousand persons were European immigrants who had to learn to speak English in order to hold their jobs and become American citizens. Thus, Americanization classes were instituted and prior to the decade's end, special classes for the foreign born--which produced excellent results--were

³²Kingsberry, Akron Negro, p. 15

conducted in all of the major factories and by the board of education in the public schools.³¹

The marked increase in the black population, however, was met with racial hostility rather than "cordial hospitality." Instead of actions being taken to assimilate the southern Negroes, racial discrimination brought about obstacles to the Negroes' advancement. On this point, Grismer has stated

Akron had less difficulty assimilating the newcomers from foreign countries than it did Negroes from the South, not because the colored people were less adaptable or less desirable but because of race prejudices. Prevented by the antipathy of the whites from living in good residential sections, they were forced to take squalid quarters in the worst districts. For the first time in its history, Akron got extensive slums, and the slums bred disease and crime.³⁴

The problem of Akron's black residents finding adequate housing was a major one, for it not only affected the black newcomers, but the black citizens who had been lifelong residents as well.

As early as 1913 an incident occurred on North Hill which exemplified the gravity, magnitude, and extent of the white hostility toward Negroes. According to newspaper accounts,³⁵ white residents, determined that blacks could not live in their neighborhood, formed a committee

³¹Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 402.

³²Ibid.

³⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 30 August; 8 September 1913.

to oust their Negro neighbors.

The trouble began when white residents in the area learned that a colored family had purchased a lot and home in the neighborhood. A committee of twenty white neighbors organized and visited the homes of the white real estate agent and the Negro buyer with the intention of preventing the transaction from being finalized.

They remonstrated with the real estate agent and warned the Negro that if he continued with his plans he would in all probability meet with serious trouble. The Negro declined their advice and two days later a congregation of whites went to his home with a sign that read, in part, "First Warning." Subsequently, the white committee visited other colored families who resided nearby--some of whom had lived there peaceably with white neighbors for decades--and informed them that it would be necessary for them to move, that their presence in the future would not be tolerated. All Negro residents except one vowed that they would not relocate.

When the colored residents appealed to the mayor for protection, his reply stated in part that.

. . . any attempt to injure these people will be met by police resistance. Those people as long as they are law-abiding citizens have just as much right to live there as white people and will be protected.³⁶

The next day a local attorney reported that the

³⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 13 August 1913.

colored citizens had been offered approximately one thousand dollars more than the value of their property if they would move. The feelings of the white residents was that the presence of one or two families was not objectionable, but "when they began to collect their friends, we objected."¹⁷ The offers to purchase were met by refusals from the Negroes. Yet the white residents continued to pressure the black newcomer not to move in and requested the Negroes who were already established to leave the vicinity.

Four days later the colored citizens of Akron held a mass meeting to plan resistance against the tactics being pursued by the white residents. Charging that unlawful and intimidating threats had been made against the colored residents of North Hill, the black citizens presented resolutions to the mayor which said:

Whereas, We the colored citizens of Akron, O., feel aggrieved at the action of certain men, white citizens of North Hill, in unjustly and unlawfully going to the homes of certain of our brethren, who live there and who own their homes there, and giving them notice to vacate and leave their homes, and

Whereas, these white citizens have made unlawful and intimidating threats against our brethren to cause them to leave their homes, to their great loss, inconvenience, and humiliation, and

Whereas, We feel that such action, if carried into effect, would tend to deprive us of all the prestige [sic] we have gained, and would make it next to impossible for us to obtain property elsewhere in the city and would give the whole of our citizens an unenviable reputation abroad, and

¹⁷Ibid., 14 August 1913.

Whereas, We know those people . . . their families and others to be respectable and law-abiding citizens in whose neighborhood any person or persons might live without trouble or fear, and

Whereas, Many of us are direct taxpayers and all of us indirectly so, therefore be it

Resolved, That we, the colored citizens of Akron, O., call upon the Honorable Mayor and city government for protection for our people all over the city and especially, at this time, for those who live on North Hill.³⁸

Many wild rumors apparently circulated regarding the tense situation. Ergo, in a further attempt to handle the state of affairs intelligently, F. B. Lancaster, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Colored Citizens Club, appealed to the colored people of Akron--in a short news article--to refrain from public discussion of the events on North Hill and to consult their Committee of Ten if they desired any information.

Approximately ten days later about fifty white residents staged a demonstration in front of the home of a colored family. Armed--in anticipation of reprisals--they erected a gallows and hung a Negro in effigy. That incident was intended to be the Negroes' last warning, but it went unheeded as the black citizens maintained their position and refused to move.

About a week later the white residents decided to settle the issue through the formation of the North Akron Improvement Co.--a company established for the purpose of

³⁸Ibid., 19 August 1913.

purchasing properties of all colored residents whom they considered objectionable. The company was incorporated and all real estate dealers who were interested in property on North Hill were warned not to sell to colored people.

Political and civic endeavors
to resist racial hostility

Some of Akron's black residents attempted to meet their needs through political endeavors by urging political appointments of Negroes and/or by educating members of their race about politics.

Early in 1910 black men formed an association called the Colored Men's Square Deal Club of Akron because they contended that black citizens did not receive their just dues at the hands of local politicians and public officials. At its first meeting the men designed plans for a movement to have a colored policeman appointed and prepared a "stinging rebuke" to be sent to Akron's police chief for ridiculing their efforts. The club also planned to work toward the improvement of conditions of the colored man in other walks of life.''

The vast number of black Americans in Akron were common laborers who had limited educations, but they knew how to capitalize upon their existing abilities. Since

'''Ibid., 24 January 1910.

the newspaper was one avenue of education open to them, blacks read and responded to the articles appearing in the press.

Individual blacks protested their inability to have a voice in the governmental affairs of the city. Typical of such protests was that of Thomas P. Lewis in a letter written in 1913 to the editor of the Akron Beacon Journal. Addressing his remarks to other black citizens, he said in part:

Now if the man of color can do mighty things elsewhere why not in Akron? You are American born citizens living under the laws of the land. You are voters and taxpayers, and still have no voice in the affairs of the government.⁴⁰

Lewis suggested to his black brethren that they unite their forces politically and demand that which was rightfully theirs, equal representation, according to their numbers. He called for a progressive move and noted that the watchword for Akron's colored voters should be "Unity of Accord, Unity of Purpose, Unity of Progressiveness" in order to fulfill the duty of their race.⁴¹

By 1915 a Negro Men's Independent Political Club had organized to take part in the fall election. The meetings were held at Second Baptist Church and the officers were as follows: G. F. Gross, president; William Murray, vice-president; Thornton H. Kelley, secretary;

⁴⁰Ibid., 28 October 1913.

⁴¹Ibid.

Julius Johnson, assistant secretary; and William Cucker, treasurer.⁴²

In 1917 several newspaper articles were written regarding an escalated crime rate among black Akronites since the rapid migration of "undesirable" blacks from the South.⁴³ Some of the citizens saw fit to answer these charges and meet what they considered a civic responsibility in educating whites about Negroes. Thus, letters were written to the newspaper to defend blacks' positions and to explain the conditions under which they lived.

One letter, written by a southern black newcomer, requested that the police investigate the vice occurring in the areas where blacks were forced to live, and stated further that

The negro who goes into his pocket and pays twenty to thirty dollars for a railroad ticket doesn't do so to go to some city to break the law. He goes for betterment of conditions. . . . There are as many as six staying at the same house where I am, wanting some decent place to stay so they can bring their families and they are men that haven't a blemish against their names.⁴⁴

Another letter written approximately one month later by James Bell, a foreman for a large corporation which employed a large number of Negroes, explained his position thusly:

⁴²Ibid., 30 August 1915.

⁴³Ibid., 23 April, 7 July 1917.

⁴⁴Ibid., 26 April 1917.

While I regret to admit that there are some undesirable, yet I am forced to take exceptions to any statement that the majority of the negroes coming among us is of an inferior caliber. I can truthfully state that 90 percent of the colored men, who are employed by the corporation with which I am identified, are men whose character are above reproach. Men, who have come to us with recommendations of from three to twenty years.⁵

A second letter which appeared on the same day was written by a colored working man who suggested that some of the high crime rate was due to the fact that the vagrancy law was not enforced. He expressed regret that some blacks were committing robbery and assaults on innocent people, but he felt that all blacks should not be blamed for the actions of a few criminals. He asserted that, ". . . we want to cooperate with the law in driving them from among us, and show the people the colored man is a law-abiding American citizen."⁶

Community organizations to
confront racial problems

Adequate housing for blacks had become critical by 1917. Black newcomers who had come to work in hotels and clubs were confronted by a color line which severely restricted their choice of residence. Consequently, a colored welfare club was organized for the purpose of solving the housing problem. The twenty-five members met

⁵Ibid., 29 May 1917.

⁶Ibid.

weekly at the home of Joseph Hadnott on Summit Street.⁴⁷

That same year "Cap" Herring organized a group of blacks to form a coalition to fight the racial discrimination and prejudice both in Akron and in the South. This small group was organized into the Akron branch of the NAACP and received their charter on 18 July 1918. Some of the earliest members were Willie Allen, Ednah Lewis, Mary Holmes, and John Dunbar. The first president under the charter was Rev. James McMullen, pastor of Wesley Temple Church.⁴⁸

The branch could not afford an office in the early days, and branch activities were limited to fund raising and meetings at Central High School and various churches. The cause, however, was more ambitious as the organization sought to provide for blacks a legal means of protection in an unconcerned society.

The large number of southern Negroes who came to Akron--like other migratory people--brought with them the traditions and many of the problems of their native regions. Therefore, early in 1919, several business and professional men, along with some of Akron's older citizens, petitioned the local YMCA to develop a branch to

⁴⁷Ibid., 10 January 1917.

⁴⁸Interview with Miss Mary Holmes, 293 Otis Street, Akron, Ohio, 4 January 1975, Mary Holmes, "Black Akron History Beginning in 1918," Akron, Ohio, 1974, p. 2

work with Akron's colored population. The agency responded later that year and opened a Perkins Street Branch placing a secretary in the field.⁴⁹

The secretary, thirty-five-year-old George Thompson, a university man and former principal of a colored high school in Crawfordsville, Indiana, was selected after the entire nation was canvassed to procure the most competent man for the job.⁵⁰

Thompson had a reputable background in education, social work, and athletics. In regard to the latter, in his track career, Thompson had been a quarter-miler and had set state interscholastic records.⁵ He subsequently set state intercollegiate records for the University of Indiana in the same event. In 1904 Thompson represented the United States in the Olympic games and ran the quarter mile in 49 2-5 seconds [sic].⁵¹

According to a newspaper account, the aim of the colored YMCA branch was to offer assistance to Akron's black population and in particular to the Negro newcomers --arriving on the average of one hundred per week--who had no place to go and no one to provide them with assistance.

The account suggested further that until the Akron

⁴⁹Leon Gordie, Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity (Akron: Leon Gordie, 1922), p. 11

⁵⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 20 March 1919.

⁵¹Ibid., 22 April 1925.

YMCA took steps that resulted in the creation of the colored branch of the organization, not one society had been established in the city for the assistance and improvement of the Negro population.⁵²

Promotion of Black Consciousness and Black Culture

Since Negroes were barred from membership in white associations, they solidified and enlarged their own organizations which became vehicles that served many functions--one being the development of black consciousness and black culture. Both black social organizations and black churches were active in this process.

Increased black social organizations

Social organizations were frequently addressed by speakers who emphasized black awareness and black unification. Typical of such programs was one sponsored by the Daughters of Jerusalem at AME Zion Church when Dr. Joseph Bradfield spoke on "Some Examples of Self-Help and Success Among Colored People."⁵³

Black social societies were on the increase and a women's auxiliary of the Knights of Pythias, the Naomi Friendship No. 49, Court of Calanthe was established 14 January 1911. Charter members included: Julia Pinn,

⁵²Ibid., 8 August 1919.

⁵³Ibid., 25 September 1911.

Leah Lancaster, Irene Rideout, Mabelle Brown, Niona Archer, Mattie Jones, Victoria Heath, Marie Anderson, Cordelia Archer, Amanda Mountain, Bertha Alexander, Fannie Alexander, Pearl Heath, Ester L. Jones, Mattie Archer, Carolyn Clayton, Arelia Lewis, and Emma Alexander.⁵⁴

Late in 1913 exercises to celebrate the semi-centennial of the freeing of four million slaves were held at Second Baptist Church with Rev. R. A. Jones serving as chairman. Among the organizations which were represented at the festivities were: AME Zion, Rev. E. W. D. Bell, pastor, AME Bethel, Rev. H. H. Summer, pastor; Odd Fellows; Knights of Pythias; the Elks; True Reformers; Daughters of Jerusalem; and Court of Calanthe.

The celebration consisted of scheduled day-long activities which included: southern melodies sung by a forty-voice chorus under the direction of C. Pollard and Miss Esther L. Jones, pianist, a Thanksgiving sermon by Rev. H. H. Summer, speeches by a centenarian, "Papa" Coleman, and other black citizens, readings by Mary Pickett and Mrs. M. E. Jones, addresses on the Civil War by Civil War veterans, James Morrison and F. M. Hailstock; and dinner with ex-slaves and old soldiers as honored guests.

⁵⁴Charter of the Naomi Friendship Court No. 49, Court of Calanthe; Interview with Mrs. Melzola Weeks, 895 Mercer Ave., Akron, Ohio 13 February 1975.

The key speaker of the day was Prof. E. W. B. Curry, president and founder of Curry Normal and Industrial Institute in Urbana, Ohio. The school followed a program similar to that of Tuskegee Institute.

Dr. Curry advised the blacks to obtain homes; to educate their children in trades as well as in the literary; to lead a clean life; and to be industrious and honest.⁵⁵

Another black organization which was established during the second decade of the century was the Mount Calvary Lodge No. 76 of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. According to Wesley's The History of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the State of Ohio, 1849-1960, on 6 March 1775, Prince Hall and fourteen other freemen of Boston were initiated at Castle William, Boston Harbor--currently Fort Independence--in Masonry in the British Military Lodge No. 441 which worked under the authority of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. This record is contained in an old minute book of the lodge, still in existence.⁵⁶

From this event the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ohio Free and Accepted Masons was formed by convention of

⁵⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 28 November 1913.

⁵⁶Charles H. Wesley, The History of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the State of Ohio, 1849-1960 (Wilberforce Central State College Press, 1961), pp. 4-5.

the three Cincinnati Lodges. It was from the Grand Lodge of 1849 that the Prince Hall Lodges in Akron--Mount Calvary No. 76 and Phoenix Lodge No. 112--derive their authority to exist.⁵⁷

Mount Calvary Lodge No. 76 received its charter on 16 November 1916.⁵⁸ When Grand Master Cory Adams opened a lodge of master masons in the old Knights of Pythias Hall, a class of seventeen candidates from Akron had the several degrees of masonry conferred upon them. That evening the lodge was instituted and the following officers were installed: Benjamin H. Andrews, Worshipful Master; N. D. Sheldon, Senior Warden; John A. Banks, Junior Warden Michael O. Woolridge, Treasurer, Julius R. Johnson, Secretary; Brother Charles C. Jackson, Senior Deacon, J. A. Holloway, Chaplain; Charles R. Lewis, Senior Steward, Levi Pinn, Junior Steward; G. Frank Greos [sic], Tyler.⁵⁹

The Supreme Camp of the American Woodmen was organized by "Cap" Herring around 1917. Not much information was accessible concerning the organization, but available data indicated that the Akron lodge was a part of the national organization. The women's group formed a

⁵⁷"Souvenir Program of the Mount Calvary Lodge No. 76 Fiftieth Anniversary Banquet," Akron, Ohio, 1966.

⁵⁸Wesley noted the date the lodge was instituted as 24 November 1917 in Wesley, The History of Prince Hall, p. 167.

⁵⁹"Souvenir Program Mount Calvary."

band and played for many civic events--one of which was the opening of the North Hill viaduct.

There were approximately twenty-one band members which included the following persons Anna Mae Lee, Rose Whatley, Cassie Hale, Mamie Rivers, and Lena Williams.⁶⁰

In the spring of 1917 a conversation occurred between Jessie Blake, Mildred Cobb Woodward, Maude Brown McDonald, and Leonard Forman (a member of Delta Lodge No. 149 of the I.B.P.O.E. of W.) which eventually led to the founding of Mary Exalted Temple No. 95. The women discussed with Forman the possibility of forming a women's auxiliary to Delta Lodge No. 149. Forman suggested that the ladies petition to the Grand Lodge to become a Temple and auxiliary, but plans were delayed because of the onset of World War I.

Subsequent plans led to the founding of Mary Exalted Temple No. 95 which received its charter on 5 November 1917. The Temple was given the name Mary in honor of Daughter Mary Mollie Isseem Debraun of Cleveland who devoted her untiring efforts toward the formation of the chapter. Daughter Bell Byrd served as the organization's first Daughter Ruler.⁶¹

⁶⁰Interview with Ednah Lewis, 463 Noah Avenue, Akron, Ohio, 30 December 1974.

⁶¹"Souvenir Program of the Mary Exalted Temple No. 95 Golden Anniversary," Akron, Ohio, 1967.

A few months later the Mary Chapter, Order of the Eastern Stars was granted its charter on 17 March 1918. Angie Andrews served as the first Worthy Matron and Joseph Holloway, first Worthy Patron.⁶²

New black churches were established

The influx of black southerners brought about an increase in the number of black churches and four were founded between 1910 and 1919.

The Robert Street Church of God began in 1917 and has had four pastors in its history. Rev. George Suddeth, Sr. founded the church after bringing his family from Alabama.⁶³ He pastored the church from 1917 to 1943. The names and years of service for the remaining pastors were: Rev. Herbert Shankle, 1943 to 1944; Rev. Robert L. Fowler, 1945 to 1968, and Rev. Ronald Fowler, who became minister in 1969. Rev. Fowler continues to serve as current pastor.⁶⁴

Mount Olive Baptist Church was founded in May 1918 as the outgrowth of a conversation between Rev. Herbert William McClellon and Mr. Richard Jones in a barber shop at 3 East Market Street. Rev. Mr. McClellon was seeking a

⁶²Interview with Robert N. Dunbar, 817 Nevin Street, Akron, Ohio, 6 March 1975.

⁶³Akron Beacon Journal, 4 March 1968, p. D3.

⁶⁴"A Membership Guide for Robert Street Church of God," Akron, Ohio, n.d.

site in which to begin a church. When Mr. Jones made arrangements for the minister to rent Mount Calvary Lodge Hall for three dollars a week, Rev. Mr. McClellon had several announcements printed and disseminated them at the corner of Main and Market Streets.

The first meeting was held at 16½ South Howard Street and plans were made to organize a church the following Sunday. A month later Rev. Mr. McClellon organized Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church and served as its first pastor. The Sunday School was established that same day by Mrs. Lillian McClellon, the pastor's wife.

In July 1918 Rev. Mr. McClellon and Brother Jesse Munford attended the Northern Ohio District Baptist Association in Massillon, Ohio at which time Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church joined said association. Several months later the church moved to a garage at the corner of High and Ridge Streets. Rev. Mr. McClellon resigned shortly thereafter on 4 November 1918. By the early 1920s, the church had relocated to Bluff Street.⁶⁵

Early in November 1918 Rev. Mr. McClellon rented a storefront and living quarters at the rear of 85 East North Street for the purpose of establishing another church. A few weeks later, on 25 November 1918, the

⁶⁵H. W. McClellon, "History of the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church," Akron, Ohio, n.d.

pastor's wife organized a Sunday School. Because of the prevailing flu epidemic, however, all churches and schools in Summit County had to close.

On 19 April 1919 Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church was organized. Mrs. McMaehan, Mrs. Maggie Curry, Mrs. Parlee Powers, Brother John Henry Story, Brother C. Pearine, Mrs. Pearine, and Mrs. Pearine's mother (with letters from Alabama) were the early members listed in the history of the church.⁶⁶

Early in 1918 at a Methodist district conference in Chicago, led by Bishop Theodore Anderson, a discussion on how to deal with the problem of large numbers of southern Negroes migrating to the North was a matter of particular concern. As a result of the discussion, Rev. Frank Arnold was sent to Akron to investigate the possibility of instituting a church. Although his report at the quarterly conference in Cleveland, Ohio indicated that the circumstances were not favorable, the conference remained convinced that the need was great. Thus, Rev. Howard E. Chapman and Rev. D. C. Skelton, District Superintendent, were appointed to come to Akron and formulate plans for establishing a church.⁶⁷

⁶⁶H. W. McClellon, "History of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church," Akron, Ohio, 1957.

⁶⁷"Souvenir Program of the Forty-first Anniversary of Centenary Methodist Church," Akron, Ohio, 1959.

Rev. Mr. Chapman was relieved of his duties at Mount Pleasant Church in Cleveland and preached his first sermon in Akron in May 1918 before a group of people who assembled at the corner of Howard and Furnace Streets.**

On 29 May 1918 a small congregation of ten people met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kudger who had offered the use of their home at 223 North Street as a temporary place of worship. Later that afternoon, the Sunday School was organized on the porch of the Kudger's home.

Services were held later that year at the Elks Hall on Howard Street and the church was named Elvira Chapel in memory of Rev. Mr. Chapman's mother. Worship services were interrupted shortly thereafter because of the flu epidemic in 1918. The church did not resume activities until 1920.**

Minimal Advancement Despite Oppression

Growth of black professional and business men

The large number of black persons who came to Akron included a few professional persons beginning in the mid-1910s. Among the first to arrive was Dr. Charles R. Lewis, who with his bride, came from Columbus, Ohio on their wedding day, 18 October 1916. Lewis had come to Akron

**"Souvenir Program of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Centenary Methodist Church," Akron, Ohio, 1968.

**"Forty-first Anniversary of Centenary."

earlier after graduating from Ohio State University's Medical School but he did not settle permanently until after his marriage.

His decision to reside in Akron was based on the suggestion of a friend, Charles Jackson, for whom he had worked building roads in Ohio during the summer. Jackson had told Dr. Lewis that there were no colored physicians in Akron and thus persuaded him to come. (Dr. Simpson had moved to Dayton, Ohio in 1905.)

The Lewises first lived on Adams Street with Mrs. Hurley, an early settler who had come to Akron in the 1880s. Later they resided in a three-room apartment over a saloon at 12 North Howard Street--the only place they could obtain (and said to be fortunate to get that) during the great influx of people coming to the city.

Concerned about living over a saloon, Dr. Lewis discussed the matter with Rev. R. A. Jones, pastor of Second Baptist Church. The sagacious minister replied that, "If you wouldn't be good living over a saloon, you wouldn't be good living over a church. It isn't where you live, it's how you live."⁷⁰

Year by year a few more black professionals arrived in Akron. By 1917 Atty. Thomas (Ted) Greene and Dr. Harold F. H. Dickinson, the first black dentist known to

⁷⁰Interview with Ednah Lewis, 30 December 1974.

practice in the city, were getting established in their professions. Approximately a year later, Akron had a black pharmacist, Harold Clark, and as the decade closed, Dr. John W. Dunbar began to practice dentistry in 1919.

Limited information existed concerning black businesses during this decade, but it is known that black businessmen, like black professionals, were very few. A 1916 news account reported in that regard that Akron's Negro population had grown so large by 1916 that the city had one black physician; an attorney was to come soon; several restaurants and bar shops were owned by Negroes; and one saloon was under Negro management.⁷¹

Three years later Woodie Colvin came to Akron and opened his interior decorating business. He had attended high school at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute where he had come under the influence of two nationally prominent black educators--Booker T. Washington and Dr. George Washington Carver. Dr. Carver not only taught Colvin agriculture, but he was also his Sunday School teacher. A news article has suggested that in the many years which Colvin has lived in Akron, he has used much of the philosophy of Carver and Washington in his civic work to promote racial harmony and to solve community problems. Colvin has been described as a man with a cause: making

⁷¹Akron Beacon Journal, 19 October 1916.

Akron a better place for all residents.⁷²

Black educators who had taught in the South were not able to use their professions in Akron. When Beall C. Stevens and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stewart arrived in Akron, they had to find employment in the rubber factories in order to support their families.

Stevens came to Akron around 1916 from Alabama where he had been enrolled years earlier in Tuskegee Institute's first class. In 1958 he was the only living member of the class.⁷³

Through the years, Stevens had in his possession a number of old, yellowed papers that were collector's items which told some of the history of the South. One prized document was a paper which in 1902 granted him the right to vote. In 1900 Alabama passed a law declaring that only educated Negroes--physicians, teachers, attorneys, and ministers--could vote.⁷⁴

His most prized possession, however, was a letter of recommendation to teach, signed by Booker T. Washington, famous black educator and founder of Tuskegee Institute. Stevens taught at Tuskegee for thirteen years and became a good friend of Washington's.⁷⁵

⁷²Ibid., 4 July 1954, p. D3.

⁷³Ibid., 26 June 1958. ⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵A copy of a document which states that Stevens was licensed to teach in the public schools appears in

When Washington died, Stevens and his family attended the funeral late in 1915. Mattie Coulter--who subsequently married Stevens' son, Leonard, was a student at Tuskegee Institute at the time of Washington's death and also attended the funeral. She had begun school at Tuskegee Institute at the age of eight and had classes in the Children's House (similar to a primary school). Mrs. Stevens graduated from Tuskegee Institute in 1918.^{7*}

When Beall Stevens decided to come North in order to better support his family, he first worked at his trades as a carpenter and a cobbler. After residing in Akron one year, he brought his family to this city and lived for three months with Rev. Mr. Upperman, pastor of AME Zion Church. The family then moved to Case Avenue across from the old Kent School and resided there for a short time. While employed as a carpenter, Stevens worked for a contractor and helped to build Goodyear's Plant Two and Goodyear Hall.

Not long after Stevens began to work at Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., the family moved to Walkersville--an area close to Toban Heights. Both of these sections of Akron were located in the vicinity of Martha Avenue, close to Goodyear's Plant Two. They were "shantytowns,"

appendix 3.

^{7*}Tuskegee Institute, "The Eureka," Tuskegee, Ala., 1918, p. 12.

populated by blacks who worked at Goodyear.

The family moved once more to Honodle Avenue and Stevens worked in the maintenance department of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. for thirty years until his retirement.⁷⁷ He and his wife, Sally, celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 4 July 1958.⁷⁸

Robert and Lottie Stewart had both been teachers and principals in schools in Florida. Robert Stewart, having acquired a private education in his youth, was later able to attend Fisk University for two years and was thereby qualified to teach. His wife, Lottie, had been provided an education in her aunt's private "Creole School." Such education was considered relatively superior and later enabled her to obtain a position as a teacher and principal in the Freedmen Bureau Schools of Pensacola--schools which were maintained for black children.

The Pensacola Board of Education had become more stringent in its educational requirements and the Stewarts, needing more money to support their family, came North to Cleveland, Ohio for a short time before settling in Akron.

⁷⁷Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Stevens, 1221 Everton Drive, Akron, Ohio, 28 December 1974.

⁷⁸A letter of congratulations sent to Mr. and Mrs. Beall C. Stevens from Ohio Sen. Fred W. Danner is included in appendix 5.

The couple found employment at Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. During this period in Akron's history, blacks were employed only in menial capacities regardless of their educational backgrounds. Ergo, Stewart was employed as an elevator operator and his wife, Lottie, worked as a charwoman.⁷⁹

Black students seek higher education

Although educational opportunities were severely limited for black residents in Akron, black parents encouraged their children to aspire to higher educational levels. Extremely few black Akronites were completing high school and/or going to college in the early years of the twentieth century. Northern blacks who did acquire a college education generally had to go south to attend black colleges or enter one of the country's other black institutions. Two which were located in Wilberforce, Ohio were Payne Theological Seminary and Wilberforce University.

A history of the two black colleges indicated that there was an early concern for the advanced education of blacks, and Wilberforce University predates the Civil War. The first step toward higher education of American Negroes was taken when on 21 September 1844 at the AME Conference of Ohio, a committee was appointed to select a site for a

⁷⁹Virginia R. Robinson, "One Family Among Many," 30 May 1973, FH-26 in Family Histories in the University of Akron, Library Archival Services, Akron, Ohio.

"Seminary of Learning." A result of that committee's work was the purchase of 172 acres and the founding of Union Seminary in 1847 near Columbus, Ohio. Courses in both manual labor and literary instruction were offered.

At the Cincinnati Conference of the ME Church, Ohio took its second step toward educating black youth. On 28 September 1853 a committee recommended that a higher order literary institution for the education of Negro people generally should be established. Tawawa Springs-- a healthful and popular resort near Xenia, Ohio--was purchased as the site for Wilberforce University. Through the cooperative efforts of the ME and AME Conferences of Ohio, the school was incorporated on 30 August 1856.

During the days of the Civil War, Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne purchased Wilberforce University for the AME Church at a cost of ten thousand dollars on 10 March 1863. In the process of reorganization Bishop Payne became the president of the institution. Wilberforce University was subsequently enlarged through the sale of Union Seminary and the increase of additional faculty members and students.

Payne Theological Seminary was established as a separate institution during President Samuel T. Mitchell's administration of Wilberforce University. Because a university could not receive state aid as long as ministerial or sectarian training was a feature of a college or

university, it was to the advantage of Wilberforce University to establish a separate institution for ministerial training. Thus, in 1894 Payne Theological Seminary was established with a separate and distinct board of directors and a separate state charter.⁰⁰

Records indicating the attendance of black Akronites at Wilberforce University or black southern colleges during the first decade of the 1900s were not found. However, Loretta May Davis (from Newark, Ohio), who later settled in Akron, was a sophomore at Wilberforce University in 1910.⁰¹ She graduated from that institution around 1912 shortly before coming to Akron. Although she is deceased, her husband, Morris Woodson, currently resides in the city.

By 1915 three black college students from Akron were enrolled at Wilberforce University, namely, Faustina Walker, Charles Points, and Mary Gross.⁰² Geraldine Dyson, another Akronite, attended there one year later. In 1917 Emmer Lancaster had begun his studies at the University of Akron in pursuit of a Bachelor of Arts

⁰⁰Wilberforce University Catalogue, 1938-39, Wilberforce, Ohio (pages unknown) quoted in "Payne Theological Seminary of the African Methodist Episcopal Church," n.p., n.d., pp. 5-8.

⁰¹Wilberforce University Catalogue, 1910-11, Wilberforce, Ohio, p. 138.

⁰²Wilberforce University Catalogue, 1916-17, Wilberforce, Ohio, pp. 139, 155, 156.

Degree.

Most black families in Akron during those years were not able to send their children to universities. However, black parents taught their children, within the family circle, about black culture, respect and pride, and black awareness. They taught their youngsters both by example and through books.

Some of the southern Negroes who migrated North had come from homes where education was stressed, as in the case of Stevens and the Stewarts. Mary Holmes, who came to Akron in 1918, had also been taught in her home to value education, and she developed an appreciation for black history.

Miss Holmes had grown to appreciate the history of Negroes through perusing a book she obtained from her father, Otha Holmes--a laborer. The book, which she currently has in her possession, is a massive volume entitled Twentieth Century Negro Literature.³ Miss Holmes, one of the charter members of the NAACP, has made a scrapbook of that organization's history and has been called upon by many organizations to speak on black history in Akron.

Black entertainment in Akron

Rollin Smith, who has gained international fame,

³D. W. Culp, ed., Twentieth Century Negro Literature (Atlanta: J. L. Nicholas and Co , 1962), pp. 1-472.

was born in Akron in 1899. He lived at 723 Hazel Street and attended Fraunfelter Elementary School and Central High School. From the time he was very young, he studied music. At first he studied informally--through listening to and watching his father play the family organ; listening to his brother, Clyde, play the violin; or listening to his mother and aunts' quartet as they sang beautiful spirituals.

He used to try to position his hands on the keys that he saw his father play, and at an early age he himself played for the church choir. During the years that Smith was growing up, the church was the only social outlet that black people had, and he never forgot about its importance. He has credited the black church as being a great influence in the lives of black people as is reflected in several of his comments which follow:

When you see a black singer, you don't ask if he or she got their start in a choir . . . you just ask which church.

During 250 years of slavery the church was our only social outlet--it was our home, our mother--and our means of escape to freedom. . . . It was our concert hall, our theatre, our country club--everything . . . and it kept us on the straight and narrow.

This was good in a way because the people raised in the ghetto got to see people at their best. . . . It gave us hope and faith in human beings."⁴

While a student in elementary and high school, Smith had several formal music lessons from various

p. 15. ⁴Sunday Post-Herald (Hong Kong), 25 March 1973,

teachers including. Professor Seigel on West Market Street; Miss Kratz, who taught him viola lessons at Kratz Music Co. on Main Street; Professor Damon, who instructed him in playing the cello; and Mr. Harley Washington, a Cleveland saxophonist, who taught him saxophone lessons at Smith's home. All of his formal training was in the classics.

Smith learned a great deal about jazz when he shined shoes at a barber shop (for one dollar a week) at age thirteen and listened to the bands booked by Charlie Parker at nearby East Market Gardens. Around 1917, Smith and his older brother, Clyde (who became a concert violinist at age fifteen), played in the Elite Jazz Band at local halls--Stanley Dance Hall at Main and Exchange Streets and Hense Baker's Club on Howard Street. They also played for Ethel Waters when she appeared in Akron.

Around World War I, the Smith brothers played for the noon dances held for the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.'s employees at the Goodyear gymnasium. Later, the cafeteria across the street hired them to play five evenings a week. The brothers were soon making one hundred dollars a week and were on their way to becoming outstanding musicians.

The noted musician has been able to recall much of his early life as the foregoing segment has indicated. Among some of his other childhood recollections are varied

memories. He recalled that his mother, Ella Rogers Smith, was in the same class in grade school with Thomas Edison's wife; that Mrs. Hurley, a cateress who lived on Adams Street, had baked Thomas Edison's wedding cake; and that "Doc" Baker, the professional football player, had dated Smith's aunt, Ada Rogers.⁶⁵

Another local musician around 1917 was William Fowler, who came to Akron from Pensacola, Florida. A very talented musician, he played the trumpet at engagements that ran the gamut from minstrel shows to vaudeville circuses. Fowler got his first union card in 1917 in the Akron Local No. 24 of the Musician's Union.⁶⁶

In 1919 Akron obtained one of the most outstanding athletic figures of that period, Fritz Pollard, a Negro football player. Pollard, the great All-American halfback from Brown University, signed to play with the Akron Indians early in November of that year.⁶⁷

Although he only weighed 145 pounds, Pollard was acknowledged as a versatile player and perhaps the greatest backfield man in the East during that time.

A 1920 account of Pollard's feats on the gridiron for two seasons in Akron termed Pollard an idol of both

⁶⁵Interview with Rollin Smith and Rollin Clayton, 879 Dover Avenue, Akron, Ohio, 7 November 1974.

⁶⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 13 January 1952, p. B3.

⁶⁷Ibid., 6 November 1919.

blacks and whites; described his unusual athletic ability; and provided some insights into his modest personality and sagacity.

One portion of the article pointed out that although Pollard earned a good salary, he was wise enough to save a good share of it so that "he would be prepared for 'rainy days' when age forces him to give up the gridiron."⁸⁸

Pollard has had the distinction of being the only black head coach of a professional football team in the nation. In 1919, he coached the Akron Steels in the old American League.⁸⁹ He was nominated to the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame in 1960 for his outstanding football prowess.⁹⁰

Summary

The turn of the century witnessed a riot that developed from the irresponsible acts of some of Akron's citizens who were enraged when a Negro, Louis Peck, was accused of assaulting a six-year-old girl. Mob rule prevailed when a crowd went to the prison to remove Peck. Fearing a lynching, the police took measures to protect Peck by secretly transferring him to a jail in Cleveland.

⁸⁸Ibid., 30 November 1920.

⁸⁹Ibid., 8 September 1974, p. B1.

⁹⁰Ibid., 23 December 1960.

Unaware that Peck was no longer in Akron's jail, the mob stoned the building and attempted to enter forcibly. In the ensuing events, two children were accidentally killed when police fired on the advancing rioters.

Subsequent actions left the city in flames as the irate crowd set fire to City Hall and thwarted firemen's efforts to extinguish the blaze. Martial law was enforced until calm could be restored.

A total of forty-one persons were prosecuted in relation to the riot. Peck was imprisoned, but years later he was granted an unconditional pardon for it was felt that he had not received a fair trial.

During that same period of time blacks were becoming cognizant of their lack of representation in the city's government despite their political support of various politicians. Thus, they organized a political club for the purpose of uniting to give support only to the party from which they could secure representation in the local government.

In the early years of the century blacks were also founding local chapters of national organizations established to uplift Negroes. Among the organizations which sought to elevate the black man's position were the Daughters of Jerusalem, the Grand United Order of True Reformers, the I.B.P.O E. of W. (the Negro Elks), and the Knights of Pythias.

The Loyal Legion of Labor aimed not only to advance the Negro, but also to better race relations. A local chapter was founded in Akron very early in the 1900s. Said organization had the support of many of Akron's prominent white citizens.

A third black church, Bethel AME (known currently as St. Paul AME Church) was also founded during the first decade of the century.

The "Negro problem" in America was the subject of many addresses and discussions as Akron's citizens--both black and white--listened to orators and laymen offer their solutions to the problem. Negroes were generally encouraged to obtain an education, and whites were "educated" about Negroes.

Three black personalities made significant contributions to the black community between 1900 and 1909. Dr. Ferdinand Simpson became the first black physician in Akron; his younger brother, Harrington Simpson, became the city's first black attorney; and "Doc" Baker demonstrated his athletic ability as a professional football player for the Akron Indians.

The rapid industrial growth due to the expansion of the rubber industry and the advent of World War I brought about a marked increase in the number of black residents in Akron. The Negro population increased eightfold between 1910 and 1919. Such a substantial gain created a

drastic change in racial attitudes toward Negroes.

One of the early signs of racial hostility was manifested in incidents that occurred on North Hill in which white residents pressured both established black residents and black newcomers to vacate their homes and live elsewhere. A tense situation existed for approximately a month as blacks withstood alarming threats and attempts to force them to relocate.

Black reaction to such tactics resulted in citywide black unity and increased political and civic activities. Black political clubs were formed and letters were written to the press calling for black unity for political progress and defending the Negro's position in an obviously hostile society.

The segregated circumstances under which blacks were forced to live served to develop black consciousness and black culture. Negroes participated in, enlarged, and founded their own social organizations and churches. Thereby, they perpetuated their culture through music, readings, speeches, dinners, and celebrations of anniversaries and events of significance to their race.

A few advances were made in terms of professional and business development among Negroes. By the end of the second decade, black professionals who had come to the city and were getting established in their professions included: one physician, an attorney, a pharmacist, and

two dentists. Black educators were unable to teach in Akron.

A few restaurant and bar shops, a saloon, and an interior decorating business constituted the majority of black businesses.

Few black students were completing high school and even less aspired to higher education in the 1910s. However, a small number of black families had instilled in their children the necessity of a college education. By 1917 four young adults from Akron were at Wilberforce University and one colored male student had enrolled at the University of Akron.

The talent provided by two Negro musicians and a black athlete had attracted the attention of many Akronites in the latter part of the 1910s. Rollin Smith and William Fowler were versatile musicians who played in local bands in Akron, and Fritz Pollard had gained the respect and admiration of football buffs throughout the area.

Black progress was slow but enduring as the 1910s drew to a close.

CHAPTER IV
RACIAL OPPRESSION AMONG AKRON'S
BLACK RESIDENTS

The Third Decade 1920-1929

A larger black population accompanied by omnipresent racial discrimination resulted in blacks being separated from the dominant population politically, economically, and socially. By the early 1920s racial barriers had been erected to the extent that blacks. 1) were not served in Akron's finer restaurants; 2) were requested to sit in the balcony in theaters; 3) could not swim in local swimming pools; 4) were refused lodging in the city's hotels; and 5) were "invisible" in both managerial business positions and in administrative posts in the local government.

The programs, pursuits, and organizations which Akron's Negroes developed to combat racial prejudice and involve themselves in their communities, and the city at large, will be examined in this segment of the paper.

Political and Civic Involvement
of Black Residents

Political appointments of blacks were almost nonexistent during this period in Akron's black history and

very few Negroes sought to hold public office. However, changes were beginning to occur as Negroes became more educated and more unified in their goals.

One of the early political appointments occurred when Judge H. C. Spicer appointed George W. Thompson as a deputy probation officer of the Summit County juvenile court. Thompson's specific responsibilities were to handle the cases of Akron's Negro juvenile delinquents.¹ By 1922 two Negroes had run for public offices. Dr. Charles R. Lewis sought a seat in the state legislature, and Leon Gordie ran for councilman of Akron's first ward.²

Soon after the enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, several black women in Akron organized the Colored Women's Political Club. Formed during the 1920 presidential campaign, the first officers elected were Mrs. Artee Fleming, president; Miss Iva Haines, first vice-president; Mrs. T. W. Dyson, second vice-president; Mrs. Johnne B. Dennis, secretary; Mrs. Mary DeBraun [sic], treasurer.

Beginning with a small group of women who worked to nominate Dr. Charles R. Lewis as a candidate for the state legislature on the Republican ticket, the membership grew

¹Akron Beacon Journal, 29 September 1920.

²Gordie, Negro Yearbook, pp. 39-40.

to five hundred during the campaign.³

The next year the club gave its assistance to efforts to nominate Leon Gordie and James Miller to City Council. Although neither man was successful, the organization shared in the success of the Republican ticket and was more keenly aware of the advantages of the ballot. The women holding office that year were: Mrs. Artee Fleming, president, Mrs. T. W. Dyson, first vice-president; Mrs. Rose Grossett, second vice-president; Mrs. Laura Black, secretary; and Mrs. Lyda Atkins, treasurer.⁴

A Negro men's political organization was also established in 1920. Recognizing the need for improving the Negro both politically and economically, a small group of men, namely, Leon Gordie, Alexander Davis, Henry Killings, Frank E. petite, and Thurston Watt, founded the Young Men's Progressive Club on 22 July 1920.

The club worked in cooperation with the Colored Women's Political Club to support the county Republican ticket as well as the candidacy of Dr. Charles R. Lewis for the state legislature. Lewis was the first Negro in Summit County to be selected to run for public office. He finished fourth in the race, and his undisputed leadership among Akron's Negroes led to his appointment on the

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

Republican Central Committee.⁵

Further activities of the Young Men's Progressive Club resulted in two appointments of blacks to positions in the city's government. Norman Kerr became clerk to the County Surveyor, Jack Weaver; and Marvin Kendrick--Akron's first black patrolman--was appointed to the police force.⁶ John Suddieth, Akron's second Negro patrolman, joined the police force in 1922.⁷

The officers of the Young Men's Progressive Club in 1922 were: Leon Gordie, president; Frank E. Petite, first vice-president; Rev. T. W. Chryer, second vice-president; Norman G. Kerr, secretary; Henry Killings, assistant secretary; Dr. W. E. Mayo, treasurer; and Robert Hill, sergeant-at-arms. The organization had an active membership of about three hundred members.⁸

Because of the rampant racial discrimination throughout the city and the activities of the local Ku Klux Klan organization, George W. Thompson, Leon Gordie, and Dr. Charles R. Lewis--acting as plaintiffs--jointly filed a petition on 25 May 1922 in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas requesting a restraining order to prohibit the organization from meeting within the limits of Summit

⁵Ibid., p. 39.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Interview with John Suddieth, Uhrichsville, Ohio, 4 March 1975.

⁸Gordie, Negro Yearbook, p. 39.

County. Attorneys Samuel T. Kelly and Artee Fleming represented the plaintiffs in their action.⁹ However, Attorney Kelly has been credited with initiating that injunction which was carried to enforcement by the court.¹⁰

By 1928 Negroes were recognizing the need for participation in two political parties in order to advance their race. Therefore, Atty. Emmer Lancaster, a 1927 graduate from Western Reserve Law School, and John Banks, the head waiter at the Portage Hotel, founded the Summit County Colored Democratic Club, Inc.¹¹ As politicians attempted to attract and hold the majority Negro vote, Negroes began to better their conditions.

Civic endeavors toward improvement of the Negroes' lives were engaged in by both blacks and whites and Negro speakers were sometimes requested to speak to white audiences. In the summer of 1920 a prominent colored woman, Mrs. D. Walker Booker from Indianapolis, addressed representatives of various white civic organizations at the YMCA in order to educate them about the Negro race. She spoke on the Negro's advancement after 250 years of

⁹Summit County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 41857, Akron, Ohio, 1922.

¹⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 24 December 1950, p. B3.

¹¹Emmer Martin Lancaster, "Biographical Sketch," 19 October 1965, University of Akron, Library Archival Services, Akron, Ohio; Holmes, "Black Akron History," p. 3.

slavery; his loyalty throughout the war; and the similarities of the black and white race. In regard to the latter, she added that "The Negroes have all of the problems of the white people and their own besides."¹² Prior to that meeting, Mrs. Booker had appeared at the various Negro churches and urged blacks to do all within their power to improve their race.

Further evidence of civic attempts to better the lives of Negroes was the formation of the Citizens Civic Federation which was organized by Mrs. Mary E. Allen. One of the programs which the organization instituted was the annual observance of the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

On 1 January 1927 a program to observe the sixty-fourth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation was held at Perkins Auditorium. The Honorable Robert S. Abbott, L.L.B., editor of the Chicago Defender, was the orator for the memorable occasion.¹³ The event was given the full support of the black community.

Economic Conditions of
Akron's Black Residents

Black persons of prominence

In the fall of 1920 plans for establishing a

¹²Akron Beacon Journal, 14 August 1920.

¹³A copy of the printed program appears in appendix 4.

permanent colored business and professional men's organization were effected at a meeting held at the YMCA. The purpose of the organization, as stated by George W. Thompson, was to promote the business interests among the colored people in Akron. Thompson had obtained the idea for perfecting such a group from a National Negro Business League Conference in Washington, which he had recently attended.¹⁴

By 1922 there were a number of small Negro business establishments to serve the black community. Both men and women were engaged in profitable enterprises and were demonstrating their competencies in diverse occupations.

Some of the more prominent men and their field of business or professions included: T. M. Fletcher, undertaker; Henry Killings, produce merchant; Frank E. Petite, sheet metal business; L. H. Forman, proprietor of a restaurant; Charles C. Manley and Troy V. Allen, barbers, A. M. Damon, instructor and owner of a music studio, J. S. Wilcher, contractor, J. D. Lewis, contractor and builder, A. Lavaine Bolar, printing business, Ed Patterson, restaurant proprietor, Dr. Charles R. Lewis, physician; Samuel T. Kelly, attorney, Artee Fleming, attorney, Dr. F. H. Strawbridge, physician, Dr. J. W. Dunbar,

¹⁴Akron Beacon Journal, 9 September 1920.

dentist; Dr. W. E. Mayo, dentist; Harold G. Clark, pharmacist; L. L. Lumpkins, expressing and hauling business; Leon Gordie, grocer; and O. H. Mayfield, hotel manager.¹⁵

George Mathews, who settled in Akron in 1920, began his business ventures with the purchase of an old eleven-room boarding house at 106 North Main Street. By 1925, he invested all of his money into converting a rooming house into the Mathews Hotel. His business enterprises met with success and four years later Mathews was able to add a barber shop to his hotel.¹⁶

During this period women were beginning to enter business and professional pursuits also. The names of some of the well-known black women and their occupations follow: Mrs. G. W. Turner, beauty culturist; Miss M. C. Bolar, beautician and dressmaker; Mrs. Wimbish, Mrs. C. L. Runa, and Mrs. William Archer, grocery store managers, Mrs. Gertrude Guy, proprietress of a restaurant, Mrs. J. C. Ferguson and Mrs. Ramsey, managers of boarding and rooming houses; Mrs. Priscilla Forrest, beautician and dressmaker; Mrs. Sidney Young, designer, Mrs. Artee Fleming, Mrs. Robert Dennis, Mrs. Claudia Coleman, Miss Mary Holmes, and Miss Ethel Black, typists, and Mrs. Joseph Cater and Miss

¹⁵Gordie, Negro Yearbook, pp. 1-40 passim.

¹⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 2 February 1958.

Marie Scott, nurses.¹⁷

Mrs. Mary Upperman stood at the head of all colored businesswomen. Born in the South, she was orphaned by age two. Mrs. Upperman received her education in Cincinnati schools and came to Akron in 1916 with her husband, Rev. L. N. Upperman, pastor of Wesley Temple AME Zion Church. After overcoming many hardships in her life--among them the untimely death of her husband--Mrs. Upperman pursued several successful business ventures. She owned and managed one of Akron's largest Negro grocery stores, conducted an employment bureau; operated a hand laundry; and operated a large rooming house.¹⁸ Eventually Mrs. Upperman also became sole owner of the only colored drugstore (the Globe Drug Store at 103 North Main Street) in the city at that time.¹⁹ Two black pharmacists, Emmitt Hogan and William Bridgeford, were employed there.²⁰

In addition to the businesses already stated, there were Negro bakers, caterers, decorators, tailors, insurance agents, real estate agents, and millers.

By 1927 many other names had become well known in

¹⁷Gordie, Negro Yearbook, pp. 8, 14, 21.

¹⁸Gordie, p. 8

¹⁹Opie Evans, ed., The Negro Yearbook of Akron, Ohio (Akron: Opie Evans, 1927), p. 5.

²⁰Interview with Mary Holmes, Akron, Ohio, 21 February 1975.

business enterprises and several other businesses had expanded. The Akron Negro Business League--affiliated with the National Negro Business League--was founded on 30 September 1926. Officers were Dr. Charles R. Lewis (physician), president; Dr. John W. Dunbar (dentist), vice-president; Charles C. Jackson (real estate agent), secretary; and Rev. G. G. Morgan, treasurer. The league's purpose was to secure commercial operations among blacks and to induce blacks to patronize legitimate Negro enterprises.

The following professional and commercial enterprises (and those engaged in said enterprises) were listed as being associated with the league. attorneys--Samuel T. Kelly, Thomas E. Green, Artee Fleming, S. C. Easley, and Emmer Lancaster; physicians--Charles R. Lewis, Fred H. Strawbridge, B. L. Thurston, L. R. Johnson, painters--J. R. Harris, J. S. Munford, B. Harris; barbers--W. M. Montgomery, C. C. Manley, William Mathews, J. C. Grant, R. H. Jones, Troy Allen, Charles L. Nunn, H. W. Woodward; social workers--George W. Thompson, Clyde L. Wilkerson, Raymond Brown; movers--J. S. Larkin, J. M. Eldridge, Vic Ancrum; printer--Alex Davis, salesmen--Frank Ford, Henry Killings; garage repairmen--William Massey, William Reed; auto service stations--William Zuber, E. L. Nunn, beauty parlor--Mr. Fite; tailor--Earl Gardner, musicians--A. M. Damon, B. F. Harris, G. A. Jackson; engineers--F. B.

Lancaster, Isaih Whitehurst; and manufacturer--Robert L. Delaney.²¹

Although black residents in Akron faced significant economic problems, they were undaunted in their determination to be economically independent. Black women, like black men, continued to pursue many specialized fields and were patronized in most cases by members of their race. In addition to the occupations in which the women were engaged five years prior, they were also employed as saleswomen, music instructors, laundresses, and stenographers. Ethel Black had been employed for several years as a clerk in the Depositors Savings and Trust Co. and had the distinction of being the only black woman in the city to hold such a position.²²

In the hair and beauty culture business, two beauticians had unusual experiences. Mrs. J. H. Wilson was the only black woman in Akron who manufactured and dispensed her own hair preparation in leading drugstores. She had twenty-five agents in Akron and Cleveland and other agents in Southern cities. Mrs. Mae Pettigrew, who had sixteen years experience in beauty culturing, was the only black operator whose patronage was entirely white.²³

²¹Evans, Negro Yearbook, p. 31.

²²Ibid., p. 19.

²³Ibid., p. 9.

Employment and economic discrimination

Despite the increase and expansion of black businesses, the employment picture for the vast number of Akron's black employed persons was marked with discrimination and limitations.

An editorial which appeared in a 1922 newspaper indicated that Akron's black population complained of unfair treatment in the distribution of employment. More specifically, Negroes complained that too many of the jobs to be distributed went to people who were neither citizens nor taxpayers. Blacks stated further that they were not considered according to their individual worth, but rather as a class of people.

The newspaper declared that it had not investigated the criticism, but did know that the persons who registered the complaint had been residents and good citizens for many years. Thus, the newspaper stated it was pleased to bring the matter to public attention in the hope that doing so would correct whatever discrimination did exist.²⁴

A few years later a particular incident was brought to the attention of the newspaper in a letter to the editor signed by "A Colored Citizen." The Negro detailed how he had been working satisfactorily for two years among men of all races and creeds only to lose his job when he differed

²⁴Akron Beacon Journal, 6 February 1922.

with a new boss regarding the Klan's policies.

The man, who was married and had four children, stated that when the layoff came he was the first to be released even though he was the second oldest on the job. He claimed further that a foreigner who was single, as well as other single men, remained on the job. In conclusion, he asserted, " . . . but I am colored and not a hypocrite and would not admit that the Klan was good for me."²⁵

Beyond letters of protest other efforts to alleviate the problems of Negroes obtaining and holding their jobs were also made. Negroes attempted to attack their economic problems indirectly through education of whites and directly through self-help.

The executive secretary of the National Urban League, Eugene K. Jones, came to the city and addressed a social worker's club at the YWCA in the mid 1920s and spoke on Negro labor. He told the audience that it was time that organized labor began to notice Negro workers since Negro labor in the North would remain permanently. Jones pointed out that white employers were beginning to recognize the capabilities of Negroes and cited instances where blacks played leading roles in the success or failure of strikes.²⁶

²⁵Ibid., 18 October 1924.

²⁶Ibid., 30 January 1925.

Shortly after the formation of the Negro Business League, the organization invited W. Franklin Walker of Columbus to speak to the local colored workers. Walker had been the former secretary to the treasurer and superintendent of education in Liberia.²⁷

Late in the 1920s a black finance company was established because colored people could not readily get loans from white finance companies. The loan company, entitled the People's System Finance Co., was located at 22 West Market Street. It came into existence after a black attorney, Dan Bowles, secretary of a black finance company in St. Louis, Missouri, sent a man to Akron to consult with Atty. Artee Fleming on procedures to establish the needed company.²⁸

Some of the early members of the People's System Finance Co. were noted black business and professional men. Among them were: Attorneys Fleming and Kelly, Dr. Charles R. Lewis, Dr John W. Dunbar, Robert Dunbar, C. C. Player and William Hardy.²⁹ Amos Forman, who later became an outstanding deputy sheriff, was one of the managers of the company. Shares were sold at ten dollars

²⁷Ibid., 21 January 1927.

²⁸Interview with Atty. Artee Fleming, 139 Central Court, Columbus, Ohio, 7 December 1974.

²⁹Ibid.; Interview with Robert Dunbar, Akron, Ohio, 12 February 1975.

a share and the company was solvent for approximately five or six years. It terminated because of financial difficulties during the depression.³⁰

The Black Social Environment

The social environment of black Akronites encompassed diverse activities--cultural, athletic, religious, community, and educational. Accounts of these facets of Akron's black history in the 1920s will be investigated herein.

Black culture

Black music constituted a part of the black culture, and two outstanding black musicians and a dancer were among the Negroes who transmitted that culture to audiences in various parts of the city. As indicated in an earlier portion of this study (pp. 162-65), William Fowler and Rollin Smith were talented musicians who were known locally. Still another young man--J. C. Wade--was also to develop a reputation as a talented entertainer. Each of these men left Akron and in this decade ended up as successes in New York City.

Fowler had traveled to New York City with a band which he had organized and directed following his brother's death in the early 1920s. During this period,

³⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 21 August 1943.

he studied at Columbia University to improve his knowledge of music, and he led the orchestra which played for many theatrical productions at the Club Alabam located in the Fanny Brice Theater. In 1927 he traveled to Europe and booked engagements in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, and Italy. It was during this point of his life that Fowler had the opportunity to study at Sorbonne University.³¹

Smith left Akron around the early 1920s and played for engagements in Peoria, Illinois before moving soon afterwards to Indianapolis, Indiana. In Indianapolis, he began to meet bands from New York and he eventually went there to join Sam Wooding's band. Accepting offers from Broadway, Smith joined an ensemble that played for the show, The Plantation Review, and he went to Europe in 1923.

Both Europe and the United States were home throughout the 1920s. When in Europe, Smith and the band played for English royalty (the Duke of Windsor, the Duke of York, the Duke of Kent, and the Duke of Gloucester); the Rothschild's (France's top banking family); and General Pershing (at a French society restaurant). Traveling throughout Europe, Smith learned to speak the local language and to play the national or local

³¹Akron Beacon Journal, 13 January 1952, p. B3, Interview with William Fowler, Sr., Akron, Ohio, 22 February 1975.

instruments in each country which he visited. He studied opera and performed concerts in fourteen different languages.

When Smith was in the United States during the 1920s, he played with Duke Ellington for about six months. He also appeared in two Broadway plays, Dover Street Dixie in 1923 and the original Ziegfield Showboat in 1928. In the latter show, Smith had a starring role and sang "Ol Man River."

Throughout his career, he also had several other distinctions which included 1) playing with the famed musicians, Louis Armstrong and "Fats" Waller; 2) playing in a band engaged by Cole Porter; 3) performing comedy with Zero Mustell in Three Penny Opera, and 4) performing for royalty in Spain, Italy, Greece, and Iran. He has received three honorary memberships, namely, honorary official of the French Academy, honorary citizen of Montmartre--a district in France (awarded to him by the mayor of Paris); and honorary member of the Giriel Foundation (an organization which invites artists to appear for benefits for children's illnesses)¹²

J. C. Wade entered show business quite differently from Fowler or Smith. He attained stardom almost

¹²Interview with Rollin Smith and Rollin Clayton, 7 November 1974, Interview with Rollin Smith, 144 Mustill Court, Akron, Ohio, 9 November 1974; Sunday Post-Herald (Hong Kong) 25 March 1973, p. 15.

instantly after his dancing talent was discovered around 1925. Wade had won a Charleston contest at East Market Gardens when still a student at Akron's West High School. Later when the Olson and Johnson troupe appeared in Akron in need of a dancer for their stage show, they learned about young Wade and requested that he audition. Wade tried out at the Keith Albee Palace Theater where his demonstrated ability enabled him to join the troupe immediately.

He performed for three days in Akron; completed another three day show in Youngstown, Ohio; and went from there to Broadway in New York City. He appeared as a tap dancer with Olson and Johnson revues for the next several years.³³

One of the most historic occasions in which black Akronites participated collectively was the celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of Akron's founding. On the city's one hundredth birthday, black citizens took part in the week's festivities and contributed their part toward making the occasion a memorable one.

Their particular contribution was a program of Negro music provided by the Akron Community Chorus, a chorus comprised of about one hundred of the city's most talented vocalists.

³³Interview with Rayfield Wade, Akron, Ohio, 11 February 1975.

An account of the rehearsals for the program illustrated the pride and diligence the black citizens exhibited in preparation for their contribution. The article paid tribute to the Negroes' talent and pointed out the extent of that talent as the blacks successfully overcame three obstacles. First of all, the greater number of singers were without musical education. Secondly, one week prior to the program the singers had never before seen the music. Lastly, the songs were difficult arrangements of the antiphonal sort. Yet, the black chorus rehearsed untiringly at Second Baptist Church from 7:30 P.M. until 11:30 P.M. nightly.³⁴

The choir's director was Carl Diton, a successful black conductor, composer, and pianist from Philadelphia, who was invited to direct the chorus by his friend, Dr. John W. Dunbar, a local Negro dentist. An account of an interview with Diton (who was said to be one of the first of his race to acquire fame) reported his belief that there was no doubt that music was the gift which the Negro had for America.³⁵ In 1914 Diton was awarded first prize in the National Negro Composition Contest. Some of the selections offered by the Akron Community Chorus were songs he had composed.

³⁴Akron Beacon Journal, 18 July 1925.

³⁵Ibid.

The performance was presented at Central High School on 22 July 1925. Its intent was to display the creative as well as interpretative ability of the Negro. A number of Negro spirituals were sung and three soloists were featured: Miss Edith Player, pianist, Mr. Chester Tisdale, baritone; and Mrs. Elizabeth Murray, who presented a reading. Clorina Bullock and Marguerite Crawford accompanied the chorus.³⁶

Young black athletes

Several black athletes came to the attention of Akronites during the 1920s. One who never saw his boyhood dreams reach fruition, yet became a significant person in the lives of many black youths, was William (Bill) Suddeth.

Suddeth's contributions to others were based in experiences he had undergone early in elementary school. During those years, Albert J. Dillehay--who had been his principal and coach--and Frank Heley--a custodian at Robinson School--were instrumental in influencing his life and involving him in the school's "Three C Club." (Three C's represented clean speech, clean living, and clean sports.)

Suddeth had started to show promise as an outstanding athlete in the seventh grade, leading his team to titles in basketball and soccer. At East High School, he

³⁶Ibid., 22 July 1925.

had won five varsity letters in three sports by the middle of his sophomore year. However, a serious football injury crippled him in 1925 and ended his athletic career. Notwithstanding the fact that he couldn't compete, the track team elected him captain for its next season.

After twenty-one years of bitterness due to the loss of an athletic future, Suddeth began to referee basketball games at Elizabeth Park and his interest in sports was revived. Later, when he became recreation supervisor at that park, he recalled the lessons he had learned through the devotion of Dillehay and Heley. With his interest in athletics renewed, young people benefitted for the next twenty-three years as Suddeth ran athletic programs and coached championship teams.¹⁷

Akron had another noted football player at East High School during the mid 1920s, William M. Bell--known familiarly as "Big Bell." Upon graduating in the class of 1928, Bell attended Ohio State University. During his first year at college, he received financial assistance from the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.; the Negro Elks absorbed a part of his expenses during his sophomore year.¹⁸

Bell achieved two distinctions when he was selected

¹⁷Ibid., 4 March 1968, p. D3.

¹⁸Ibid., 18 October 1965, p. B7.

to play on Ohio State University's varsity team. He was the first Negro alumnus from East High School to attain a position on a Big Ten varsity team,³⁹ and he was the first black since 1897 to make an Ohio State University team. Bell distinguished himself further when, in 1931, he was voted an all-Big Ten tackle and was chosen for several All-American teams including that of the Associated Press.⁴⁰

He is listed in Who's Who in Negro Education and Who's Who in American Education. The latter source provided the following information on his educational and athletic background. Bell earned all three degrees at Ohio State University--a B.A. in 1932, an M.A. in 1937, and a Ph.D. in 1960. His educational and coaching assignments have included positions as head football coach at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1936-42, and professor and director of physical education and varsity athletics at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College.⁴¹

Another black athlete from the opposite side of the city had also gained recognition in the 1920s. Earl

³⁹Ibid., 19 February 1959.

⁴⁰Ibid., 18 October 1965, p. B7.

⁴¹Robert Cook, ed., Who's Who in American Education, 23rd ed., 3 vols. (Hattiesburg Who's Who in American Education, Inc., 1968), vol. 1 Who's Who in American Education, 1967-68, General Education, by Robert Cook, p. 63.

"Sheik" Delaney had marked his days at West High School with several significant accomplishments which included: 1) earning letters in football, basketball, and track; 2) holding Akron sprint records for the 100- and 220-yard dashes; 3) being selected as an All-City end; and 4) setting a new state record in the 100-yard dash at Columbus, Ohio.

Following his graduation from high school, Delaney maintained his interest in football. He played for the Akron Indians, Copley Road Merchants, and Darago Meats. He also coached the Akron Black Peppers, a Negro bantam weight football team.⁴²

A noted prizefighter, Gorilla Jones, attained local, national, and international fame toward the end of the 1920s. Managed by Suey Welch, Jones held the National Boxing Association Championship in the middleweight division. During his career, he won 106 fights--48 by knock-outs--and was defeated in twenty bouts.

When the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame was created in 1957, Jones was one of the forty-nine original members selected for induction.⁴³

The black churches

A number of churches were established during the

⁴²Akron Beacon Journal, 2 February 1967, p. B13.

⁴³Ibid., 20 September 1957.

1920s as the increase in the black population occurred. Although some Methodist and Baptist Churches were founded during this period, the need for churches of varying denominations was evidenced through the organization of churches that departed from the African Methodist Episcopal and Baptist persuasions.

Among the black churches founded and the approximate year in which they began were: Bethel Temple Apostolic, early 1920s; Phillip's Chapel CME, 1920; Bethel Seventh Day Adventist, 1920, Greater Bethel Baptist Church, 1920; First Apostolic Faith Church, 1922; United Baptist, 1922, Wooster Avenue Temple Church of God in Christ, 1922; New Canaan Primitive Baptist Church, 1922; Providence Baptist Church, 1923; St. John CME, 1924; and Antioch Baptist Church, 1924.¹¹

Accessible records indicated that Antioch Baptist Church was organized when the Rev. William Crawford called together a small group of fifteen people who had met as a mission. Some of the original members were Mrs. Annie Mae Jordan, Mrs. Lessie King, Mrs. Sarah Banks, and Rev. Morgan Smart. Services were held in a rented room on the second floor of 290 South Main Street.

Subsequently, the church moved to 684 West Bowery

¹¹The Church in Akron (Akron: The Regional Church Planning Office and the Council of Churches of Greater Akron, 1963), pp. 179-252 passim.

Street where it received the name of West Side Baptist Church and membership had increased to approximately fifty people. Following Rev. Mr. Crawford's resignation the church was pastored by Rev. Mr. Beaumont until 1926, when Rev. Mr. Holly became the minister. Under Rev. Mr. Holly's pastorship the church moved to 655 West Bowery Street.

In September 1927 Rev. C. B. Bluntt from Newton Falls, Ohio accepted the call to pastor the church. After consulting with the members, the name of the church was changed to its present name, Antioch Baptist Church. The pastor's family moved to Akron in 1928 and under the leadership of Rev. Mr. Bluntt, the church prospered both spiritually and financially and increased its membership. As the decade ended, a frame dwelling at the corner of Campbell and Bell Streets was purchased and converted to church quarters. The property was lost in the depression years and services were held in a storeroom at 713 West Bowery Street.¹³

The black churches continued to grow and many ministers served their congregations for varying periods of time. Financial problems beset a number of the churches sporadically, but programs were developed to sustain them. One such program was the establishment of Women's Day. The first Women's Day program to be held in

¹³"Program of Dedication of Antioch Baptist Church," Akron, Ohio, 1962.

a black church in Akron was held at Centenary Methodist Church in 1924. The idea was brought to Akron from Sampson Memorial Church in Virginia by Mary Horn and her mother.⁶⁶ (Centenary Methodist was formerly Elvira Chapel.)

As the membership of AME Zion Church grew, the need for a larger church was evident. The members purchased the present site and old parsonage under the leadership of Rev. J. L. Black. Church records indicated that the property was once owned by the monarchy of England; was later acquired by the Connecticut Colony on 23 April 1762; and was purchased many years later by Simon Perkins.⁶⁷ (Akron was once a part of the Western Reserve as noted earlier in the study.)

In 1926 local architects, Wardner and Somerville, drew up plans for the new church and a Negro contractor, Plato, was commissioned to build the structure. The church was dedicated on 12 August 1928 under the pastorate of Rev. B. F. Gordon.⁶⁸

The churches continued to serve not only as places of worship, but also as meeting places for organizations and lecture halls for orators. Second Baptist Church hosted a number of prominent speakers who came to Akron to

⁶⁶"Forty-first Anniversary of Centenary Methodist Church," 1959.

⁶⁷Portions of these records appear in appendix 3.

⁶⁸Wesley Temple, One Hundredth Anniversary, 1966.

deliver orations on the perpetual "Negro problem." Among some of the more prominent speakers were Dr. J. Silas Harris, James W. Johnson, and Judge William H. Harrison.

Harris, with Booker T. Washington, helped to found the Negro National Educational Congress. Speaking as a guest of the Knight Republican Club, he told the audience that Americans had tried every conceivable plan to solve the "Negro problem" except one and that was justice. He urged that Negroes be given the opportunity and liberty that others then had, the opportunity to develop.⁴⁹

Johnson, executive secretary of the national NAACP, spoke to a capacity audience of both blacks and whites and asserted that blacks having good jobs, wholesome homes, education, and morals would compel recognition of their fitness for the rights upon which they insisted. He felt that the answers to racial problems lay in granting Negroes their rights of citizenship.⁵⁰

Harrison, a black barrister, rose from the Mississippi cotton fields to become assistant attorney general of Illinois. His message protested segregation and noted several significant points for blacks to consider. First of all, he suggested that inferiority of opportunity did not imply inferiority of individuals. Secondly, he

⁴⁹Akron Beacon Journal, 18 April 1922.

⁵⁰Ibid., 4 May 1925.

pointed out that good ancestry was fine, but what you were counted more than what your grandfather may have been. Thirdly, he explained that blacks must think because thought ruled the world and also ruled those who don't think. Fourthly, Harrison suggested that blacks must be patient under stress and trial for that was God's way of developing strength. Lastly, he asserted that blacks must have self-confidence and be willing to work and save.⁵¹

Black organizations, new and old

Early in the 1920s a branch of the United Negro Improvement Associations (UNIA) was founded in Akron. It was known as the Akron Division No. 215 of UNIA and African Communities League. A portion of the organization's preamble stated that it was

. . . a social, friendly, humanitarian, charitable, educational, institutional, constructive, and expansive society, and is founded by persons, desiring to the utmost to work for the general uplift of the Negro people of the world. And the members pledge themselves to do all in their power to conserve the rights of their noble race and to respect the rights of all mankind, believing always in the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.⁵²

In 1922 W. L. Sherrill, high commissioner of the UNIA of Ohio, spoke at Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church and told blacks that the association did not stand so much for "back to Africa" as it did the redemption of Africa for

⁵¹Ibid., 30 November 1925.

⁵²Gordie, Negro Yearbook, p. 37.

Negroes.⁵³

Marcus Garvey was also associated with the organization and came to Akron during this period.⁵⁴

By the mid-1920s the first black college fraternity in Akron was established. On 9 May 1925, the Alpha Tau Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity was organized by founders Atty. Artee Fleming, Dr. Charles R. Lewis, and Dr. J. W. Dunbar.⁵⁵

Attorney Fleming has claimed to be the only living Alpha in the nation who has been a member of the fraternity longer than any other brother. He was an original member of the second chapter--Beta Chapter--founded at Howard University. All of the brothers of the first chapter are deceased.⁵⁶

The Colored YMCA had been established in 1919 and George Thompson was called upon frequently to address organizations for the purpose of enlightening them on the black man's plight and how his conditions could be bettered. He spoke to both adult and children's

⁵³Akron Beacon Journal, 7 July 1922.

⁵⁴Interview with Leon Gordie, 1173 Fourth Avenue, Akron, Ohio, 8 November 1974.

⁵⁵William Threatt to Mrs. Shirila McClain, Akron, Ohio, 14 January 1975, Personal Files of Mrs. Shirila McClain, Akron, Ohio.

⁵⁶Interview with Atty. Artee Fleming, 139 Central Court, Columbus, Ohio, 7 December 1974.

audiences.⁵⁷

In 1923 Thompson told the local real estate board that the one great need of blacks was opportunity along all lines and that the Negro could be an asset or a liability according to the attitude on the part of whites. That same year he assessed the racial situation nationally in a speech to a church audience at Grace Methodist Episcopal Church. In reference to comparative solutions of the North and South, Thompson asserted that the best minds of the South were attempting to solve the "Negro problem" whereas in the North, the migration of blacks to northern states had caused serious problems. A few years later, a youthful audience of the Akron Newsboys Club benefitted from Thompson's remarks on the topic, "Do Not Judge a Man by His Color."

One month later a conversation that dealt with the work which the YMCA had pioneered culminated in the formation of the Association for Colored Community Work (ACCW). The historical highlights follow.

After the Colored YMCA had worked on the social and economic development of Akron's colored population for six years, a committee, formed largely from the board members of the Negro branch of the YMCA, concluded that there was a need for some other type of social agency for colored

⁵⁷Akron Beacon Journal, 12 February, 1 October 1923; 7 February 1925.

people.

They met shortly thereafter with E. J. Larrick, executive of the Better Akron Federation--a forerunner of the Community Chest--and several other prominent Akron citizens, notably: C. W. Seiberling, rubber manufacturing executive; Edward S. Babcock, publisher; Parke Kolbe, president of the University of Akron; and Thomas Fletcher, a Negro mortician. Plans for a meeting with Harvey S. Firestone, Sr. of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. ensued. Said meeting resulted in Firestone's advancing--through the Better Akron Federation--the first ten thousand dollars for the operation of the newly founded agency, known as the Association for Colored Community Work (ACCW).

The organization became affiliated with the National Urban League immediately and the first executive secretary appointed was George W. Thompson. The agency was instituted with two boards: a managing board of directors which consisted of prominent Negro citizens and a board of trustees comprised of prominent white citizens. Thomas Fletcher became the first board of director's president, and the first board of trustee's chairman was Dr. Parke Kolbe. Headquarters for the agency were set up at the corner of Perkins and Prospect Streets in an old frame house. The agency moved twice more, first to 193 Perkins Street and later to 199 Perkins Street, where it

operated for many years.⁵⁸

Besides Fletcher, the other black members who were on the board of directors included: Dr. L. R. Johnson, Dr. C. R. Lewis, Dr. W. E. Mayo, Dr. F. H. Strawbridge, Mrs. Mary Upperman, Mrs. T. E. Green, Mrs. J. S. Clark, Mrs. Artee Fleming, Mrs. William Hardy, Dr. J. W. Dunbar, James E. Miller, Edward G. Lewis, Bufford Eaton, and Robert Dandridge. Other members who served on the board of trustees were: Charles Herberich, C. W. Seiberling, Edward S. Babcox, J. B. Huber, Homer Campbell, and Ernest Clindinst.⁵⁹

Some of the local black organizations provided assistance to the new agency. The Ethical Culture Club furnished the restrooms; the Mount Calvary Lodge equipped the game room, and the colored Knights of Pythias offered their assistance wherever needed.

The library, although only partially equipped, was used daily and assistance was provided to colored high school and college students.

Staff members included Hattie [sic] Bowie, Miss Mary Brown, a graduate of Wilberforce University, and Chester Tisdale, a graduate of the University of Akron.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Historical Highlights," Akron, Ohio, 1951.

⁵⁹Akron Beacon Journal, 17 April 1925.

⁶⁰Ibid., 30 September 1925.

In his new position as executive secretary of the ACCW, Thompson continued to be asked to address audiences throughout the city in order to educate both blacks and whites on the racial problems. Typical of his appearances were those at the local churches, classes at the University of Akron, and the state Hi Y boys' camps.⁶¹

The first of a series of the agency's annual dinners was held at Kirkwood Methodist Church in January 1926. The guest speaker for the occasion was R. W. Jeliff, an Oberlin graduate and director of the Playhouse Settlement in Cleveland.⁶²

After two years of work, the organization was involved with the public schools, the predominant industries, and the other agencies in the Better Akron Federation. At its second annual dinner all three groups were commended by Thompson for their cooperation with the ACCW.⁶³

Negro employment was one of the agency's principal areas of concern, for jobs other than menial or domestic labor were the exception for Negroes in the 1920s. Since the demand for domestics exceeded the supply, in 1929, the agency instituted a school in domestic service in order that Negroes might become more efficient household

⁶¹Ibid., 27 July 1925; 29 April 1926.

⁶²Ibid., 30 January 1926.

⁶³Ibid., 15 January 1927.

employees. It was hoped that training and efficiency on the part of domestics would unquestionably raise both their standard of service and their compensation.⁶⁴

Thompson, along with his committee, earnestly endeavored to be productive in several areas other than employment and industrial relations work. Recreational and group work; health and housing, and social adjustments of thousands of Negroes moving to Akron following World War I were also primary concerns. The leadership which the agency provided in getting Negroes accepted to a greater degree as community citizens was considered as possibly their greatest achievement during that period.⁶⁵

The first youth group of the NAACP was formed in 1920 with Mrs. Percy Fleming serving as youth advisor and Miss Mary Holmes serving as assistant youth advisor. One year later, under the leadership of Atty. Samuel T. Kelly, the NAACP continued to confront racial segregation as it fought against lynching in the South and the Ku Klux Klan activities in Akron. Atty. Artee Fleming succeeded Attorney Kelly as president of the association as the decade came to a close.⁶⁶

Several celebrities visited the city appearing as

⁶⁴Ibid., 24 May 1929.

⁶⁵Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Highlights," 1951.

⁶⁶Interview with Mary Holmes, 4 January 1975.

guest speakers at programs given under the auspices of the local branch of the NAACP. Among them were Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, in 1921; Atty. Clarence Darrow, in 1928; and Oscar De Priest, in 1929.

DuBois, an internationally prominent black figure, addressed a large integrated audience at the First Congregational Church on the immediate problems facing the two races. A portion of his remarks follow:

It is an old piece of foolishness that if the people below you once get above, you are bound to suffer. As foolish as to assume that if the man below you acquires an education, you yourself are to be less wise; as foolish to believe that if the man below you acquires a measure of prosperity, that that prosperity is to be directly subtracted from your own substance.

It is possible by sympathy and social contact to answer the problem in Akron, and if in Akron, to answer it in the United States, and if in the United States, then in the world.⁶⁷

Darrow, the noted white Chicago lawyer, spoke at Central High School to a mixed capacity audience. He was a somewhat controversial figure whose thoughts reflected his individuality. Among other notions which he expressed were the following. 1) that it was up to the white race to solve the "race problem," but blacks would have to help; 2) that the idealism which once led to an abolition movement was currently lost in the North, and 3) that he was curious as to what would happen if Akron's current citizens attempted to raise a fund to the memory of John

⁶⁷Akron Beacon Journal, 31 January 1921.

Brown--in the city in which he once lived.

He concluded his remarks by saying:

It is a long cruel fight the colored race faces. Its pleasures cannot come in this generation. This generation must find its happiness in the glory of those who will come after it.

No race has made the strides, in such a short length of time, that it has. It is producing songsters, novelists, poets, lawyers, the peers of their white fellows.

That alone is answering the question of the "superior race."⁶⁶

Oscar DePriest of Chicago, the only Negro member of the Congress at that time, spoke to a capacity audience at Second Baptist Church. His observations, directed at racial problems in Akron, stated summarily, that there ought to be more than one Negro policeman, some Negro firemen, Negro clerks at the post office, and Negro school teachers, in a city of this size.

He urged blacks to fight for their race regardless of their political affiliations and to utilize the block system--a system wherein blacks would obtain the political affiliations of people block by block.

In closing, DePriest commented that he was proud of the Negro women for they had been the salvation of the Negro race. He explained that his parents were slaves in Alabama who had no chance, no education and added, "What success I have, I owe to my mother."⁶⁷

⁶⁶Ibid., 21 February 1928.

⁶⁷Ibid., 27 May 1929.

Throughout this period of time a number of noted persons were the house guests of Dr. and Mrs. Charles R. Lewis who resided at 361 Euclid Avenue. Among their distinguished guests were: Marcus Garvey, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, and Carl Diton.⁷⁰

Educational pursuits

Black persons in Akron, like black people throughout the nation, were recognizing the value of an education. For young black people the avenues of education were the public schools, their families, their organizations, and their churches. Of the four avenues open to them, it was felt that schooling, i.e., formal education, provided them the best opportunity.

As early as 1920 Negro leaders were aware of the "dropout" problem and the critical need for advanced education. One of the earliest projects developed to assist black youth was the formation of an organization consisting solely of Negroes who had attained high school experience. The purpose of the organization was threefold

- 1) to provide scholarships for students who had demonstrated marked intellectual achievement;
- 2) to place the Negro youth in an improved intellectual environment; and
- 3) to encourage young Negroes to stay in school.

Officers of the club were: Miss Sadie Glover,

⁷⁰Interview with Ednah Lewis, 30 December 1974.

president; Mr. Chester Tisdale, vice president; and Miss Ethel Black, secretary.⁷¹

Unlike the black youth's situation, public schools were not as readily accessible to adults. Many older people had acquired a limited education in their youth and depended upon organizations, churches, or the media to inform them of current concerns and to extend their knowledge.⁷²

One of the earliest attempts to educate and improve the status of the city's Negroes--through the use of the media--was accomplished through Akron's first black newspaper published by Amos Forman from 1921 to 1922. Forman, with some assistance from his wife, was manager, reporter, printer, and editor of The Akron Informer, a four-page weekly publication.

The paper was printed at a print shop owned by Alex Davis (which was later owned by Arthur Bolar). Articles included church news and news items about coming events in

⁷¹Akron Beacon Journal, 9 July 1920.

⁷²An exceptional case was that of Amos Forman, a former deputy sheriff. Forced to leave school in Baltimore, Maryland and work at age nine, Forman had very limited schooling--a third-grade education. He earned most of his elementary credits through correspondence courses. Later as an adult, he enrolled in some adult high school classes at Hammel Business School and Central High School (in the summer) in order to further himself and obtain his high school diploma. Forman eventually attended Akron Law School but financial problems terminated his completing the courses. Interview with Amos Forman, 414 Pine Street, Akron, Ohio, 29 December 1974.

the black community, but Forman focused his attention on editorial comments about the conditions that prevented Akron's Negroes from advancing.⁷³

The Black and White Chronicle, a weekly newspaper, was the second black newspaper in the city's history. It was published and edited for six years (from the summer of 1924 until April 1930) by William B. Johnson. Other staff members were Mary Holmes, William Byrd, and Mrs. P. H. Strawbridge. Miss Holmes was bookkeeper, proofreader, and reporter for church and social news. Byrd assisted with the advertising and Mrs. Strawbridge helped with the mailing.

Newspaper coverage included court cases, local, and international news. Copies were sold on the street weekly for five cents per copy or were mailed to advertisers and subscribers. The paper ceased publication during the depression due to lack of advertisement.⁷⁴

Another form of the media which was used to educate black residents in Akron was The Negro Yearbook. Two such yearbooks were published five years apart during the 1920s. The first yearbook was published in 1922 by Leon Gordie. It was the first attempt in the city to compile a reliable

⁷³Interview with Amos Forman, 29 December 1974.

⁷⁴"Black Newspapers in Akron," Philosophy, Religion, and Education Division, Akron Public Library, Akron, Ohio.

annual chronicle of the industrial, economic, and professional achievements of Akron's colored people.

The aim of the yearbook was to familiarize the business and professional workers, as well as the public, with the goals, programs, and practical achievements of Negroes in various fields of activities. The yearbook also attempted to enlighten the public on the thrift, industry, and economy which was evident among black people in Akron.

The second yearbook was edited in 1927 by Opie Evans. Its purpose was similar to that of the first Negro yearbook. The profitable enterprises in which black business and professional people were engaged were not known to the majority of the black citizenry. Consequently, they were not receiving from the public the respect due to them for their progress, and the yearbook provided a means of enlightenment. The publisher urged the readers to patronize the businesses advertised therein.

As has been indicated, the academic pursuits of black students in the prior decade reflected an awareness on their part of the need for further education. During the 1920s, more black Akronites advanced to college.

In 1921 Emmer Martin Lancaster became the first Negro student to graduate from the University of Akron.⁷⁵ Other Negroes who attended the University of Akron during

⁷⁵Lancaster, "Biographical Sketch."

the years from 1920 to 1929 included: Daniel Thomas, Theodore Flippo, Lloyd Taylor, Addison Spencer, Rufus Thompson, Chester Tisdale, Raymond R. Brown, and Phyllis Dyson. Spencer, Thompson, Tisdale, and Brown received their bachelor degrees from the university.⁷⁶ Miss Dyson was the first black woman to graduate from the University of Akron.

Miss Dyson's mother, Capitola Robinson Dyson has been reported to be the first black female to graduate from Central High School. In preparation for her graduation, she delivered a speech on Toussaint L'Ouverture.⁷⁷

A few other Negro Akronites attended college outside of the city. Among them were: Henry Sparks and Robert Black (enrolled at Ohio State University); Charles Brown (enrolled at University of Syracuse), and Willa and Edith Player (both of whom graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University).⁷⁸

Miss Mary Brown graduated from Wilberforce University in 1925 and shortly thereafter took a position at the ACCW. She has been an Akron resident for fifty years and is currently known to most Akronites as Mary Hogan Smith.

⁷⁶Interviews with Raymond R. Brown and Emmer Lancaster, Akron, Ohio, 20 February 1975.

⁷⁷Interview with Edith Delaney Mitchell, Akron, Ohio, 10 February 1975.

⁷⁸Interview with Raymond R. Brown, Akron, Ohio, 22 February 1975.

There were a number of black teachers who were in Akron during the 1920s. None, however, were granted positions in the Akron Public Schools--regardless of their former training or positions. Black women educators in Akron had occupied all levels of administrative and teaching positions, namely, principals, special supervisors, city and county teachers, kindergarten work, special teachers in domestic science, domestic art, music and physical culture.

Among those who had held such positions were Mrs. F. H. Strawbridge, Mrs. Harold Clark, Mrs. Mary Upperman, Mrs. George Thompson, Mrs. I. J. Bowie, Mrs. James Russell, Mrs. R. H. Jones, Mrs. A. Allen, Mrs. Laramore, Mrs. Frank Petite, Miss Geraldine Dyson, and Miss Florence Cross.⁷⁹

Mrs. Marguerite Fleming came to Akron in 1924 and having had a substantial background in music, attempted to join the public school teaching staff. She was denied the opportunity until 1957.

Her musical education began in 1905 when she started playing the piano in churches at nine years of age. However, her formal training had not begun until she was seventeen. Music lessons were provided at school and she learned other songs and hymns from hearing her father, a minister, sing.

⁷⁹Gordie, Negro Yearbook, pp. 14, 21.

Mrs. Fleming was accompanist for the glee club of her high school where she won a scholarship as valedictorian of her class. Due to a lack of money she was forced to decline the honor. Mrs. Fleming spent five years working as a domestic before she could enroll at the University of Michigan where she completed four years of a seven-year course. Her education was terminated because she lacked sufficient funds to continue.⁸⁰ So outstanding have been her musical contributions to the religious, social, civic, and cultural development of the Akron community that Mayor John S. Ballard proclaimed 28 June 1967 as Marguerite Jamison Fleming Day.⁸¹

The Depression Years

Racial problems brought on by the rampant discrimination initiated two decades earlier continued into the 1930s. However, the economic decline which created a national depression overshadowed the racial concerns nationally and locally. Black persons in Akron, as well as throughout the United States, felt the most severe effects of the economic crisis.

Although the racial issue was subordinated to a lesser concern, local black citizens continued their efforts to combat racial prejudice and to further their

⁸⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 12 March 1967, p. F3.

⁸¹A copy of the proclamation appears in appendix 3.

advancement. From available records, the writer has been able to document: 1) the general conditions that existed for Negro residents; 2) their individual attainments; and 3) some of the accomplishments of black organizations during these years. Each will be studied herein.

General Conditions Among Akron's Black Citizens

The effect of discrimination coupled with the economic decline resulted in the unemployment of many Negro Akronites in the early years of the depression. By the end of 1930, a number of unemployed persons were being fed twice weekly at Wesley Temple AME Church.²

The special problems that Negroes faced in Akron were beginning to be analyzed at a conference on race relations held in 1931 at the First Congregational Church. A Cleveland pastor, Rev. Russell S. Brown, spoke on "A New Approach to Race Relations" and pointed out in particular the employment of Negro teachers in Cleveland's public schools as an important step in the elimination of race prejudice there.

Following the minister's address, seven discussion groups considered the problems of race relations in Akron and discussed, among other issues, the employment of Negro teachers and the exclusion of Negroes from hotels and

²Akron Beacon Journal, 27 December 1930.

other places.⁸³

Although black teachers were employed by the government's Works Projects Administration (WPA) to teach classes to adults who had limited education, no black teachers were hired in the Akron Public Schools. WPA classes were limited to fifteen adults and were housed in churches and some of the schools.⁸⁴

By 1934 the fact that Akron's Negroes had suffered more in the depression than any other group in the city had been documented in a federal report. Statistics released by the Federal Relief Administration indicated that Negroes constituted 20 percent of the total population on relief although comprising only 4 percent of the city's population. Blacks were the first to be laid off and the last to be hired.⁸⁵

Suffering under the double handicap of racial discrimination and limited opportunity for employment, black families had the awesome responsibility of motivating and encouraging their children to seek an education to prepare themselves for advancement. Black speakers, black organizations, and black churches were instrumental in assisting black families with their task.

⁸³Ibid., 16 February 1931.

⁸⁴Interview with Virginia Threatt, 644 Rainbow Drive, Akron, Ohio, 28 December 1974.

⁸⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 8 February 1934.

In 1936 Elmer A. Carter, editor of the National Urban League's Opportunity (their national organ), visited Akron to speak to various audiences at diverse sites, namely, the city's business and professional executives at the Akron City Club; an economics class at the University of Akron, a mass meeting at AME Zion Church, and an assembly at Garfield High School.

He explained that the greatest problem that beset his race was "throttled inspiration," i.e., that feeling that every colored boy and girl must have as he or she neared the end of common school education--what is it all for?⁶

Black organizations were beginning to motivate black youth to aspire to higher levels of education through the development of educational programs. Typical of organizations which designed educational program assistance were the Negro Elks who held an annual oratorical contest and an annual observance of National Negro Educational Progress Week.

The Elks national oratorical contest provided high school students with an opportunity to learn the art of oratory and to win a college scholarship if they were a winner at the regional [or national] level.⁷

⁶Ibid., 22 April 1931.

⁷Ibid., 16 April 1939.

At the observance of the National Negro Educational Progress Week, speakers were invited to inform the public about the Negro's progress in education.

According to Judge W C. Heuston [sic], Grand Director of Education of the Negro Elks in America, who spoke in Akron at the fourteenth annual observance of that event, the purpose of observing the educational week's program was to encourage blacks to further their education. It was believed that educating Negroes to care for themselves as much as possible would help to alleviate the black man's economic plight.⁸⁸

A few more opportunities had been extended to blacks in terms of employment during the 1930s. Most of the black city employees were garbage collectors, but a few had local government positions such as sheriffs, patrolmen, a probation officer, and a court bailiff. Jack Beeman, James Miller, Emmer Lancaster, and Amos Forman were appointed as deputy sheriffs (in subsequent terms); Mrs. M. Alberta Banks served as a Summit County probation officer; Hosea Lindsey worked as a court bailiff, and David Oglesby and Henry Munford were patrolmen.

By the close of the 1930s black businesses had increased. Blacks were engaged in a wide variety of business enterprises which included ownership or management of

⁸⁸Ibid.

photography studios, hotels, restaurants, night clubs, coal companies, dance studios, cleaners, grocery stores, laundries, moving companies, automobile establishments, radio and sound recording, business, barber shops, beauty shops, funeral homes, printing companies, and service stations.⁸⁹

Churches continued to increase and five new churches were organized in the 1930s. Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church (1931); the Church of God in Christ (1932), True Vine Church of God in Christ (1936); Mt. Calvary Baptist Church (1937); and Good Hope Baptist Church (1939).⁹⁰

Although some churches had quite a few ministers who pastored their churches throughout the years, Second Baptist Church was an exception. In 1934 the church held a recognition ceremony to mark the forty-first anniversary of Rev. R. A. Jones' pastorship. Over one hundred persons, black and white, were in attendance to honor Rev. Mr. Jones.⁹¹

Church activities grew and absorbed total families. Representative of such programs was the young adult fellowship program organized in 1931 by Rev. S. M. Riley at Centenary Methodist Church. The program provided both

⁸⁹Kingsberry, Akron Negro, pp. 25-27.

⁹⁰The Church in Akron, pp. 189, 234, 252.

⁹¹Akron Beacon Journal, 10 March 1934.

religious and social activities to men, women, and children of all ages. Under the pastorship of Rev. G. G. Morgan, leadership classes in religious training, baseball teams, and scouting were instituted.⁹²

As the decade drew to a close, Akron's Negro leaders were preparing to meet with city council to have their demands for the creation of a federal housing project in North Akron addressed. The area in question was the East North, Spring, and Stuber Streets section of the city.

Deputy Sheriff Amos Forman, an active advocate of the plan, circulated petitions favoring the project. Forman pointed out that the government, through the WPA, had spent thousands of dollars beautifying Elizabeth Park which was situated near a heavily populated "shack center." It was felt that demolition of the inadequate, unhealthful housing and replacement of it with modern sanitary homes facing the park would rid the city of an eyesore and advance the living conditions of the area's residents.⁹³

In spite of the hard times, black citizens maintained their sense of humor and implemented activities for amusement and diversion. During the 1930s the Cleveland

⁹²"Forty-first Anniversary of Centenary Methodist Church."

⁹³Akron Beacon Journal, 14 September 1938.

Call and Post, a black newspaper sold in Akron, held elections to select a "mayor" of Akron's Harlem (the Howard Street business district). In 1935, Willie F. Taylor became the first "mayor" when he won a landslide victory. He held the post a year.⁹⁴

By 1939 Jimmy Clark became the fourth mayor of Akron's Harlem (Taylor, William Prymas, and Tom Smith had held the office previously). Runner-up in 1939 was Herbert Dix. The Cleveland Call and Post contributed twenty-five dollars to the winner and Mayor Schroy presented Clark with the badge of office. The inaugural ball, held at the Elks Hall on Howard Street, climaxed the year's campaign.⁹⁵

Individual Gains: Academics, Athletics and Aesthetic Accomplishments

Perhaps one of the highest academic honors which was earned by a black student in the 1930s was the one which MacNolia Cox received when she won first place in the Akron area Spelling Bee sponsored by the Akron Beacon Journal.

MacNolia Cox, a thirteen-year-old eighth grader at Colonial School, was one of the thirty-seven boys and girls chosen in the final selection of entrants.⁹⁶

⁹⁴Ibid., 4 May 1973.

⁹⁵Ibid., 9 December 1939.

⁹⁶Ibid., 4 April 1936.

Judges for the contest were Prof. Richard H. Schmidt, registrar at the University of Akron; Mrs Stanley Emmitt, president of Akron Council, Home and School League, Judge Oscar A. Hunsicker, juvenile court judge; and Father Joseph M. Gallegher, pastor of St. Vincent's Church.

Miss Cox spelled her way to the championship on 23 April 1936 before the largest audience ever in attendance (three thousand persons) at the Akron Armory. She received a twenty-five dollar cash prize and the spelling bee crown after correctly spelling "sciatic"--the word misspelled by the runner-up--and then correctly spelling "voluble."³⁷

The Akron Beacon Journal's coverage of the event merited several letters of commendation from local and national figures. The local president of the NAACP, Emmer Lancaster, praised the newspaper for its "very generous and impartial treatment of MacNolia's victory,"³⁸ and T. M. Fletcher, a local black mortician, lauded the newspaper for its "fair play and encouragement offered to the young lady."³⁹

National reactions to her victory came from the National Urban League office and from black and white

³⁷Ibid., 23 April 1936.

³⁸Ibid., 28 April 1936.

³⁹Ibid., 29 April 1936.

members of Congress. The secretary of the National Urban League, Eugene K. Jones, applauded the Akron Beacon Journal for their "liberal public spirit in affording children of the community, regardless of race, creed, or color, the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity."¹⁰⁰

Rep. A. W. Mitchell, a Harvard graduate and onetime office boy for Booker T. Washington, extolled Miss Cox's victory and envisioned it as a credit and a help to the Negro race. He sought to inspire her to further endeavors through a verse by Laurence Hope that he (Mitchell) had inserted into the house record in Miss Cox's honor. The verse read:

Men should be judged not by their tint of skin
The gods they serve, the vintage that they drink,
Nor by the way they fight, or love, or sin
But by the quality of thoughts they think.¹⁰¹

Rep. Dow Harter of Akron also extended his congratulations to Miss Cox saying that her victory was a tribute to her race and to her school. Her homeroom teacher, who assisted her, was Miss Cornelia Green. Mrs. Blanche V. Boyd was her principal.

Miss Cox resided with her mother and stepfather, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Key at 1884 First Street, SW in Kenmore. Key was a WPA worker.

At the time that Miss Cox went to Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 1 May 1936.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 23 April 1936.

she was one of two Negro girls to ever reach the finals. She finished fifth in the national Spelling Bee when she misspelled the word "nemesis."¹⁰² On her return to Akron, the Akron Council of Negro Women (with Mrs. C. I. Brazelton as program chairman) welcomed her home with a parade from the Union Station through downtown Akron to Colonial School. Her mother and teacher rode with Miss Cox in an automobile covered with banners. Hundreds of automobiles formed a caravan to participate in the parade.¹⁰³

The motivation of blacks to remain in school and secure an education was reflected in the decrease in the "dropout" rate. Consequently, there was a marked increase in the number of blacks who attended high school. When Negro social work began in 1919 at the Colored YMCA, there were only thirty-five Negro children attending high school. Twenty years later the figure had risen to 654 black high school students.¹⁰⁴

Although the economic and racial picture was grim--and particularly grim for Negroes--black families and black organizations persevered in their attempts to see to it that Negro children received the necessary schooling. According to Knepper, Akron had only a small Negro element

¹⁰²Ibid., 26 May 1936.

¹⁰³Ibid., 29 May 1936.

¹⁰⁴Association for Colored Community Work, "Report of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting," Akron, Ohio, 1939

in a city whose composition was predominantly white and of recent southern origin. Analyzing the racial and educational circumstances for blacks in Akron at that period in the city's history, Knepper stated in sum that:

The Ku Klux Klan was an active force in Akron. Such Negroes as may have hoped to get a college education locally may well have thought twice because of the backlash such action would trigger. In the 1930s few Negro families could secure the funds needed for fees, books, clothes, and the other expenses of going to college. Admission requirements from 1923 to 1945 worked to the disadvantage of children who came from educationally deprived backgrounds.¹⁰³

Among the few black students who were enrolled at the University of Akron during the 1930s were James Turner, Robert Burton, Stanley Junius, and Edith Delaney. Turner attended the university's Business Administration School for one year before leaving school to work at Firestone. Burton worked odd jobs and with some financial assistance from the Elks organization was able to complete his pre-medical training. Junius was one of the early black football players at the college. Miss Delaney had the distinction of being the first black woman to have graduated from the university's Teacher's College. She graduated in 1933.

Several other Negroes who pursued degrees during this decade attended Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio. Some of the students were natives of Akron

¹⁰³George Knepper, New Lamps for Old (Akron: University of Akron, 1970), p. 233.

and others were residents of other cities, but they came to Akron to live shortly after graduation. Among those who were enrolled were: Virginia Wilson, Bennett Chestnut, Nathan Martin, Marguerite Calloway, John Jetton, Henry Munford, Beatrice Turner, Winona Turner (an Elks Oratorical contest winner and recipient of a full four-year scholarship), Thelma James, and Ruth Anderson.¹⁰⁶

Rev. G. Lincoln Caddell (who had the longest tenure as pastor of Akron's St. Paul AME Church--1957-70), was graduated from Payne Theological Seminary in 1934 with a B.D. degree. Two years later he received a B.A. in History from Wilberforce University, graduating cum laude.¹⁰⁷

Three Negro youths whose athletic ability had been aptly demonstrated to Akronites during the 1930s also attended colleges out of the city. They were James Craig, Horace Bell, and Andy Averitt.

Craig had been a football player and a wrestling star at East High School. After graduation he followed the advice of his cousin, "Big Bill" Bell, and enrolled at Ohio State University. After one year, Craig transferred

¹⁰⁶Interview with Mary Hogan Smith, Akron, Ohio, 4 December 1974, Interview with Beatrice Turner O'Rourke, Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio, 5 December 1974.

¹⁰⁷Interview with Rev. G. Lincoln Caddell, 901 Baughman Street, Akron, Ohio, 28 December 1974.

to West Virginia State College and played every varsity game his sophomore year. He was declared ineligible in his junior year due to a technicality in his transfer status. In Craig's senior year, he left college, came to Akron, married and began working for the city.¹⁰⁸

Horace Bell, younger brother of "Big Bill" Bell, also attended East High School and graduated in the 1935 class. Despite the fact that his father had died in 1926 and his mother's death occurred eighteen months later, Bell's family felt that he should be afforded the chance to further his education. Bell's older brother, Bill, financed his tuition to the University of Minnesota from a depression year's coaching salary of nine hundred dollars; his sister paid young Bell's fare to Minnesota.¹⁰⁹

Bell, known to many as "Horse," had several honors to his credit. He had played on the University of Minnesota's football team which won a national title in 1936, and during his varsity season, the team won Big Ten championships from 1936 to 1939. Bell also had the distinction of being the first Negro to play in the All-Star Classic at Chicago's Soldier's Field.¹¹⁰ In subsequent years he was a premedical student for two and a half years at Butler University before earning his medical degree at

¹⁰⁸Akron Beacon Journal, 15 October 1967, p. E3.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 18 October 1965, p. B7.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 19 February 1959.

the University of Indiana in 1952.¹¹¹

While a number of fine athletes resided in East Akron, there were also talented athletes from the opposite side of town, one of whom was Andrew (Andy) Averitt. Averitt had gained recognition as a football and basketball star at West High School in the early 1930s, but basketball was his forte. He was selected to the All-Tournament Team twice during his high school years and subsequently played amateur basketball with Woolcock Plumbers in 1934.

Averitt attended Kent State University for a short time before enrolling at the University of Toledo. His athletic and college career were terminated due to illness.¹¹²

In 1933 another well-known black made a contribution to Akron's citizens. J. C. Wade, a former resident who had gone to New York and achieved stardom as a tap dancer, had returned to Akron and opened a dancing studio. His first studio was at 324 Gold Street, and he taught both ballet and tap dancing. The success of his instruction forced him to seek larger quarters and late in 1935 he moved his business to Howard Street.

Wade had a celebrated background for he was an

¹¹¹Ibid., 18 October 1965, p. B7.

¹¹²Ibid., 17 October 1966.

exceptionally talented dancer. When his contract was terminated with Olson and Johnson, he was offered a job as partner and chief instructor with Joe Price--an instructor whose students were stage and screen stars.

In his Akron studio, Wade taught both black and white students lessons in all types of dancing. Among his former students who achieved stardom were: Alvin Leslie, Dora Mae Hixson, Billie Parsons, Lorraine Baker, and Billy Carmichael (nephew of Hoagy Carmichael).¹¹³

Wade's local shows included his annual dance recital; the J. C. Wade Night Club Review, and personal appearances in night clubs, theaters, and benefit shows.¹¹⁴ He held his first annual dance recital on 21 June 1935 and was billed as Akron's only colored teacher. His night club review, sponsored by the Goodyear Colored Club, consisted of an all-Negro cast of radio and stage artists. One particular benefit show in which Wade appeared was Goodyear's Annual Charity Carnival which provided aid to needy Goodyear families.

Night life in Akron during the years of the depression were quite exciting according to DeWitt Pittman, a self-taught drummer and entertainer who worked in Akron's

¹¹³Akron Informer, 10 September 1949.

¹¹⁴"First Annual Recital of the J. C. Wade Dance Studio," Akron, Ohio, 1935, (Akron) Wingfoot Clan, n.d ; (Akron) Wingfoot Clan, 30 October 1935, p. 1.

night clubs. There were several clubs then--The Little Ritz, The Speedway Inn, and the Grandview Inn--which throbbed with jazz.

Pittman, the son of a sharecropper, had come to Akron in 1931 seeking a better life. He soon came to realize that the only employment that he could find was as a porter--part-time.

He started sitting in as a drummer with a local group and eventually became good enough to team up with four other musicians to form "The Society Five." Their first job at the Palmer Inn paid one dollar per night. Several years passed before Pittman found employment in the rubber plants, but in the meantime he became well known as a jazz drummer in Akron's night club circles.¹¹⁵

Diversified Black Organizations

The growth of the black population was reflected in the increase of black associations. Year by year, the black community had developed black organizations to meet its diverse needs--political, social, educational, economic, religious, civic, and cultural. Through such bodies Negroes had made great strides in being absorbed into the Akron community and in combatting its racial hostility.

Most of the black organizations which were existent

¹¹⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 31 December 1972, p. D3.

in the 1930s carried on the programs for which they were originally created. Although some of the earliest ones had gone out of existence, new associations had been formed to meet new demands. Two organizations--the ACCW and the NAACP--grew in prominence as they addressed most of the Negroes' needs. This segment of the paper will examine the foci of the ACCW and the NAACP and will investigate the newly created black organizations.

The ACCW's programs

The ACCW continued to have its annual dinner and engaged speakers who discussed the problems and possible solutions to the racial problems in America.

Two of the areas to which the agency gave considerable attention were those of employment and vocational opportunity. As early as 1930 the ACCW sponsored a vocational opportunity campaign and invited Dr. M. O. Bousefield of Chicago, vice-president of the Supreme Liberty and Life Insurance Co., to address a group of local men at the Akron City Club regarding the Negro's opportunity for employment.

Bousefield declared that even though the Negro was given the worst jobs and the worst places to live, the black man was coming up in the world more rapidly than other groups through the development of social responsibility. Bousefield suggested that the Negro's greatest

contribution to the world had been his labor from the days of slavery hence. He added that the general level of the entire nation could be elevated by raising the standards of Negroes because they too would have buying power if given a job.¹¹⁶

Nine years later the ACCW was still persevering in its attempts to prepare black youth for various vocations should the opportunities be extended to them. The topic of "Negro Youth in the World of Tomorrow" was the central theme of a week-long conference in March 1939. Over two hundred black students from northeastern Ohio cities convened in Akron to discuss racial problems of colored people. The purpose of the convention was to impress black youth with the idea that despite the obstacles and hardships that existed there were definite opportunities for Negroes to perform services and earn a livelihood

One of the features of the conference was a debate between the Akron and Canton high school students. The question for debate was "Resolved, That Negro Colleges and Universities Prepare Students Better for Life's Vocations Than Mixed Colleges and Universities " Allen Killings, Percy Fleming, and Wanda Jones were members of the Wesley Temple team which debated the Canton team.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶Ibid., 24 April 1930.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 25, 26, 27 March 1939.

An editorial in the Akron Beacon Journal commended the ACCW for showing initiative through its efforts and stated:

It need not be stressed that the lot of the Negro in depressed times is not a happy one. Generally in the lower income bracket anyway, the Negro finds avenues of employment normally open to him closing under depression. Latent race prejudices become active. Because it is difficult for the Negro to make himself heard, the plight of the Negro goes unnoticed.¹¹⁸

Two other activities of the ACCW during the 1930s were noteworthy. One was the memorial service to Harvey S. Firestone held at Second Baptist Church. Sponsored in conjunction with the Council of Negro Churches, the service was held to pay tribute to the assistance that Firestone had provided for the Negro race. Speeches were presented by Robert A. Taft of Cincinnati, Atty. Emmert Lancaster, and Dr. George E. Haynes.

Music was furnished by a fifty-voice choir and two soloists: Ednah Lewis, president of the Ohio Baptist Association Woman's Auxiliary, and Mercer Bratcher, a former Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. employee.¹¹⁹

The second activity of note was the observance of Negro History Week which was jointly sponsored by the ACCW and the local chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. In 1935, Miss Edith Delaney, assistant girl's secretary of

¹¹⁸Ibid., 25 March 1939.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 30 March 1938.

ACCW, was chairman of the ninth annual celebration program. An exhibit was held daily at the ACCW headquarters throughout the week. Teas and discussion hours augmented the celebration, and the public library, through the cooperation of Librarian Will C. Collins, featured daily literary displays.¹²⁰

NAACP programs

The NAACP activities during the 1930s were under the leadership of the president, Emmet Martin Lancaster, for most of the decade (1928-37). During his term of office, the Lancaster Scholastic Trophy, named in his honor, was initiated. The award, which he presented annually from 1936-40, went to the Negro high school graduates who attained the highest grades during their high school careers.¹²¹

In June of 1937 forty-five graduates of Akron high schools and two universities were honored. Miss Kathleen Thomas, an East High School graduate, was the recipient of the Lancaster Scholastic Trophy. Swanson Shaw, also an East High School graduate, received special recognition.¹²²

Lancaster's administrative years were quite productive. In addition to instituting the Lancaster

¹²⁰Ibid., 9 February 1935.

¹²¹Lancaster, "Biographical Sketch."

¹²²Akron Beacon Journal, 21 June 1937.

Scholastic Trophy, his leadership led to other accomplishments. He was instrumental in getting Atty. Clarence Darrow to speak in Akron in 1928; he fought segregation in the public schools--particularly in the school choirs;¹²³ and he assisted in starting an annual concert of Negro music in which vocal groups, orchestras, soloists, and choruses participated.¹²⁴

Hosea Lindsey succeeded Lancaster as president in 1937. During his administration William Pickens, Negro author and a Phi Beta Kappa graduate from Yale University, returned to Akron for a second time. Pickens, director of the national NAACP, addressed an audience on education and racial problems. In a similar speech, six years prior, he told his listeners that there was no such thing as "Negro crime," a "Negro death rate," or "Negro education." He stated that what did exist were the crime rates and death rates for people who lived under the conditions which Negroes were forced to live. Likewise, Negro education was not distinct from other education--that there was no such thing as Negro physics, Negro math, etc.¹²⁵

In the fall of 1937 the outstanding accomplishments of the organization were lauded and four of the six

¹²³"NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner Souvenir Program," Akron, Ohio, 1974.

¹²⁴Akron Beacon Journal, 7 August 1933.

¹²⁵Ibid., 4 February 1937, 9 December 1931.

officers were reelected. Three of the NAACP's attainments that year were-

1. The creation of a spirit of cooperation among the entire Negro population of the city
2. The placement of the association on a firm financial basis
3. The securing of a membership roll ten times larger than that of recent years¹²⁶

One final noteworthy act was executed by the local branch of the NAACP during the 1930s. In September of 1937, the NAACP made application for a Carnegie medal to be awarded to patrolman John Suddieth in recognition of his heroism in saving the lives of seven passengers in a burning car. Suddieth raced to the overturned car and dragged three children who were sprayed with gasoline through a broken window. He then assisted the men out of the front seat and with their aid extricated the two women passengers as flames swept the car. In recognition of his bravery, city council passed a resolution commending Suddieth on his act.¹²⁷

New organizations

Several other organizations were formed during the depression years, namely. Rubber City Lodge No. 233 of

¹²⁶Ibid., 9 October 1937.

¹²⁷Ibid., 16 September 1937.

the I.B.P.O.E. of W.; the American Legion John Fulton Post No. 272; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Beta Beta Chapter; the Negro Twenty-five Year Club; the Council of Negro Women; the Negro Art Club; Veterans of Foreign Wars Rhine River Post No. 3618; and the Frontiers of America.

The Delta Lodge 149 of the I.B.P.O.E. of W. had dissolved when property purchased for its headquarters was lost during the financial crash of the 1930s, but a new lodge was established in 1932 under the name of Rubber City Lodge No. 233. Dr. F. H. Strawbridge was installed as Exalted Ruler and J. A. Banks was elected secretary.¹²⁶

The American Legion John Fulton Post No. 272 was granted its charter in October 1932. J. L. Suddieth was commander and J. A. Spratley served as adjutant. Other officers included L. S. Sheeler, chaplain and Wayman Cruse, sergeant-at-arms. The names of the original members according to the charter were: Thomas L. Sampson, Harry L. Jones, George W. Denrison, A. Q. Brazelton, J. L. Larri-
more, L. B. Peebles, John Alvis, Frank Price, F. D. Fisher, H. Cocksey, Harry W. Thomas, Ray Wimberly, S. D. Turner, Moses Avery, Simerel D. Bowles, Eddie Bird, O. C. Campbell, William E. W. Ewing, Thomas E. Finley, A. J. Douglas, Espie Glenn, William R. Hardy, Harry Helm, Harry King, Henry Moses, S. D. Parnell, Thomas Saunders, Edward S.

¹²⁶ "Souvenir Program of the I.B.P.O.E. of W.," 1951.

Scruggs, Moses Sneed, Frank Stewart, Robert T. Stone, Elder Tripp, Edward J. Walker, James C. White, Barney Harris.¹²⁹

Akron's first black college sorority was the Beta Beta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha organized in Cleveland, Ohio in 1932. Mary Hogan, who was instrumental in the chapter's being founded, served as its first president. Other founders were Juella Thompson, Willa Player, Geraldine Dyson, Susan Lyles, and Virginia Wilson. Although a small chapter in terms of numbers, the sorority entertained the Great Lakes Regional Conference in 1934.¹³⁰

The first pledge (Ivy Leaf) was Edith Delaney who was initiated and became a soror on 4 May 1933. Members present at the first initiation were Sorors Mary Hogan, Virginia Threatt, Susan Lyles, and Juella Thompson. Visiting sorors, Phyllis Dyson, Carolyn Lancaster, Beatrice Woolridge, and Caroline Lattier were also in attendance.¹³¹

¹²⁹Charter of the John Fulton Post No. 272 of the American Legion, Akron, Ohio. Said charter is at John Fulton Post No. 272, 65 North Summit Street, Akron, Ohio.

¹³⁰Alpha Kappa Alpha book containing the historical highlights of the sorority. Among the historical records of the sorority in the possession of Mrs. Frances LaRue Howard, 547 Hoye Avenue, Akron, Ohio.

¹³¹Alpha Kappa Alpha, Beta Beta Chapter (Akron, Ohio), Minutes of the Meetings of the Sorority, meeting of 4 March 1933, p. 12. Among the historical records of the sorority in the possession of Mrs. Frances LaRue Howard, 547 Hoye Avenue, Akron, Ohio.

In the mid-1930s a civic organization, the Negro Twenty-five Year Club, was established for social and constructive purposes. Comprised of Negroes who had resided in Akron twenty-five years or more, the group was founded at the American Legion Hall. Officers who were elected were: Mrs. John Clark, president; Harry Hailstock, vice-president; J. R. Jackson, secretary, Mrs. Mattie Steele, assistant secretary, and Mrs. Carrie White, treasurer.¹³²

By its first anniversary, the club had a membership of sixty-four and eighteen honorary members, seventy years old or older. The oldest member was George Prince. Some of the more prominent members of the organization were: Rev. R. A. Jones, Mrs. Roberta Black, E. W. Sims, Mrs. Ella Christian, Mrs. Louise Wilson, Mrs. Amanda Mountain, Mrs. Libby Byers, Rev. J. H. McMullen, Mrs. Sarah Dandridge, Mrs. M. Heath, Mrs. Esther Williams, Mrs. Julia Pinn, Mrs. Ella Chapman, Mrs. Mary Tillman, Mrs. Matilda Haines, Mrs. Maria Anderson, Rev. William Branch, Mrs. Capitola Dyson, and Mrs. Susie Cudgel.

Those who served as officers for the organization were: Mrs. Julia Clark, president; Mrs. Martha Hailstock, first vice-president; Mrs. Cora Christian, second vice-president; Mrs. Cora Dandridge, third vice-president; Mrs. Carrie White, treasurer; and J. R. Johnson, treasurer

¹³²Akron Beacon Journal, 21 March 1935.

[sic]. Guest speakers were Mrs. Otis Hower and C. W. Seiberling.¹³³

Probably the largest contribution which the Negro Twenty-five Year Club made to the city was the presentation of the John Brown Memorial on 25 September 1938.

The idea for establishing the memorial had been conceived two months prior when at its regular meeting the members of the club decided that in keeping with their purpose and to perpetuate the name of the Negro Twenty-five Year Club, they would sponsor the dedication and erection of a memorial to pay tribute to the memory of John Brown. Atty. Emmer Lancaster was selected as chairman of the John Brown Memorial Committee, the committee which brought the plans to fruition.¹³⁴

The presentation ceremony at Perkins Woods included addresses and speeches by many prominent people; musical selections; the unveiling of the memorial by Doris Brown, third grand-niece of the famed abolitionist;¹³⁵ and the presentation of colorful flowers and wreaths by local black organizations.¹³⁶ It was a memorable occasion for

¹³³Ibid., 20 April 1936.

¹³⁴The resolution authorizing Atty. Emmer Lancaster to negotiate with the City Planning Commission for the erection of said memorial is included in appendix 3.

¹³⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 26 September 1938.

¹³⁶The printed program of the dedication services is included in appendix 4.

both black and white citizens.

Another civic organization, The Council of Negro Women, established in 1932, became an active force in improving the Negro communities and the city in general. The council grew out of a nucleus of two block clubs which were organized in the Elizabeth Park area. As more neighborhood clubs were established throughout the city, the sister clubs saw fit to organize the council as a parent body. The ACCW provided assistance in establishing the council into a main body which consisted of twenty-one block clubs and became known as the Council of Negro Women. George Thompson, Raymond Brown, and Mary Hogan assisted in the organization of the group and meetings were held at the ACCW.

The neighborhood clubs, which met in homes prior to the formation of the council, were organized for the purpose of: 1) beautifying and consolidating black communities; 2) inspiring the black community to higher education, and 3) building black pride.

The neighborhood block clubs followed the area of the neighborhood schools. The Council of Negro Women lent support to the various PTA groups in the neighborhoods and helped to develop Elizabeth Park and Elizabeth Park homes.

More than one thousand women were members of the organization which encompassed clubs in Akron, Barberton,

and Twinsburg.¹³⁷

Three of the programs of the Council of Negro Women were the National Negro Health Week activities; a campaign to raise money to build a gymnasium for Negro youth; and a program to teach Negro children black history.

In 1935 the activities to commemorate National Negro Health Week were scheduled as follows:

1. Sunday--Speeches by ministers at the various local black churches regarding health
2. Monday--Addresses on health by physicians and nurses
3. Tuesday--Housewives were scheduled to appear
4. Wednesday--Presentation of a sketch on the value of life insurance
5. Thursday--An address by Mrs. L. L. Kinsey, chairman of the beautification committee of Akron and Summit County's Garden Forum¹³⁸

The following year the organization raised \$704.35 for the construction of the gymnasium.¹³⁹

Because students were not taught black history in school, the Council of Negro Women sponsored a contest to teach black children about their heritage. Hobart Briggs

¹³⁷Interview with Mary Eagle, Akron, Ohio, 9 January 1975.

¹³⁸Akron Beacon Journal, 30 March 1935.

¹³⁹Ibid., 25 June 1936.

won the contest in 1939. His prize-winning entry had articles and pictures of both locally and nationally prominent Negroes. The student's families helped them locate materials for their books.¹⁴⁰

A Negro Art Club, organized in 1937, was the first organization in the city to present a gift of art treasures to the new Akron Art Institute. The \$125 gift, purchased through funds collected from the Negro community, was a collection of carvings and agricultural pieces created by the Bush Negroes in Dutch Guiana, South America.

The scheduled presentation ceremony consisted of the presentation of the collection and a concert of music by the Moore Singers; soloists, Mercer Bratcher and Jessica Brazil; and Mrs. Edith Brown, pianist.¹⁴¹

The Veterans of Foreign War, Rhine River Post No. 3618 received its charter on 6 July 1937. Charter members, having served honorably in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps of the United States of America in its foreign wars, were: Lester Sheeler, George McCullough, Lewis Buchanan, Wilbur Watts, Emmett Payne, Gordon Kiser, Robert Dorton, Aron Bryant, William M. Wheeler, Thomas L. Sampson, Lee Wellons, Henry Moses, William Idley, Robert Hardy, Harrison Johnson,

¹⁴⁰Miss Mary Holmes has among her personal records the black history book which she helped her young cousin, Hobart Briggs, compile. Interview with Mary Holmes, 4 January 1975.

¹⁴¹Akron Beacon Journal, 10 December 1937.

Elzie Fortune, George Booker, Ivy Grozar, Conley Harper, Archie J. Reaves, and Elder Tripp.¹⁴²

The Frontiers Club, a national service club comprised of Negro business and professional men, was organized by Atty. Artee Fleming in 1939. As the first national chairman of the constitutional committee, Fleming wrote most of the constitution for the national organization.¹⁴³

The purpose of the association was to serve members of the Negro race and the community. Officers included: Atty. Artee Fleming, president; Henry Sparks, vice-president; Raymond R. Brown, secretary; and Dr. B. L. Thurston, treasurer. Other members were Atty. Emmer Lancaster, Dr. F. H. Strawbridge, Dr. George Dunbar, Emmitt Hogan, Mercer F. Bratcher, Daniel Thomas, Atty. S. T. Kelly, and George W. Thompson.¹⁴⁴

Summary

The decade of the 1920s witnessed black residents resisting the racial oppression that began in the prior decade. They responded both individually and through

¹⁴²Charter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Rhine River Post No. 3618, Akron, Ohio. Said charter is at Rhine River Post No. 3618, 1474 Copley Road, Akron, Ohio.

¹⁴³Interview with Atty. Artee Fleming, 7 December 1974.

¹⁴⁴Akron Beacon Journal, 25 February 1939.

organized attempts in order to establish their equality.

Politically, black candidates seeking public offices were just beginning to emerge, and Negro citizens unified to bring about the political power that resulted in the appointments of blacks to positions in local government.

Civically, blacks protested the racial slurs against them by engaging speakers to enlighten whites about Negroes, and they demonstrated their pride in blackness through participation in the city's first observance of the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

In terms of economic advances, more black professional people had come to the city and a variety of black businesses were in operation. There were four physicians, three dentists, five attorneys, and two additional pharmacists by the end of 1929. Both men and women had entered into business operations which included: undertakers, salespersons, barbers, musical studios, contractors and builders, hotel owners, restaurant managers, grocers, printers, beauticians, dressmakers, designers, laundry operators, nurses, real estate agents, insurance agents, caterers, decorators, bakers, millers, and typists.

To assist Negroes in their economic development, a Negro business league was formed which consisted of men in businesses and the professions.

Although some black families were making economic gains, the vast majority of Negroes could not attain any

economic progress because of the racial discrimination that prevailed. Since blacks were judged by class rather than on individual merit, Negroes were offered only the jobs that called for menial labor regardless of their educational qualifications.

Further endeavors to assist themselves economically resulted in the formation of a black finance company in order to help Negroes obtain loans. The company existed for approximately five or six years.

The social environment of Akron's Negroes encompassed cultural, athletic, religious, community and educational activities. A minute number of individuals were beginning to excel in the fields of music and sports. However, most Negroes were able to uplift themselves through their church activities, community organizations, or affiliations with civic enterprises.

Churches served in a dual capacity as places of worship and as lecture halls for orators who sought to educate audiences about the racial situation locally and nationally.

Organizations attempted to develop programs to uplift blacks; to ameliorate their social conditions, to improve their employment status; and to fight discrimination.

In regard to education, methods to educate all blacks--school-age youngsters, adults, and college

students--were being implemented. Black families were becoming increasingly cognizant of the value of an education, and concerned adults developed organizations and programs to encourage Negroes to stay in school. Since most adults had limited educations and could not attend classes, black leaders in the community attempted to educate the masses through black newspapers and through the publication of Negro yearbooks.

Limited numbers of Negroes were able to acquire a college education at this period of time, but a few families were able to send their children to institutions of higher learning. Black organizations assisted students whose families were unable to meet the expenses that attendance in college incurred.

The depression years were particularly difficult years for Akron's Negro families. Suffering under the double handicap of being black and poor, Negro residents continued to face the unenviable task of motivating their children to remain in school--to complete their education. Black churches, speakers, and organizations maintained their supportive role of aiding families in meeting that challenge.

A few more political appointments to positions in local government, an increase in business enterprises, and the implementation of church activities that strengthened family ties were among the brighter side of what was

generally a gloomy environment for Negroes.

Notwithstanding the severe hardships that they had to encounter daily, individuals continued to earn distinctions for themselves which reflected credit to their race. More black athletes were commanding attention and respect; many more Negroes were attending high school; and a few more blacks were enrolled in colleges.

Perhaps the greatest single honor that was earned locally by a Negro in the 1930s was the victory of MacNolia Cox when she placed first in the Akron area Spelling Bee. Her victory was applauded locally and by leaders in other parts of the nation

The ACCW and the NAACP became the prominent black organizations which addressed most of the problems of Negroes. The ACCW focused on programs to promote the social welfare of, employment opportunities for, and the educational progress of Negroes. The NAACP, while developing programs to further the education of blacks, stressed programs aimed toward the eradication of discrimination.

Other associations were founded which fostered social cohesiveness, enhanced cultural opportunities, and provided service to Akron's black residents.

Two civic organizations were established in the 1930s--the Negro Twenty-five Year Club and the Council of Negro Women. The Negro Twenty-five Year Club, established

for social and constructive purposes, dedicated a memorial to John Brown in Perkins Woods in 1938. The Council of Negro Women, formed from a group of neighborhood block clubs, aimed to beautify and consolidate the black community; to inspire the black community to higher levels of education; and to build black pride. Among its civic activities were the observance of National Negro Health Week; a campaign to secure funds to construct a gymnasium for Negro children, and a contest to teach black history to Negro students.

CHAPTER V

ADVANCEMENTS THROUGH EMPLOYMENT, CIVIC PRIDE, AND EDUCATION: 1940-1959

A Decade of Hope 1940-1949

Advancement Through Unity

Employment opportunities for Negroes

The racial barriers which stifled the progress of the black man were most obvious in the lack of equal opportunities for employment. Given the most degrading types of work with the lowest incomes, black Akronites became cognizant of the need to raise their standard of living by fighting for better jobs.

Early in the 1940s the Future Outlook League (F.O.L.) founded in Cleveland, Ohio by John Holly, had an active chapter operating in Akron. The purpose of the organization was to improve the Negro's position in America. Its procedures to uplift the black man, economically and socially, were implemented through affirmative action tactics to gain employment for Negroes and to increase their wages.

The F.O.L.'s activities during this period were successful in ending discrimination against Negro women at

the local telephone company. Loeb's account of those successes in Akron stated that, "A militant, young crusader, Marion Dixson, directed this group." Dixson served as chairman of the F.O.L.'s State District Conference, and Fred Eaves was president of the F.O.L.'s Akron branch in the late 1940s.¹

Another organization, the ACCW, had worked to secure jobs for blacks since its inception. However, it was able to improve its services following several important changes after twenty years of operation. In 1945 the agency underwent a metamorphosis that resulted in three major alterations in the structure of the organization and plans for a larger facility. First of all, an interracial board of trustees consisting of twenty-five members was established. Second, the agency was incorporated under a new name--the Akron Community Service Center (ACSC)--having new goals and new responsibilities. Third, staff and committee duties were realigned and personnel were added to meet the enlarged scope of the agency's programs. Finally, a building fund campaign committee was organized to set goals for the construction of a new physical facility.

Raymond R. Brown became the executive director of

¹Charles H. Loeb, The Future is Yours (Cleveland: The Future Outlook League, Inc., 1947), p. 98 and section of photographs.

the ACSC following the death of George W. Thompson. Under Brown's leadership, the agency accomplished many of its goals through its various departments, focusing on youth, industrial relations, recreation, and women's and girls' activities.²

The 1949 annual report of the ACSC detailed how that agency's Industrial Relations Department worked arduously to secure employment for Negroes.³ Through strategic procedures--group conferences, interviews, research, and correspondence--the ACSC enlisted community support to persuade employers to increase their labor efficiency by hiring competent Negro workers. Toward the decade's end, some progress had occurred, but the agency was still striving to convince the local department stores and the telephone company to hire blacks in other than menial capacities.

In addition to developing programs to persuade leaders in business and industry to change their anti-Negro hiring policies, the ACSC also developed programs to prepare blacks for jobs. By the close of the 1940s, three projects were underway which aimed to advise and inspire, recruit, and train Negroes for employment. They were

²Akron Community Service Center, "Annual Report United We Build," Akron, Ohio, 1945.

³Akron Community Service Center, "Twenty-fourth Annual Report," Akron, Ohio, 1949.

1) a vocational guidance project; 2) a pilot placement project; and 3) a nurses' training project.

In the vocational guidance project, high school students were interviewed and referred to those agencies which were equipped to address their specific needs regarding occupational data and counseling.

Since employment other than low-level jobs--regardless of Negroes' levels of education--were difficult for blacks to obtain, a pilot placement project was created. Through the project, job applications of Negro Akronites who had professional or technical training were circulated to the National Urban League (which acted as a clearing house for blacks throughout the nation). Negroes who were unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled or domestics continued to obtain employment through the ACSC's placement service.

The nurses' training project worked to enroll black women in the nurses' training programs of the local hospitals. Project efforts met with no success, but one hospital promised "consideration" of Negro applicants in the fall of 1949

On the positive side, the Akron Public Library had worked for many years to promote racial understanding in the city. The library was one of the first institutions in Akron to participate in Negro History Week activities and to welcome black youth and adults as additions to their staff.

The American Legion, John Fulton Post No. 272 had established an employment committee to work on a job drive to obtain better positions for Negroes. Their first victory occurred when in 1949 they were able to secure a job for Clarence Harris as the first Negro milk truck driver for a local milk company.⁴

Finding better jobs for blacks was also the primary concern of a political group of women--the Republican Women's Progressive Club--organized by Mrs. Sadie Smith in the early 1940s. The organization sought to uplift Negro women through the acquisition of jobs in governmental positions. Among the early members in the club were: Geraldine Fisher, Anna McMullen, Millie Hutchinson, Betty Franklin, Leona Jones, Deborah McClain, Essie Collier, Rose Culver, Emma Hale, Mary Adams, Evelyn Harris, and Anna Mae Culver.⁵

The black social environment

In terms of religious and spiritual growth, black congregations had suffered many losses during the depression years, yet each congregation persevered in its efforts to band together and support its church both spiritually and financially. The 1940s were years of

⁴Picture at the American Legion, John Fulton Post No. 272 at 65 North Summit Street, Akron, Ohio

⁵Interview with Sadie Smith, 21 March 1975, Akron, Ohio.

greater reward to black congregations as new churches formed; more stability in pastorships occurred; organizations within the churches sprouted; buildings were completed and mortgages were burned.

Black organizations continued to increase and those already established strived diligently to bring about greater equality and prosperity for their race. Most social organizations served as social outlets for Negroes, giving them an opportunity to develop leadership and to enjoy fellowship among friends.

One such organization was The Benevolent, Protective Order of Reindeer, Pride of Akron, Lodge No. 27, which was granted its charter on 1 May 1940. The next year on 16 March 1941 the women's auxiliary to that lodge, Iona Chapter No. 21, was issued its charter. The members of the organization who had attained a third degree constituted another group known as The Past Most Noble Queen's Palace, Waddell Palace No. 7. Their charter was granted on 5 July 1944.⁶

Some of the organizations, created for fellowship and humanitarian purposes, provided financial assistance or other services to the black community to advance their educational levels. Illustrative examples were the Elks organization and the American Legion, John Fulton Post

⁶Interview with Mrs. Melzola Weeks, 895 Mercer Avenue, Akron, Ohio, 13 February 1975.

No. 272.

The Elks held their annual oratorical contest and awarded financial assistance to its winners to further their educational pursuits. Among some of its winners during the period from the late 1930s through the 1940s were Robert Burton, Sterling Tucker, Ambrose Brazelton, and Kenneth Mundy. All of them advanced beyond the local level.⁷

The national contest which helped many young blacks locally, had also provided scholarship aid to prominent national figures who participated in their local oratorical contest in their youth, namely, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Farmer.⁸

The American Legion, John Fulton Post No. 272 provided services to the community through its program for civic education which sent boys to Buckeye Boys' State. As early as 1938 Martin Chapman, Ray Dove, and Thomas Raspberry represented their schools--Garfield, East, and South High Schools, respectively--at the meetings in Columbus, Ohio. Among the young students who were sent in the 1940s were Walter L. Sanders in 1947 and Earl Bruce Tate, Jr. in 1948.

The purpose of Buckeye Boys' State was to expose

⁷Interview with Mrs. Aerieal Fuller, 1316 Hardesty Boulevard, Akron, Ohio, 30 December 1974.

⁸Elks News, June 1965, p. 8.

eleventh graders to a mock government environment. A week's activities were programmed which provided the students with the opportunity to run for office, be appointed to governmental positions, and learn how the state government functioned.⁹

By the mid-1940s Negroes who were coming to settle in Akron were being received more hospitably. On 13 February 1944 a mass meeting to welcome black newcomers was scheduled to be held at Second Baptist Church under the auspices of the Negro Advisory Committee of Akron's War Manpower Commission. Mayor Slusser and representatives from labor, industry, the War Manpower's Commission, the public schools, civic, and fraternal groups were scheduled to attend the meeting. Negro churches were also to participate in the welcome through their deliverance of sermons on the topic of "welcoming newcomers."¹⁰

Nevertheless black veterans returning home from service, faced the ever-present racial hostility that existed prior to their departure. The World War II servicemen encountered problems similar to those which confronted black veterans returning from any of America's previous wars. As early as 1917 a letter to the editor defending Negroes stated.

⁹Interview with Martin O. Chapman, Akron, Ohio, 9 March 1975.

¹⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 12 March 1944.

It is needless to recount the part played by the negro in building the American history, for every man and woman knows that upon the fields of every war in defense of American liberty, the negro has bared his bosom to the raking storm of shot and shell and that he has enjoyed that liberty, gained only by drenching battlefields with his sacred blood, less than any alien that has pressed the sod of American soil.¹¹

Similar remarks were echoed in the press several years later when an Akron Negro protested:

In world war you gave me a chance and a good one. You taught me that I was an American citizen and that the enemy's shot and shell were made for me just as much for you. Yes, it was very good of you, of course, because you put my dug-out just as close to the firing line as you did yours. But it is a shame to push me back at home now. . . .¹²

Twenty-five years later black veterans still met inequality when they returned home. The discrimination in employment; the segregation in housing; and the racially-biased treatment throughout the city permeated the environments in which blacks survived.

Advancement through civic enterprises

Housing was a particular concern of Akron's black residents for they were forced to reside in the city's worst districts. Although the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority, established in 1938, was created to assist the community in slum clearance projects, it met many obstacles before its plans could be realized. As Grismer

¹¹Ibid., 29 May 1917.

¹²Ibid., 27 November 1924.

has noted.

From its inception, the Authority encountered bitter opposition. A group of Akron real estate dealers, spurred on by owners of substandard homes occupied by Negroes and poor whites, did everything within their power to prevent any slum clearance projects from being started. They insisted that the project would create a housing surplus and depress real estate values, and they branded the proposal as "socialistic."¹³

Grismer described the fight which the Authority had before succeeding with its plans to build its first project--a housing development just east of the North Hill viaduct. He stated:

This district, covered with dilapidated houses was inhabited mostly by Negroes and had long been notorious as a breeding place for crime and disease. Akron civic leaders had talked for many years about doing something to improve conditions there--but all they did was talk.

The Authority on the other hand, got action. Properties along North and Spring Streets were condemned and razed, and on April 10, 1940, work was started on Elizabeth Park Homes. . . . James Miller, one of Akron's most respected Negroes, was made manager of the homes. Under his direction the project became a model development.¹⁴

Negroes had been adamant in their objections to living in criminal surroundings. Thus, in the fall of 1941, a series of meetings, sponsored by various colored groups in Akron, were held to protest vice conditions in black communities.¹⁵

¹³Grismer, Akron and Summit, p. 511.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 511-12.

¹⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 23 October 1941.

The Akron Council of Negro Women was conscious of the serious problem of inadequate housing for blacks and in 1941 acquired an eleven-room house at 369 Wooster Avenue in order to provide a residence for black working girls. The council had no outside financial aid in purchasing the property and planned to continue its maintenance through voluntary personal donations. The home was administered similar to that of the YWCA residence, having definite rules and a house mother.

The members of the organization firmly believed in the doctrine of self-help and their motto was "Lift as we climb." Mrs. T. M. Fletcher was the organization's first president and served two years in that capacity.

Mrs. Mary Eagle, chief organizer of the council, was president of the organization at the time that the home was obtained. Other officers at that time included: Mrs. Pearl Christian, first vice-president, Mrs. Belle Williamson, second vice-president; Mrs. Ethel Ashby, secretary; and Mrs. Mary Powell, treasurer. Trustees were Mrs. Eva Perrin, Mrs. A. J. Terrell, Mrs. Frank Scruggs, Mrs. Carmen Jackson, Mrs. Lela Taylor, Mrs. Georgia Bush, Mrs. Florence Minson, and Mrs. Eula Goban.¹⁶

A few years later, the association attempted to curb juvenile delinquency among Negro youth. Two

¹⁶Ibid., 25 May 1941.

recreation projects for black children were planned by the council at the organization's home. a playground for smaller children, to be directed by staff members of the city's Recreation Department, and a soda bar and recreation room in the home's remodeled basement, for the use of older children. The funds for the projects were made possible through a five hundred dollar gift from an anonymous donor and a one hundred dollar donation from the American Legion, John Fulton Post No. 272.¹⁷

By the late 1940s the housing problem of Akron's black population had become very acute. The ACSC reported that:

More than 12,000 new Negro citizens have come to Akron since 1940, swelling the race population to over 25,000. Only 75 new homes have been built and occupied by Negroes during that period, although about 3,000 houses of all kinds have been purchased.¹⁸

Although the NAACP had fought bigotry in all areas under Sam Shepard's direction at the close of the 1930s, the organization focused its battle against police brutality and discrimination in housing throughout Leon Gordie's administration in the 1940s.¹⁹

Civic enterprises to educate Negroes through publications involved two undertakings: A Negro directory and

¹⁷Ibid., 14 May 1944.

¹⁸Akron Community Service Center, "Annual Report for 1947," Akron, Ohio 1947.

¹⁹NAACP, "Freedom Fund Program," 1974.

a Negro newspaper.

The Akron Negro Directory, published in 1940, provided Akron's citizens with diverse information on the city's black population. Somewhat similar to the city's annual directory, it listed Akron's black residents, their occupations, and place and length of residence. Statistics concerning Akron's Negro citizens included their tax assessment; their annual expenditures; the number of Negroes who were registered voters; and the number of Negroes on relief, on WPA, in private industry, etc. The black businesses, lodges, and organizations were also listed.²⁰

The need for a black newspaper to inform the black citizens of events which were pertinent to their lives motivated a small group of World War II veterans to begin publication of the Akron Informer, late in 1946. Those eventually involved in its publication were Dumas Adams, Ben Works, Elvin Brown, Willie Simmons, and Jimmy Black.

One year later, Samuel R. Shepard took over publication of the eight-page tabloid. Although he catered more to high school students, and organized a press club among high school girls, reporters were both university and high school students. Coverage included national and local news, church and club activities, editorials and a

²⁰Kingsberry, Akron Negro, pp. 1-128 passim.

gossip column. Circulation was approximately two thousand and newsboys and newsgirls sold the paper weekly.²¹

Individual Accomplishments

Black Akronites had been engaged in many pursuits--civic, cultural, athletic, political, educational, and philanthropic--throughout their history. Their significant deeds were often accomplished in the face of intolerable treatment yet they contributed notably to their race and mankind in general. Some of the individual attainments and the interest which they pursued during the 1940s will be documented herein.

A black philanthropist

One of Akron's Negro philanthropists who bequeathed the city a large sum of money was George Stevens. Born to parents who settled in Akron in 1857 after fleeing from slavery, Stevens was a fair-complexioned Negro who was easily mistaken for Caucasian. In his childhood years, Stevens was a playmate of C. W. Seiberling and they sailed boats on the Ohio Canal. Later in his life, he attended Buchtel College, but dropped out of school because of financial problems. He began working in a stove company, became acquainted with O. C. Barber, and subsequently worked for him as an engineer in his Strawboard Company. By age

²¹"Black Newspapers," Akron Public Library, Akron, Ohio.

thirty-five, Stevens was fire chief in Barberton's Fire Department.

Stevens began passing for white and as the years passed, he settled in Hartford, Indiana where he took a position with the Fort Wayne Corrugated Paper Company. Living in a hotel room for forty-nine years, his life style became very reserved and equally private.

He gradually amassed a fortune and was noted for his benevolences to various Negro funds. When he expired in 1940, at eighty years of age, he was Hartford's wealthiest citizen.

A delegation of Hartford's richest residents traveled to Akron's Billow Chapel to pay their final respects to Stevens. It was only after the funeral that they learned--to their great dismay--that the Negro members in attendance were members of Steven's family.²²

Hartford's richest citizen left a sizable amount of money in a trust fund in Akron. Steven's will specified that the income from the fund was to be divided among various members of his family during their lifetimes. Following their deaths, the money was to be utilized, through the Akron Foundation.

. . . to aid and assist charitable and educational institutions, to promote the health, happiness, comfort, progress, and morals of Akron's people, to

²²Akron Beacon Journal, 23 October 1973, p. B1.

minister to human wants and needs; and to alleviate suffering of persons unable to care for themselves.²³

Black educators and
black college students

In the year 1940 the Akron Board of Education hired its first black teacher, Herbert R. Bracken. Among its other outstanding civic contributions, the Council of Negro Women is credited with being successful in its attempts to have Bracken hired.²⁴

The outstanding educator had distinguished himself while still a student at the University of Akron when he won the Ohio Intercollegiate Oratorical Contest in 1938-39 and went on to place second nationally. According to Knepper:

His topic "The Economic Color Line" reflected certain problems of the Negro community of which he was a part. As the first Akron winner since "Bob" Tucker in 1890, Bracken was honored at a student assembly where he received the praise and commendations of his fellow students and President Simmons.²⁵

Education had always been important in Bracken's family, and he used to walk six miles a day to elementary school and later, ten miles round trip to acquire a high school education. He commuted by train forty miles a day to complete two years at Tennessee Agricultural and

²³Ibid., 11 April 1940.

²⁴Ibid., 25 May 1941.

²⁵Knepper, New Lamps, p. 235.

Industrial College, for he believed the message his grandfather had instilled in him, "Get your education. It's the one thing nobody can take away from you."²⁶

Bracken taught elementary school and had been a former principal in the South before coming to Akron and working at Firestone Tire and Rubber Company as a janitor.

During his professional career in Akron, other assignments included teaching at East High School and Akron Night High School. Chosen in 1970 to present the commencement address at East High School, he received a standing ovation.²⁷

The next black educator who was appointed during the 1940s was John Ervin, who taught at Howe School. A few years later Mary Kate Moore joined the public school staff in 1945. She was the first black woman teacher, and she taught music at Leggett and Miller Schools.²⁸

The efforts of the ACSC and the Frontier Club were reported as being influential in getting Negro teachers hired during 1947.²⁹ That year Wallace Berry, Wilma Gowens, Abbie Willacy, and Martin Chapman joined the

²⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 20 February 1966, p. H3.

²⁷"History of Bezaleel Consistory No 15," A.A.S.R., 1906-1971, n.p., p. 133.

²⁸Cleveland Call and Post, 29 September 1945.

²⁹Akron Community and Service Center, "Annual Report, 1947."

public school staff. Chapman, assigned to teach physical education at Bryan School, became Akron's first black coach when he assumed the position of assistant football coach to "Mike" Krino at East High School that same year.³⁰

It was also in 1947 that Esther Spruill, a black teacher, pioneered in the area of preschool education when she opened a day care center on Perkins Street. According to a 1973 news account, day care was virtually unknown among blacks during the 1940s, and Mrs. Spruill had difficulty in finding children whose parents would enroll them. Unaware of the benefits of day care service, it was the practice of working mothers to leave their children with relatives or neighbors. Thus, Mrs. Spruill closed her business after a short time and taught in the public school system. Eleven years later she resigned from the public schools, and when she opened a day care center--Cupid's Nursery School--some Akronites wishing her services had to be placed on a waiting list. Many people consider her to be the "mother of Akron day care."³¹

Increasing numbers of black students were seeking a means to go to college during this period. Struggling black youth not only received financial assistance from some of the black organizations, but the Knight Memorial

³⁰Interview with Martin Chapman, 9 March 1975.

³¹Akron Beacon Journal, 13 May 1973, pp. H1, H6.

Educational Fund also enabled a few blacks to pursue college degrees.

The fund was established in 1940 by John S. Knight, president and editor of the Akron Beacon Journal, as a memorial to his father, C. L. Knight, a noted Ohio editor. The purpose of the fund was to aid needy young persons with special aptitudes to obtain an education. It embraced all fields of education, the arts, sciences, and professions.

Two Negroes--Jessie Kirk [Jessica Brazil] and Robert Burton were among the first of the twenty-eight recipients to be assisted. Mrs. Kirk, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mathew Brazil, was born in Akron and graduated from West High School prior to attending Wilberforce University for two years as a music major. She had been studying voice on a scholarship in New York City and planned to enter the Cleveland Institute of Music in the fall of 1940.

Robert L. Burton was one of eight children of Mrs. Vivian Burton. Although his mother was financially pressed, she was education-minded and determined that all of her children would go to college. Three of her eight children were in college by 1940

Burton had graduated from South High School and the University of Akron and planned to enter Meharry Medical College at Nashville, Tennessee. He was able to complete his undergraduate work with the assistance of his mother,

the National Youth Administration (NYA) and odd jobs.¹² (Burton's brother Johnathan received a Knight scholarship in 1952 which enabled him to pursue a medical degree at Northwestern University.)¹³

About two weeks after Mrs. Kirk and Burton had been awarded scholarships, the Mary Exalted Temple No. 95 and the I.B.P.O.E. of W., Rubber City Lodge No. 233 sponsored a parting reception in their honor. The Rubber City Lodge No. 233 had also provided funds to assist Burton when he pursued his undergraduate degree at the University of Akron.¹⁴ Mrs. Kirk and Burton also were Knight scholarship recipients in 1941 and 1942.

As more black students realized the importance of education, they aspired to become better students and to demonstrate their abilities. Thus, other deserving Akron blacks received Knight scholarship assistance during the 1940s. Their names, fields of interest, and choice of colleges follow Etta Beatrice Kimball (a 1939 South High School graduate), undergraduate work at Talledega College, Percy Fleming (West High School graduate, valedictorian, and womanhood cup winner), journalism at Howard University, Lucimarian Tolliver, social administration at Howard

¹²Ibid., 1 September 1940.

¹³Ibid., 20 January 1952.

¹⁴Ibid., 12 September 1940.

University; Spurgeon Moore, music major at the University of Akron; Julia Perry, music major at Westminster Choir College; Mary Kate Moore, music education at Columbia University, James Carter, art major at Western Reserve University, Normal Purnell, pre-law courses at Ohio State University, and Paula Sanders, psychiatric social work at the University of Minnesota.

Most black Akronites left the city to pursue their education and/or to practice their profession. Only a few attended the University of Akron, for as Knepper has indicated:

Not until World War II brought a large Negro migration to Akron, and the G.I. Bill provided funds for schooling, did the campus have a substantial number of Negro students.³⁶

Black musicians

In the field of music, the talents of a few black Akronites received national fame. Two who received such recognition were Jessica Brazil and Julia Perry.

Miss Brazil, a Negro soprano, began her musical career as a soloist, choir director, and pianist at the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Akron, Ohio. During her studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music under the direction of Mme. Nevada Van Der Veer, Miss Brazil had the

³⁵Ibid., 22 June 1941; 31 May, 11 October 1942; 6 October 1946, 14 September 1947.

³⁶Knepper, New Lamps, pp. 233-34.

honor of singing for Marian Anderson--the famous Negro contralto--at a reception given in Miss Anderson's honor.³⁷

National stardom was achieved when Miss Brazil appeared on Broadway in Carmen Jones.³⁸ Singled out in preference to competitors from all over the world, she was chosen to star in the role of Frankie, the fortune teller. The talented soprano also made recordings for Decca Records and appeared with Deems Taylor and Ginny Simms on an NBC Radio Hall of Fame broadcast.³⁹

So outstanding was her performance in Carmen Jones that in 1973, Miss Brazil was selected as a part of a world-wide survey and requested to send a resume, photographs of herself in the play, etc., to the University of Michigan to become a part of a permanent "Collection of Black Artists" at the university.⁴⁰

Julia Perry, a Negro composer, gained her love of music from her two older sisters who were both talented musicians. She began her serious study of music in Akron during her high school years and began to excel in several

³⁷"Souvenir Program of the Youngstown Symphony Orchestra, Seventeenth Season, 1942-43, Third Program," Youngstown, Ohio, 10 December 1942.

³⁸Kyle Chricton, "Carmen Jones," Colliers Magazine, 15 January 1944, p. 15.

³⁹The Akron Buchtelite, 17 October 1950.

⁴⁰Eva Jessye to Jessica Woods, Ann Arbor, 2 January 1973, Personal Files of Jessica Woods, Akron, Ohio.

competitions. Early in high school, she won a superior rating in violin and voice in a regional contest held at Wooster College in Ohio. By her senior year, she had won a scholarship to Cleveland Institute of Music, but declined the honor and attended the University of Akron for one year.

Miss Perry studied at the Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, toured with the choir, and sang frequently in New York's Carnegie Hall. Her first composition, a spiritual entitled "Lord, What Shall I Do?" was planned to be featured by Nan Merriman of the Metropolitan Opera Company and the Negro soprano, Ellabelle Davis, in their concert appearances.⁴¹

Black persons in government

In the political field minimal changes had occurred as only a few more blacks were given opportunities to fill governmental positions. One who advanced politically was Emmer Lancaster, who left Akron in 1940 to accept an important federal government position as Advisor on Negro Affairs to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

At the local level a few more Negro patrolmen were hired during the 1940s, namely, Callie McCombs, James Craig, Nathan Martin, Archie Bullock, and Joe Thomas.

⁴¹Christian Science Monitor, 4 August 1949.

As one of Summit County's deputy sheriffs, Amos Forman received training in the FBI's fingerprinting school and became an expert in the field. He has been credited with the development of Summit County's fingerprint department. In 1944 he became head of the Bureau of Identification for the Summit County Sheriff's Office, directing that department until his retirement.²

An Akron Informer article said of his expertise:

. . . Forman is in complete charge of this department and is a recognized authority in the science of dactyloscopy and has a rating of a captain in the criminal division.³

Perhaps one of the most important political appointments of a Negro to a position at the local level of government occurred in 1947 when Atty. Luther R. Johnson, Jr. became the first Negro assistant law director. Johnson had been active in the community for a number of years serving in positions of leadership civically, politically, and in the local unions. A testimonial banquet was given to honor him on 27 January 1948.

Testimonials included those of Roy E. Browne, Akron's law director; Atty. Alexander Russell, the regional director of the National Bar Association; presentation of token by George Milliron, president of Goodyear

²Cleveland Call and Post, 7 July 1956, 21 September 1946.

³Akron Informer, 16 October 1948

Local; and George R. Bass, president of Goodrich Local No. 5, URW-CIO. W. O. Walker, editor of the Cleveland Call and Post, presented the address.⁴⁴

Akron's first black nurse

Although racial discrimination existed in the city's hospitals and black and white patients were not permitted to share the same rooms, a major breakthrough toward the gradual elimination of the hospitals' discriminatory policies occurred in the mid-1940s when Martha Averett became the first Negro nurse to work in any of Akron's hospitals. She joined the staff of Akron City Hospital in 1946, being promoted to a position of a supervising nurse--in charge of an entire floor--nearly ten years later.⁴⁵

The stamina and aspirations that Mrs. Averett possessed as she grew up in the ghettos of Washington, D.C.; the determination she demonstrated as she worked to acquire an education, and the competence that she exhibited when she became the first Negro nurse in an Akron hospital were only a part of the attributes of her character. Since becoming an invalid in 1959, she has continued to improve conditions for Akron's citizens and in 1974, she

⁴⁴"Souvenir Program of the Testimonial Banquet Honoring Luther R. Johnson," Akron, Ohio, 1948.

⁴⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 29 May 1966, p. B3.

received the governor's Community Action Award.⁴⁶

Other interests and pursuits

The versatility of Akron's black population and the breadth of their interests has been reflected in many ways, i.e., through culture, athletics, politics, education, religion, etc. However, three of Akron's Negro residents--Margaret McClain, Herman Poole, and Opie Evans--have pursued interests that have brought them hours of pleasure and gratification and have simultaneously contributed to the knowledge of others.

Early in the 1940s Margaret McClain took an interest in genealogy and began to trace her lineage while awaiting the arrival of her firstborn.⁴⁷ She had known a part of her heritage for a number of years and had taken particular pride in that heritage. Her great grandfather, Peter Bruner, had been a former slave, and he later served in the Civil War.

Bruner, who could neither read nor write anything except his name, dictated the story of his life as a slave to his fourteen-year-old daughter, Carrie, Mrs. McClain's grandmother, and his adventures were later printed in a

⁴⁶The (Akron) Reporter, 19 October - 26 October 1974.

⁴⁷A copy of the genealogy of Margaret McClain's family appears in appendix 5.

book in 1938.¹¹

In the introduction of his book, which Bruner dedicated to his children and grandchildren, he stated.

In this book I have given the actual experiences of my own life. I thought in putting it in this form it might be of some inspiration to struggling men and women.

In this great, free land of ours, every person, no matter how humble or great seems the handicap, by industry and savings, can reach a position of independence, and be of service to mankind.¹²

In the fall of 1941 Herman Poole, a brilliant Negro inventor, utilized his spare time for a period of three months to build a motorized scooter which he called a "frictionomatic" vehicle. Poole, employed in the janitor service of General Tire and Rubber Company, developed the motorbike from an assortment of odd parts which included the following: a frame from a water pipe, a motor from a twenty-year-old motor; a gas tank from a portion of an auto air horn; fenders from a 1936 spare tire cover; the clutch throw-out from an auto, and an exhaust pipe from the handle of an old sweeper.

The mechanics of the scooter were also very unique. The clutch and brake worked on the same drum (clutch on the inside and brake on the outside); pressure on the foot pedal automatically released the clutch and applied the

¹¹Interview with Margaret McClain, 1161 Smithfarm Avenue, Akron, Ohio, 29 December 1974.

¹²Peter Bruner, A Slave's Adventures Toward Freedom (Oxford: n.p., 1938).

brakes; and the vehicle had no transmission. The machine could travel twenty-five miles per hour and ran one hundred miles to a gallon of gas.⁵⁰

Poole called his motorbike "Herpo"--taken from the combination of the first part of his first and last names. An article about his vehicle also appeared in an issue of General-ly Speaking which was circulated to England and South America.⁵¹

Opie Evans, who has been the first member of his race to pioneer many ventures in Akron, became the first Negro projectionist in the city when he was named as projectionist for the Ritz Theater.⁵² One year prior Evans had filmed the first news televised from Akron, a \$250,000 fire in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. His pictures were used as a headline on the 8 00 P.M news broadcast at the WEWS television station in Cleveland, Ohio.⁵³

Evans also was the first Negro to read commercials on an Akron radio station. In the mid-1940s, a program broadcast on radio station WJW featured a black gospel quartet. Evans was the master of ceremonies and read the announcements and commercial advertisements for the

⁵⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 16 November 1941, p. D10.

⁵¹Interview with Herman Poole, 1345 Chippewa Avenue, Akron, Ohio, 10 March 1975

⁵²Akron Informer, 16 April 1949.

⁵³Pittsburgh Courier, 21 February 1948.

program.⁵⁴

Accomplishments within families

Other individual attainments occurred within families in the 1940s. Members of the Moore family were embarking on noteworthy careers or individual pursuits and members of the Robinson family made history in the city's Spelling Bees.

In 1942 Mrs. Bertha Moore founded a Democratic political organization, the Tea Time Study Club, in order to assist Negroes to grow politically, to get Negroes elected to governmental offices, and to make blacks more conscious of the city's government.

The name of the organization has an interesting background. Mrs. Moore, an ardent civic worker, reflected one day upon the plight of black Americans having no representation in their local government, and she paralleled their circumstances with those of the Americans prior to the Revolutionary War. She recalled that the Boston Tea Party had aroused the English and made them aware of the gravity of the American's sentiments. She felt that Negroes too needed to "dump some tea." She also believed that it was important to study the conditions that would effect Negroes lives if certain politicians

⁵⁴ Interview with Opie Evans, Akron, Ohio, 24 March 1975.

were elected. Therefore, she named the organization, which she founded, The Tea Time Study Club.⁵⁵

Some of the early members of the organization were: Clara Cornell, America L. Perry, Mattie Chapman, Annie Easley, and Alice Johnston.

Although Mrs Moore was active in civic and political affairs she, with her husband, Dalmas, had reared three children and provided them with musical backgrounds. Their eldest child, Spurgeon, had graduated from Central High School and was enrolled at the University of Akron, majoring in music early in the 1940s. He was also very active in community affairs, participating in Negro History Week activities and directing the thirty-five voice junior choir of Second Baptist Church.⁵⁶ Moore enlisted in the army in 1943 and completed his military career in 1966, being discharged with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Their daughter, Mary Kate Moore, graduated from Central High School and the University of Akron, serving as accompanist for the choral group and orchestra at the latter institution.⁵⁷ She enrolled at Columbia University to pursue graduate work in the field of music and

⁵⁵Interview with Bertha Moore, 327 Spicer Street, Akron, Ohio, 30 December 1974

⁵⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 7 February 1943

⁵⁷Cleveland Call and Post, 29 September 1945.

subsequently was a featured artist with the Langston University A Cappella Choir at Langston, Oklahoma, where she taught for five years.⁵⁸

Kermit Moore, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Dalmás Moore, was a brilliant cellist early in his life. At age fifteen, he was first cellist for the University of Akron, and he had won a full course scholarship to the Cleveland Institute of Music when only eighteen years old. In 1947, a John Hancock Scholarship enabled him to advance his study at Tanglewood under Dr. Serge Koussevitsky, the great cellist and conductor. An award from the Boston Symphony Orchestra provided him the opportunity to study an additional year at Tanglewood.⁵⁹

The members of the Robinson family who made history in the Akron area Spelling Bees were three sisters--Faith, Shirla, and Sheila--daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Dumas Robinson.

Representing Seiberling School, Faith Robinson, a thirteen-year-old eighth grader, became the second Negro to win an Akron area Spelling Bee when she won the WAKR spelling title in 1947.⁶⁰ Although she received a trip to

⁵⁸"Moore in Concert," University of Akron, Akron, Ohio, 31 July 1955.

⁵⁹Dick Campbell Concerts, "Kermit Moore, Cellist," New York, n.d.

⁶⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 20 April 1947, p. A1.

Washington, the winner of that contest did not participate in the National Spelling Bee.

The little champion had participated in the Beacon Journal Spelling Bee the year prior and had won the hearts of the audience. An account of the 1946 Spelling Bee noted:

She was hardly tall enough to reach the microphone and had to stand on her tiptoes. When she went down on the word panacea, audible sighs of regret were heard throughout the auditorium.⁶¹

Almost a week after Faith had won the WAKR spelling crown, all three Robinson sisters were among the thirty-four youngsters in the Beacon Journal Spelling Bee.

According to a 1947 news article:

For the first time in the 20-year history of the bee, three sisters were finalists. Faith Robinson and her twin sisters, Sheila and Shirla, of Seiberling School were enthusiastically acclaimed by the audience.⁶²

One year after Faith's victory, Sheila and Shirla appeared on the Akron Armory's stage in the twenty-first Beacon Journal spelldown. Of the thirty-seven participants, Shirla placed second and her twin sister, Sheila, finished tenth.⁶³

⁶¹Ibid., 1 May 1946.

⁶²Ibid., 26 April 1947.

⁶³Ibid., 10 April 1948.

A Decade of Change 1950-1959

Background Information

Early in the 1950s patterns of overt discrimination were evident in housing, employment, medical services, and public accommodations. Although the Negro population had increased nearly 100 percent from 1940 to 1950 (26,510 in 1950), available rental properties were minimal. The prohibitive factors of stiff credit restrictions and limited listings imposed barriers which prevented blacks from buying in particular areas of the city.

Opportunities for improved employment status were just beginning to be extended, and only then under pressure from black organizations and well-intended, determined white citizens. With the exception of the local telephone company, there were no opportunities for Negroes in utility companies, trucking firms, or mass transportation. One cab company hired Negro drivers.

In the rubber industries, blacks had not yet attained white collar jobs, but they were beginning to be elevated to a few positions other than janitorial and menial jobs. Institutions for banking and finances, as well as real estate and insurance companies, did not employ blacks in any capacities other than custodial laborers.

In terms of educational, cultural, and municipal government, the racial hiring practices varied. Black

teachers constituted approximately 1 percent of the educators in the public school system, the public library exercised a policy of hiring regardless of race; and radio stations practiced merit employment. (They also provided time for discussion of race relations.)

The majority of the city's governmental departments did not employ Negroes, and only seven of the city's 257 policemen were black. No Negro nurses were hired as public health nurses.

Other indicants of discriminatory policies were the fact that all hotels except one discouraged Negro patronage; and two of the city's seven cemeteries refused Negro burials.⁶⁶

Black Progress

Organizational efforts to effect changes

On 1 May 1950 the ACSC began its operations in a new facility at 250 East Market Street (current site of the agency). The new building, designed to serve the community through more extensive programs, housed a larger staff as well. Diverse departments met the various needs of the Negro community, and throughout the decade, particular emphasis was placed upon increasing employment opportunities for blacks.

⁶⁶Ibid., 8 November 1952.

In order to realize changes in hiring practices, the ACSC, through its Industrial Relations Department, surveyed and studied problems; educated leaders who were in policy-making positions of business, industry, and government; and enlisted the cooperation and support of the local schools.

By 1951 the ACSC had identified three specific economic problems which the Negro community encountered.

1) inadequate job opportunities for women above the domestic service level; 2) lack of opportunities for apprenticeship training in the skilled craft trades; and 3) insufficient white collar and office positions for young Negro men and women.⁶⁵

Massive educational programs through negotiations, institutes, and workshops, were conducted throughout the 1950s. The annual reports of the ACSC revealed the following procedures were implemented by the agency's Industrial Relations Department in order to obtain jobs.⁶⁶

In 1951 a committee worked to establish the

⁶⁵Akron Community Service Center, "Annual Report: For the Record," Akron, Ohio, 1951.

⁶⁶See Akron Community Service Center "Annual Report For the Record," 1951; "Annual Report: In the Center of Progress," 1952; "Annual Report: Pulling Together," 1953, "Annual Report, Thirty Years of Inter-racial Progress in Akron," 1954; "Annual Report," 1955, "Annual Report. Open to All," 1956, "Annual Report: The Future Is . . .," 1957, "Annual Report Strengthening the Family for Opportunities," 1958, Akron, Ohio.

opportunity for Negro medical graduates to intern at the local hospitals. In the fall of that same year, the agency sponsored an Industrial Relations Institute which made possible

for the first time in the history of this community, for management representatives to get together in a series of meetings designed specifically for probing factors perpetuating racial barriers in employment.⁶⁷

Three years later the ACSC was involved with negotiations to open the way for Negro employment in public transportation; distributed vocational handbooks to churches and schools; and presented occupational displays at the agency and in the Akron Public Library. A special guidance service for high ability boys was instituted in 1955. Recognition of the need for vocational preparation led to the formation of the Junior Frontiers Club--a career club project for junior high school boys. The club was created through the cooperative efforts of the ACSC and Akron Frontiers Club.

By 1957 the agency began a deliberate talent search among high school students to give them special vocational counseling. Eighty-three field visits to inform school administrators and counselors of the rapidly increasing opportunities for black Americans reflected the ACSC's concern and efforts to help black youth.

⁶⁷Akron Community Service Center, "For the Record," 1951.

During the next two years the agency continued its institutes and workshops, formed a Tomorrow's Scientists and Technicians Project for senior high school boys and girls, and prepared a series of pictorial briefs on Akron's Negroes whose success in diverse occupations was little known. The brochure, entitled They Prepared, was officially presented to the Akron Public Schools in 1958 by the ACSC's president of the board, Dr. M. E. Farris.

At a time when negotiations were frequently and consistently met by outright refusals and recalcitrance, the agency's accomplishments were major breakthroughs. By 1951 Negro nurses were accepted as trainees in one of Akron's hospitals, two black graduate nurses were working in that hospital, and Negroes were employed as telephone operators at the local telephone company. Through the assistance of the Akron Frontiers Club and the Employment Service, the ACSC was able to set the stage for the employment of two maintenance electricians at a rubber factory. They were the first Negroes to be hired by that firm in ten years.

A major victory occurred when Negro sales clerks were hired in the department stores after three years of effort by an interracial committee headed by Dr. Noble S. Elderkin, retired minister of First Congregational Church.

In the next three years more advancements were made as Negroes were employed as clerks in retail groceries,

variety stores and offices. For the first time rubber industries hired and started to train Negroes for managerial and technical employment, and a black research chemist worked with one of Akron's rubber firms. All of the local hospitals had accepted Negro nurses and nurse trainees; a large store and two hospitals hired Negro pharmacists; and two major department stores employed four permanent sales clerks.

From the mid-1950s to the close of the decade, other occupational advancements for Negroes included: the opening of stenotype training to blacks; the employment of a Negro as a toll collector (by the Turnpike Commission); the hiring of a receptionist (at a major rubber company); the employment of a meat inspector (for the city of Akron); the placement of a typist and a stenographer (each employed as the first Negro in a business office).

In 1956 the Akron Transportation Company employed the first Negro bus driver, and by 1957 two other utility companies hired Negroes above the level of porter or laborer. Four Negro women were clerks at the Ohio Edison Co., and Negro men worked on construction and repairs for the East Ohio Gas Company. In addition, two of the major rubber manufacturers employed their first Negro secretaries.

The ACSC had worked diligently to revolutionize the thinking of Akron area employers and to meet the challenge

of Dr. Eli Ginzberg's message.

For the Negro population to be able to compete on an equal basis for professional, scientific, managerial, skilled, and other desirable jobs will require a revolution in all levels of Negro education, and beyond this, in the values and aspirations, the living conditions, and the community environments of large groups in the Negro population. All of this in turn depends in large part on opportunities of Negroes to earn larger incomes.⁶⁶

The leadership provided by Raymond R. Brown, executive director of the ACSC, and his competent staff encouraged Negroes to aspire to higher levels and fostered improved race relations. Brown also served the community in other capacities during the 1950s. He was president of the Adult Education Council and a board member of the Akron Public Library. In 1957 Brown became the first Negro to be named to the library's board.⁶⁷

One other concern of the ACSC involved adequate housing. In 1951 the ACSC's annual report stated that a "positive factor in race relations in Akron has been the integrated neighborhood found throughout the city, thus making for better understanding on both the adult and youth levels."⁷⁰ Five short years later the agency's Annual report noted that many of Akron's Negroes had moved

⁶⁶Eli Ginzberg, The Negro Potential, quoted in Akron Community Service Center, "The Future Is . . .," 1957.

⁶⁷Cleveland Call and Post, 23 November 1957.

⁷⁰Akron Community Service Center, "For the Record," 1951.

to the southwest section of the city and that the majority were buying homes built in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷¹

Perhaps some of the integrated housing patterns evident in the early 1950s were due in part to the NAACP's fight against discrimination in housing during the prior decade. In the 1950s the NAACP investigated segregation in semi-private accommodations in local hospitals and bigotry in other areas, but needing finances to maintain and enlarge its operations, the organization directed some of its efforts toward the creation of fund raising activities.

During the years from 1950 to 1959, the association had several presidents, namely, Rev. U. S. Munnerlyn, Atty. Samuel Dashiell, Mrs. Esther Spruill (the first woman to be president), Rev. William C. Upshaw, Dr. Wilfred B. Bozeman, Jr., and Willis Shaw.

Rev. Mr. Munnerlyn's tenure witnessed the formation of two important fund raising committees--the freedom fund committee and the life membership committee. During Mrs. Spruill's term of office she directed untiring efforts toward terminating alleged segregation in schools, police brutality, and segregated swimming pools. The organization also acquired its first office at 22½ West Market Street under Mrs. Spruill's leadership.

⁷¹Akron Community Service Center, "Open to All," 1956.

The first freedom fund dinner was held during Rev. Mr. Upshaw's presidency. The occasion came to be an annual event and the major fund raising project of the local branch.

The inception of a third fund raising program, fashion fairs--which brought celebrated models to Akron--occurred during Dr. Wilfred B. Bozeman, Jr.'s tenure. The famous model, Marguerite Bellafonte, came to Akron to present a fashion show while Willis Shaw presided over the organization.⁷² In terms of fighting racial prejudice, both Bozeman and Shaw directed their attention to alleged segregation in the schools.⁷³

The black political organizations, active in the 1940s, persisted in their attempts to gain more representation in local government through employment of Negroes and appointment of blacks to decision-making positions. Two Democratic organizations, the Tea Time Study Club and the Tiretown Democrats, were instrumental in the placement of Negroes in supervisory and clerical positions in governmental offices and as meter readers in the Municipal Water Department. A Republican organization, the Women's Progressive Club, was also effective in obtaining jobs for women, generally as clerical workers in governmental

⁷²Interview with Mary Holmes, 4 January 1975.

⁷³NAACP, "Freedom Fund Program," 1974.

positions.

Blacks were becoming increasingly aware of political power; were working in the booths during elections; and were succeeding in having black candidates elected or appointed to office. In 1954 Atty. Rufus Thompson became the assistant law director. Three years later Edward Davis set a precedent when he was the first Negro to be elected to Akron's city council. He began serving as third ward councilman in January 1958. Davis became president of city council in January 1970 and currently serves in that capacity.

Akron's black churches

Akron's Negro churches continued to grow both in members and in the number of new churches. Some were integrated churches, but most were totally or predominantly black. Typically, the black churches expanded the scope of their activities to include: total family programs, building improvements, fund raising projects, and civic pursuits. New organizations within the church were formed to foster fellowship or to improve efficiency in the administrative operations of the church.

Two ministers who provided leadership both to their churches and the black community arrived in Akron during the 1950s. Rev. William C. Upshaw accepted the call to pastor Antioch Baptist Church on 3 December 1950, after

the death of the former pastor, Rev. Mr. Bluntt, and Rev. Eugene E. Morgan, Jr. came in 1953 to pastor Wesley Temple AME Zion Church.

One of Rev. Dr. Upshaw's first jobs was to lay the cornerstone to honor Rev. Mr. Bluntt as builder of the church. The latter pastor had died suddenly, three week's prior to the churches' completion. Rev. Dr. Upshaw worked right alongside of his congregation to complete the church building and to beautify it. Multiple building improvements were made and an abounding fellowship developed. The devoted pastor has served his congregation faithfully and has inspired them to attain higher heights. He instituted a program of religious education to make his members better informed about the Baptist church and their Christian responsibilities.⁷⁴

At Wesley Temple AME Church, Rev. Dr. Morgan provided the type of leadership which met the needs of his total congregation. By the close of the decade he had developed programs to serve the youth, instituted the Cathedral Choir for young adults--primarily young married couples, and formulated plans for a Christian Education Building.⁷⁵

In 1951 St. Philips Episcopal Church--the only

⁷⁴"Program of Antioch Baptist," 1962.

⁷⁵Wesley Temple "One Hundredth Anniversary Brochure."

Negro Episcopal church in Akron--was founded. It was begun as a mission in 1924 by Bishop Keeler in response to the need among some of Akron's Negro population. For several years the congregation met at St. Paul's Episcopal Church on East Market Street. The onset of the depression caused the church to become moribund, for it lacked funds and leadership. Some twenty years later, a small group of people petitioned Bishop Tucker for the reorganization of the mission. On 27 June 1951 at a formal meeting at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, St. Philip's was reorganized. The Rev. Irving Mayson came to Akron to serve as priest of the church and services were held at the ACSC. Eighteen people convened to worship at the first service of the mission.⁷⁶

Among the original members of the church were Dr. and Mrs. John W. Dunbar (Mrs. Dunbar was instrumental in having the church reorganized), Susie Macbeth, Carolyn Lancaster, Leah Lancaster, Marcella Robinson, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Bruce Tate, Sr., E. Bruce Tate, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Orville Campbell, Walter Campbell, Charles Campbell, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest DeSett, and Mr. and Mrs. Clayton DeSett.⁷⁷

By the late 1950s a building had been erected at

⁷⁶"Canterbury Player's Souvenir Program of The Man Who Came to Dinner," Akron, Ohio, 1959

⁷⁷Interviews with Elinor Dunbar, Carolyn Lancaster, and Marcella Robinson, Akron, Ohio, 29 March 1975.

1130 Mercer Avenue and the congregation worshipped in its new edifice. One of the organizations within the church, the Canterbury Players, evolved during the mid-1950s. It was a dramatics club which developed from an idea of Mrs. Earl Tate, Jr. and operated under the sponsorship of the Woman's Auxiliary of the church.

Membership included both members and nonmembers of the church. The following persons comprised the Canterbury Players in 1959: Pauline Berry, Sheila Berry, Mabel Brown, Ronald Bland, Nancy Clark, Jane Craig, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Driskill, Harry Holcomb, Malissa Hurt, Chauncey Jeffries, Leah Lancaster, Edward Lander, Ellie Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. Henry McClain, Charles McDonald, Rev. and Mrs. Irving Mayson, Emma Jean Nutter, George Shadie, Mr. and Mrs. Haynes Robinson, Mr. and Mrs. E. Bruce Tate, Jr., Joe Tazewell, LaRue Thomas, Fred Wilson, and Aubrey Willacy.

Individual Accomplishments

As Negroes persevered in their struggle against racial discrimination, they overcame many obstacles through the help of organizations, churches, and the strength of their families. Moreover, there were a few whose own inner strengths and determination demanded recognition and served as an inspiration to others.

This segment of the study will investigate those

black Americans in Akron who made life a little richer during the 1950s.

Biographical sketches

The individual accomplishments of Akron's Negroes were beginning to be acknowledged in the local newspaper's "Biography in Brief" as early as the 1950s. Among those persons who were selected for that weekly feature were Negroes engaged in civic work, union employees, lawyers, ministers, social workers, and businessmen.

One of the earliest biographical sketches was that of Mercer F. Bratcher, an active community and civic leader. During that time, Bratcher was employed at the Ohio State Employment Service as the agency's employment specialist in charge of minority group services. He was lauded for his quiet professional approaches to combatting interracial prejudices--at work or in the community.⁷⁸ In 1957 Bratcher won the annual Brotherhood Award sponsored by the Akron Area Council of Churches and related groups. An account of that event stated

Nearly four hundred guests witnessed the citation bestowed upon Bratcher for his contribution to inter-cultural, inter-racial, and inter-religious brotherhood in Akron during 1956 and throughout his life.⁷⁹

During the next three years, three Negroes were

⁷⁸Akron Beacon Journal, 30 May 1951, p. B3.

⁷⁹Ohio Informer, 16 February 1957

recognized for their work with the unions and as leaders in the black community. William E. Fowler's biographical sketch praised his work with the UAW as an international representative and later as subregional director, detailed his civic work; and noted his musical background.⁰⁰

At the time that James E. Turner's biography was written, he was in charge of the URW's Fair Practice Department. The newspaper commended his ability to negotiate through diplomacy and the utilization of his sense of humor. His active memberships in many civic and community organizations reflected his serious concern to improve friendship and understanding among Akron's citizens.⁰¹

Woodie Colvin's biography, like Fowler's and Turner's, described the civic work with which he was involved and praised his bargaining powers--whether as a union worker, in civic enterprises, or eliminating racial barriers.⁰²

Atty. Samuel T. Kelly's biographical sketch appeared in the newspaper in 1950. He was known as a fighter for civil rights since his arrival in Akron in 1920. As president of the NAACP he combatted the Ku Klux

⁰⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 13 January 1952, p. B3

⁰¹Ibid., 8 February 1953, p. B3.

⁰²Ibid., 4 July 1954, p. D3

Klan, and later he focused on the elimination of racial discrimination in public housing.⁸³ The Samuel T. Kelly award, in his honor, is presented annually by the NAACP to the person who has contributed unselfishly to the promotion of civil rights.

Another attorney, J. Franklin Spruill, was recognized for his capability as a lawyer. Spruill, known throughout the black community and the courtrooms for his extensive vocabulary; his perpetual sense of humor; his booming voice; and his keen mind, was described as an attorney who always managed to retain his composure and grin when others were shouting furiously. The hardships he endured to obtain an education; his football abilities; and his memberships in diverse organizations were also noted.⁸⁴

An account of the life of Atty. Rufus L. Thompson related data regarding his religious, educational, and employment background and cited a particular military experience that reflected his sympathetic concern for others. Thompson was assistant law director, a dedicated church worker, and a member of many community organizations.⁸⁵

⁸³Ibid., 24 December 1950, p. B3.

⁸⁴Ibid., 28 February 1954, p. D3.

⁸⁵Ibid., 26 September 1954, p. F3.

The biographical sketch of Rev. U. S. Munnerlyn, a past president of the NAACP, detailed the obstacles which the minister encountered during his early childhood and as a young teenager working to support his mother and four younger brothers and sisters. His ministerial work and his leadership to Akron's black community were lauded. The sketch noted that Munnerlyn considered his highest honor that of being asked to present the baccalaureate address at Garfield High School in 1948. His address was entitled "The Art of Successful Living."⁶

Earl Bruce Tate, Sr. came to Akron 15 October 1945 as the executive director of the Glendale Branch of the YMCA. The Glendale Branch, organized primarily for Negro youth, became a vital program under Tate's guidance. His biographical sketch extolled his leadership capabilities after ten years of YMCA work in Akron and a total of twenty-five years with the YMCA program. A testimonial dinner, organized by the Glendale Branch, was given in his honor in the fall of 1954.⁷

The versatility of one of Akron's Negro businessmen, Opie Evans, was reported in the local newspaper in 1956. The biographical account reported the various enterprises in which Evans had engaged in the past and those in which

⁶Ibid., 29 March 1953, p. D3.

⁷Ibid., 8 May 1955, p. D3.

he was then involved.

During the 1950s Evans ran a sound equipment business; conducted a weekly broadcast over radio station WHKK; and built and bought homes for rental property to provide decent housing for members of his race. Some of his past ventures included publication of a Negro yearbook and a weekly Negro paper, The Akron Vindicator; a door-to-door salesman; a printing business, janitor at Firestone Tire and Rubber Co.; head of the motion picture department of that same firm; and a huckster with a mobile concession stand.**

Varied accomplishments

The 1950s witnessed several other individuals receiving honors, recognition, or making advancements in their given occupations. All have enriched the lives of Akronites and have been a credit to the black race.

In the field of music Julia Perry and Kermit Moore had become internationally famous for their talents. Miss Perry, a recognized Negro musician and composer, had performed her composition, Stabat Mater, in October 1951 at Central High School in Akron, and some months later presented a recital of her compositions in Europe. She sang the soprano part in Stabat Mater and received the following commendation from one critic

**Ibid., 13 May 1956, p. D3.

Not since the war has any serious American work received so enthusiastic a reception in Italy. Miss Perry has a great gift for the setting of words to music and a delicate sense of the meaning of the Latin text.⁸⁹

Kermit Moore, a young cellist, was gaining fame abroad as he traveled throughout Europe performing in concert and lecturing on American universities and on all aspects of American folk music.

Moore, a baritone, discovered that audiences abroad loved Negro spirituals and he sang several spirituals after devoting the first part of his recitals to cello works of noted classical composers--Beethoven, Brahms, etc.

The talented musician performed before Belgium's dowager Queen Elizabeth at her chateau at Laeken near Brussels. By the late 1950s Moore had also played on several radio and television programs in Europe and at the World's Fair in Brussels.⁹⁰

A third noted black in the field of music during the 1950s was Jesse Owens, a baritone, who was acclaimed by audiences at bandmaster Horace Heidt's Youth Opportunity broadcasts. One week after graduation from high school, Owens' rendition of "Glory Road" drew a thunderous ovation from an audience of 8,800 and captured first prize--\$250--in Heidt's contest early in 1950.⁹¹

⁸⁹Ibid., 6 July 1952, p. A16.

⁹⁰Ibid., 8 September 1958.

⁹¹Cleveland Plain Dealer, 30 January 1950.

Owens took top honors in Milwaukee on Heidt's broadcast and qualified for the finals later that year. He had risen to national fame in a little over two months.² He later traveled with the Heidt troupe overseas and became a recording star.

Owens had worked his way through East High School as a shoe shine boy and graduated with honors. He studied voice for three years under Miss Nora McGonnell and frequently practiced in a cold garage.³

In the field of education, a bright pupil distinguished himself, and two black public school educators made major advancements. Early in the 1950s a young black student became a champion at Crosby School. As a member of a team which represented their school in the WAKR-Akron Beacon Journal Quizdown contest, Dale Perry and his teammates challenged King School competitors. Although Perry's team lost, he was the individual winner who accumulated the most points and was awarded a radio.⁴

In 1956, George C. Miller became the first black counselor in the public school system when he accepted a counseling position at Thornton Junior High School.⁵ One

²Akron Informer, 24 March 1950.

³Cleveland Plain Dealer, 30 January 1950.

⁴Interview with Dale Perry, St. Paul, Minnesota, 11 March 1975.

⁵Interview with George C. Miller, Akron, Ohio, 15 February 1975.

year later, Martin O. Chapman became Akron's first black administrator in the public schools when he was appointed as assistant principal of Thornton Junior High School.⁹⁶

Other changes were starting to take place in other fields. By the mid-1950s Laurita Sharpp, a black librarian, had advanced to the position of head librarian at Wooster Branch of the Akron Public Library. She was the first Negro in the city to hold that position. Mrs. Sharpp joined the public school staff as a librarian at Thornton Junior High School in 1957. Her appointment marked the first time that a black Akronite had held that post.⁹⁷

Herman Poole, the Negro inventor who had built a motorbike in his spare time during the 1940s, continued to pursue his mechanical interests and invented a three-wheeled car in the mid-1950s. The automobile was unique in several aspects: 1) it was the only three-wheeled car in the state; 2) having only three wheels--two in front and a chain-driven power rear wheel--the "Pooley" was registered in the motorcycle class, at a cost of five dollars; and 3) the car was amphibious. Although the motor vehicle department issued Poole five dollar license plates, they later requested that they be returned. Poole

⁹⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 29 July 1962, p. E3.

⁹⁷Interview with Dr. and Mrs. Eldridge Sharpp, Akron, Ohio, 28 March 1975.

refused, wrote to Columbus, and won his case.

The car was able to run 50 mph on land; its engine had twenty-seven horsepower, and it covered three hundred miles on six gallons of gasoline.

Poole singlehandedly did all of the designing and construction of the car including the shaping of all of the metal for the original body. It took him five years to build the car, working in the shop behind his home at 1355 Honodle Avenue.⁹⁸

His rather recent inventions include a heat retriever and a "lady-baiter"--the latter is a gadget that allows a person to bait a hook without touching the worm.⁹⁹

Honors were bestowed upon two outstanding Negroes in the Akron community early in 1957--Edward C. Lander and Atty. William Andrew Jackson.

Lander was chosen from twenty-six candidates to become Akron's first "Community Ambassador" in a program sponsored by the Akron Area Adult Education Council. He attended the Akron Public Schools before receiving a scholarship to Western Reserve Academy,¹⁰⁰ and in 1954 he became the first Negro to graduate from that institution.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Akron Beacon Journal, 2 January 1955.

⁹⁹Interview with Herman Poole, 10 March 1975.

¹⁰⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 7 April 1957, p. A17.

¹⁰¹Interview with Norma Spencer, Akron, Ohio, 4 February 1975.

He spent two years at the University of Chicago on a scholarship before transferring to the University of Akron where he was enrolled at the time when he was selected.

As community ambassador, Lander spent ten weeks in Germany, living with a German family. Before he departed from the United States he was trained in Akron history, economics, and culture so that he could better explain his hometown.

In one segment of his application Lander explained why he wished to become a community ambassador:

The problem of futile wars between nations . . . stems from the "wars" between individuals.

Thus the problem became Why do negative attitudes, dislikes and hatreds exist among individuals? My answer to that question is, basically, lack of a desire on the part of most of us to understand and appreciate our fellow man. More comprehensively, nations must learn to love one another not for similarity of culture . . . but for differences.¹⁰²

Atty. William Andrew Jackson was honored in 1957 when he received second honors and a fifty dollar prize in the Akron Bar Association's Annual Grant Memorial Legal Essay Contest. His prize-winning essay, "The Legal Efficacy of Interposition and Nullification," was published in the Ohio Bar, the publication of the Ohio Bar Association.¹⁰³ Jackson wrote on the aspects of the Supreme

¹⁰²Akron Beacon Journal, 7 April 1957, p. A17.

¹⁰³Ibid., 1 February 1957; William A. Jackson, "The Legal Efficacy of Interposition and Nullification," Ohio Bar 37 (30 September 1957) 789-98.

Court's decision on desegregation and the efforts on the part of certain southern states to prevent its implementation.¹⁰⁴

A second noteworthy honor occurred for him when in 1959 he set a precedent by being the first Negro to be elected as county commander at the Summit County Convention of the American Legion. Jackson had been an active and devoted worker in the American Legion, John Fulton Post No. 272 for several years. A news article regarding his new position stated that Jackson's election marked the first time in forty years that a Negro had held such a high position in Summit County veteran's circles.¹⁰⁵

A graduate of Talledega College, he was later employed by the local Social Security office (and was known to many of his friends as "Social Security" Jackson). He earned his law degree from Cleveland-Marshall Law School in 1953.

As the decade closed another significant advancement for Negroes occurred when, in 1959, Dr. Edgar A. Toppin joined the college staff at the University of Akron as its first Negro faculty member hired on a full-time basis. In his history of the University of Akron, Knepper described Toppin, an Assistant Professor of History, as an

¹⁰⁴Ohio Informer, 16 February 1957.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 30 May 1959.

extraordinarily talented and resourceful scholar, a great favorite, and one who made an outstanding contribution to the campus during the four years that he stayed in Akron.¹⁸⁸

Summary

As the 1940s began blacks continued to experience difficulty obtaining employment above the level of domestic work or common laborers regardless of their level of education. Diverse approaches to secure positions resulted in: 1) militant, affirmative action tactics, 2) persuasive strategies involving group conferences, workshops, interviews, research, and correspondence; 3) employment drives; and 4) political action.

In the black social environment, churches continued to serve as religious institutions and social outlets for Negroes, and black organizations remained supportive of black families in working toward motivating youth to aspire to higher levels of education. Ceremonies were held to welcome black newcomers, but returning Negro veterans still experienced that lack of freedom for which they had fought--on foreign soil--to preserve.

A few advancements were made through community and civic enterprises, particularly in the area of housing. A slum clearance project resulted in the development of

¹⁸⁸Knepper, New Lamps, p. 367.

the Elizabeth Park Homes, blacks continued to protest vice conditions in black communities throughout the city; and the NAACP led assaults on discrimination in housing.

The Council of Negro Women assumed a monumental task which resulted in the purchase of a home for black working women. Subsequently recreational programs were also held at the facility in order to combat juvenile delinquency among Negro youth.

Individual gains were evidenced through the advancements in education and employment. Black students were receiving financial assistance from the Knight scholarships to further their education. Akron's first black teacher was hired in 1940, and a black nurse was working in a local hospital by the mid-1940s. Minimal progress was made in positions in local and federal government, and Negroes were pursuing careers as musicians, composers, and vocalists.

The 1950s witnessed advancements in employment opportunities which were formerly unattainable. Each gain, though small, was significant. Blacks were able to secure very token employment above the level of menial and custodial work. For the first time in the city's history blacks became employed in white firms as: sales clerks, telephone operators, secretaries, receptionists, bus drivers, clerks, repairmen with public utilities companies, chemists, and maintenance electricians.

In organizational advancements: 1) the NAACP embarked on major fund raising programs in order to continue its vital work; 2) political clubs pressed for employment in local government positions; and 3) black churches were structuring programs to develop internal strength.

Negroes were featured increasingly in biographical sketches and other articles in the local newspaper for their accomplishments in the fields of law, civic work, industry, ministry, social work, business, and music.

CHAPTER VI

LOCAL RESPONSES TO NATIONAL ISSUES: 1960-1975

A Depiction of America - The National Scene

A number of events precipitated the civil rights movement of the 1960s as black persons continued their struggle for equality. The Supreme Court decision of 1954 led to the desegregation of the nation's southern schools and resulted in improved educational preparation of Negroes--and violent opposition by whites. The Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 attracted national attention and brought about a victory for southern Negroes--and antagonism on the part of southern whites. "Tent City" in Fayette County, Tennessee highlighted the plight of the nearly one hundred dispossessed black families of tenant farmers who attempted to register to vote in 1960. It elicited the aid of people throughout the nation--to the dissatisfaction of most southern whites.

The oppression of black Americans was broadcast worldwide as nations watched the frustrations of Afro-Americans erupt into violence in the streets of the United States.

At the inception of the civil rights movement, the

black protests were nonviolent, and a significant milestone in black history was the participation of college students in the movement. Black students were joined by white students as both pressed for equality for black Americans.

The period was a tumultuous one both among and between members of both races. Many older blacks and whites resented the demonstrative tactics of the younger generation and the consequences brought blacks against blacks, blacks against whites, and whites against whites.

The tactics of the student movements were largely moderate and nonviolent, yet formidable and effective. They included sit-ins; selective buying campaigns; kneel-ins; voter registration campaigns, freedom rides, marches; task forces to organize backwoods, rural, illiterate people; workshops on nonviolent procedures; filling the jails; and black separatism.

The intransigence of whites was evidenced by their strategies to defeat the nonviolent efforts of blacks as they used police dogs, high-powered water hoses, beatings, clubbings, and tear gas to halt black progress. The nation watched the atrocities as the mass media exposed to all of the world the horrendous treatment of American Negroes.

By 1963 the nation's black citizens and many of its upstanding, responsible white citizens joined together

in the massive March on Washington in 1963.

By the mid-1960s multiple national anti-poverty programs were begun to meet the problems of the persons in the lower socioeconomic strata of American society, and steps were being taken to protect the rights of Negroes. Federally funded educational projects were implemented; programs to elevate the employment levels of the poor were being initiated; urban renewal programs were launched on a larger scale, and civil rights legislation was enacted as the nation took measures to create equality for all.

The measures were rather tardy however, for about that same time, riots--on the part of America's black and poor--replaced peaceful demonstrations. The abuse of southern blacks had drawn the empathy of northern blacks and "by 1969 more than four hundred disorders of varying degrees of seriousness had occurred."¹ The rebellions were generally spontaneous and unorganized, directed more toward property damage--looting and burning--than toward criminal acts against persons.

The concept of black power emerged as the black revolution caused the nation's Afro-American population to become more conscious of their heritage; to take pride in their past; and to unify for their common purposes.

¹Johnson Publishing Co., eds , Ebony Pictorial History of Black America, vol. 3: Civil Rights Movement to Black Revolution (Nashville. Southwestern Co., 1971), p. 69.

The 1970s, however, have borne witness to a dismantling of some of the programs designed to help the poor, and economic cutbacks have terminated the employment of many of those for whom the programs were originally designed to assist.

Local Responses to the Civil Rights Movement

Black Akronites Protest

The maltreatment of southern Negroes evoked the wrath and indignation of blacks in Akron, and their response was one of empathy and action. A number of Akronites participated in the March on Washington in 1963, and in 1965 black and white citizens congregated at Mount Olive Baptist Church on Coburn Street before marching in a nonviolent protest in sympathy with events at Selma, Alabama.

As nonviolence gave way to open rebellion, Akron experienced six days of civil disorder, commencing on 23 July 1968. A report on Akron's civil disturbances indicated that the disorder was unexpected by both blacks and whites, and "a kind of 'it can't happen here' attitude was common."² The report offered the following explanation for the reaction.

Akron's black citizens, however, have suffered the same discrimination and experienced the same

²Akron Commission on Civil Disorders, "Report on Civil Disorders," p. 7.

prejudicial atmosphere as that which has characterized American cities in general. Conditions contributing to the impatience and resentment of the black people toward their treatment were not significantly worse in July 1968 . . . But the possibility for trouble was greater . . . although many failed to realize it.³

As the violent unrest continued, National Guard troops were summoned, a state of emergency was declared and a curfew was imposed before the disturbance could be quelled.

An account of the incidents that took place during the six days of disorder stated that:

. . . a number of businesses were firebombed, hundreds of persons were arrested, including many young people, and there were innumerable confrontations between blacks and law enforcement officers. The lifting of the curfew . . . was in doubt until the last minute but the decision to do so probably averted a major confrontation and more violence. The evening ended with a street dance and a release of pent-up emotions on all sides.⁴

The local NAACP focused on varying issues protesting police brutality, alleged de facto segregation, and discrimination in employment and housing. Through its endeavors eight black firemen were hired in 1973. During those stormy years strong and capable leadership was provided through the presidential terms of Mary Holmes, Atty. Edwin Parns, Helen Arnold, and William L. McMillan.⁵ When James Turner, retired director of URW's Fair Practices Department, took office early in 1975, he became

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 8.

⁵"NAACP Freedom Fund," Akron, Ohio, 1974.

the first full-time president of the Akron branch of the NAACP. He had served the organization in various other capacities for nearly thirty years.⁶

Fighting Poverty in Akron

The war against poverty attacked one of the major problems of Akron's black population. Since blacks constituted a large and disproportionate percentage of the lower economic class, they stood to benefit from programs which emanated from the anti-poverty efforts. A number of organizations came into existence and diverse programs were developed to provide poor blacks and whites with jobs and opportunities to elevate their socioeconomic conditions. Two of the prominent organizations which were designed to uplift the poor were the Community Action Council (CAC) and the Model Cities organization. Brief background data on the organizations will be provided herein.

As the national war on poverty got underway in 1964, Mayor Erickson assigned Atty. Arthur Snell, assistant law director, to attend sessions in Chicago and Washington where discussions were being held on the qualifications for the federal anti-poverty programs. Acting in the capacity of an unpaid coordinator, Snell devoted countless

⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 18 December 1974, p. C1.

hours toward developing and launching a local anti-poverty program. As a result of his able direction, Akron's CAC was organized, and Snell was partially responsible for the receipt of the council's first \$750,000 federal grant.⁷

He resigned his position as unpaid coordinator only after the program was firmly established and the appointment of a director was imminent.⁸ The first director of CAC was Lois C. Scherer who accepted the post early in 1965.⁹ Assistant director, Al Witcher, was appointed a few weeks later.¹⁰

The Model Cities programs were developed to assist residents in the "Model Neighborhood"--a 1,909-acre site located in Southwest Akron having the following characteristics: 1) about 10 percent of the residents were unemployed, 2) nearly 40 percent of the homes were sub-standard; and 3) approximately 50 percent of the residents received public assistance.

In 1969 eleven Model Cities programs--which followed federal guidelines established in the Model Cities Act of 1966--were developed to rehabilitate and revitalize the area. On 28 May 1970, Akron's plans were

⁷Ibid., 10 July 1967, p. A2; 11 July 1967, p. A6.

⁸Ibid., 8 March 1965, p. B1.

⁹Ibid., 31 March 1965, p. F1.

¹⁰Ibid., 20 April 1965, p. B1

approved and 3.4 million dollars were appropriated to finance the first thirteen months of operation.¹¹

From its inception the Model Cities organization consisted of two segments the Model Neighborhood Commission--the citizen's participation organization; and the City Demonstration Agency (CDA)--the city's arm of the organization. Willie Owens was appointed as director of the Model Neighborhood Commission's staff, and CDA was headed by Frank Lomax III. Dr. Eldridge Sharpp served as chairman of the Model Neighborhood Commission.¹²

The Akron Community Service Center and Urban League (ACSC&UL)¹³ had worked from its inception to improve conditions among Akron's black population. Between 1963 and 1964 the agency restructured its programs and departments in order to provide more services to the community and effectively meet the new needs of the 1960s.

When the Mideastern Regional office of the National Urban League was established in 1964, Raymond Brown, executive director of the ACSC&UL, was promoted to regional

¹¹Ibid., 11 August 1971, p. E1.

¹²Interview with Dr. Eldridge Sharpp, Akron, Ohio, 28 March 1975.

¹³On 23 June 1958 the name of the local Urban League was appended and the official name of the agency became the "Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc." Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Annual Report Strengthening the Family for New Opportunities," Akron, Ohio, 1958.

director. He had given years of guidance and direction to Akron's Urban League program and staff since 1945. Vernon Odom, who had been program director and subsequently the associate executive director of the ACSC&UL, became the agency's new executive director in 1964.

Odom, a graduate of Morehouse University, had attained a master's degree from Atlanta University's School of Social Work and was a man well qualified to meet the challenges of the 1960s.

Under Odom's directorship the agency moved to close the gap between those who have had, and those who have not had, the opportunity to be equal in American society. By 1968 the agency, in compliance with the National Urban League's policy, had devoted itself to addressing the unanswered cries from the ghetto which found expression through looting, burning, and general civil disorder. Thus, the agency redirected its efforts to stress social change rather than social service. The shift in philosophy became known as the "New Thrust" which sought to "build the internal strength and power of the ghetto while simultaneously accelerating the process of, and push for, integration."¹⁴

Testimony of the strong and competent leadership

¹⁴Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Forty-fourth Annual Report New Thrust Toward New Opportunities," Akron, Ohio, 1969.

which Odom provided during the challenging 1960s occurred in 1968 when he was named "Social Worker of the Year" by the North Central Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.¹³

The war on poverty brought about the creation of educational, employment, and economic programs as well as programs to improve social living conditions. Most of the programs were federally funded, but others were provided through private contributions and were not specifically designated as anti-poverty programs.

Educational programs

Historically education has been perceived as a vital and positive means of abating poverty and of uplifting the poor. Several of the educational programs which developed in an attempt to break the poverty cycle were funded through CAC or Model Cities and were conducted in cooperation with black agencies, the public schools, black organizations, universities, and various community agencies. They have been numerous and only a few have been selected to serve as examples of the types of programs developed to assist the poor

As early as 1963 a tutorial project, which generally focused on elementary school students, had been instituted by two Yale University students, Thomas

¹³Akron Beacon Journal, 7 March 1968, p. C1.

Roderick of Silver Lake, Ohio and Gary Piper of Akron, Ohio. Roderick and Piper had been active in the Northern Student Movement which had set up a tutorial project in the East. They began their project with a volunteer staff in cooperation with the supportive efforts of the ACSC&UL. The project was continued in the fall and winter of that year by students Mary Paolucci and Linda Stein, and two University of Akron professors, Dr. Walter Lehrman and Dr. Donald Henderson. (Henderson, a black educator, is currently Associate Provost of the University of Pittsburgh.)

Gary Piper, a paid director in 1964, conducted the program with a volunteer staff. By 1965 the program was funded through the Summit County CAC and cosponsored by the ACSC&UL and the University of Akron. It became known thereafter as the Akron-Summit Tutorial Program (A-STP). The project was headed by James W. Gramantine in 1965, followed by Dr. Walter Lehrman's directorship in 1966. Thomas Fuhrman was appointed as director of A-STP a year later and served for seven years until Karen James was named director in 1974. The program grew in effectiveness and by 1972 all University of Akron freshmen desirous of becoming teachers were required to take an education course which entailed tutoring for A-STP.¹⁶

¹⁶Thomas Fuhrman, "Special Information Report on the Akron-Summit Tutorial Program," Akron, Ohio, 1973, p. 2.

In the spring of 1965 prekindergarten programs were initiated at centers throughout the city through the cooperative efforts of the Akron Board of Education and the local CAC. Most of the classes were housed in churches throughout the Akron area. The project--currently known as Head Start--has continued its attempts to give preschool educationally disadvantaged children the necessary skills to ensure them of a more successful beginning in the public school system.

Since the mid-1960s many educational programs, aimed toward helping lower socioeconomic families, have been developed and implemented in the Akron Public Schools in order to offset the educational disadvantages that are common to deprived environments. Most of the projects have focused on the primary or intermediate grades, but some have been designed to assist junior and senior high school pupils and adults. The supplemental, federally funded programs in the Akron Public Schools are under the direction of George C. Miller, a black administrator, who serves as Director of Supplemental Services of the Akron Board of Education.

In the summer of 1965 three black sororities, with funding channeled through CAC, jointly conducted a two-month Head Start program at three locations Wilcox School in Twinsburg, Ohio; United Baptist Church in Akron, and Hillwood Homes in Akron. The project director was

Barbara Whaley, and the sorority cosponsors included local chapters of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, and Phi Delta Kappa sororities.¹⁷

The National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Beta Iota Chapter had been active in Akron since receiving its charter on 26 March 1955.¹⁸ From its inception the black teachers' sorority had worked in various projects to upgrade the education of children. In the summer of 1970, however, the sorority responded in large measure to the needs of the community by contracting to serve as a delegate agency to the Model Cities Day Care program

Dedication of countless hours of planning and organization on the part of the sorority's eleven active members resulted in the opening of five day care centers and the appointment of Esther Spruill as director of the project.

All five centers were located in churches. The first center was opened at 332 Trigonía Drive in August 1970, followed by a center at 401 Berry Avenue. By spring, three other centers--which opened at 784 Coburn Street, 732 Russell Avenue, and 292 East Market Street, respectively--were staffed and in operation.

The program met two important objectives 1) it

¹⁷Akron Beacon Journal, 21 June 1965, p. B1.

¹⁸Charter of the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Beta Iota Chapter, Akron, Ohio, 1955.

provided a service to working mothers; and 2) it provided preschoolers with a quality, well-rounded program through its provisions for adequate nutrition, social development, health services, and instruction in academic skills.¹⁹

By 1972 the Model Cities Day Care Program had been extended to include an Infant Stimulation pilot program. The program was an outgrowth of research on infant stimulation conducted by Sheila Berry over a seven-month period (December 1971 to June 1972). Mrs. Berry was appointed as director of the Infant Stimulation component, and the program was implemented on 1 September 1972.

In its early phase, eight Model Cities infants and their mothers constituted the population being served. The babies were enrolled at two weeks of age and continued until age three. Two home visitors, trained by Mrs. Berry, were taught how to instruct the mothers to stimulate the infant's senses for the development of all of the pre-requisite skills necessary for academic success.²⁰

At its inception the program was the only one of its kind in the state of Ohio,²¹ and has been visited by the wife of Gov. John Gilligan²² and the state's attorney

¹⁹Akron Beacon Journal, 11 August 1971, p. E1.

²⁰The National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, "Fifty Years 1923-1973," (n.p.), 1973.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Akron Beacon Journal, 20 March 1973, p. D3.

general, William Brown.²³

In 1970 a special educational program was developed by the ACSC&UL and funded by the Sisler-McFawn Foundation. The program was implemented in order to provide a personalized instructional and tutorial service for secondary school youth, dropouts, and adults residing in the Wooster Avenue area. George C. Miller was appointed to direct the project.

One of the program's greatest strengths has been its "instant curriculum" or "cash approach." Tutoring has been available for persons who have needed remediation in particular aspects of subjects thereby eliminating the need to enroll in night school courses. Many tutees have come seeking instruction aimed specifically at helping them get a particular job they desired.²⁴

An educational program developed by the local graduate chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, a black fraternity, began its operation in conjunction with the Wooster Branch of the Akron Public Library. (The library is located in a predominantly black area of the city.) The greatest thrust of the program--instituted in 1970 and named "Project Read"--was an attempt to motivate early use of the library. However, activities are programmed for both

²³ (Akron) Reporter, 26 October-2 November 1974.

²⁴ Akron Community and Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "An Educational Project," Akron, Ohio, 1972, p. 3.

adults and children.

Atty. Edwin Farms, chairman of the Alpha Phi Alpha Library Committee, has provided invaluable leadership to the project and has been instrumental in the program's success. In its initial operation, the fraternity formed a "Borrowers and Readers Club" for elementary students, and by fall of 1974 a junior high school organization was being formed.²⁵

Significant outcomes have been realized in the four years that the program has existed: 1) the summer's circulation increased fourfold;²⁶ 2) the project has shown that children can spend more time reading than watching television,²⁷ and 3) seven of the top ten readers were boys (as opposed to the general belief that girls in elementary schools are better readers).²⁸ Congressman John Seiberling visited the program in the fall of 1974.²⁹

"Project Read" has been financed by local private and business contributions. However, in the summer of 1974, a \$75,000 two-year federal grant was appropriated. George Nichols, head of a special Alpha Phi Alpha

²⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 15 September 1974, p. C8.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷(Akron) Reporter, 7 September-14 September 1974.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., 28 September-5 October 1974.

committee; John Rebenack, Librarian of the Akron-Summit County Public Library, Mildred Wright, head librarian of Wooster Branch Library, Raymond Brown, a member of the Ohio State Library Board, and others of their respective groups were credited with working diligently toward efforts to obtain the grant.³⁰

The fraternity has also provided valuable financial assistance to deserving students seeking to further their education. Co-chairmen Archie Berry and John Crooks headed the fraternity's 1974 scholarship committee. At a "Scholarship Awards" luncheon in the spring of 1974 Berry presented awards ranging from \$400 to \$1,000 to nine students.³¹

Beginning on 31 December 1973, the local chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi, another black fraternity, initiated an annual New Year's Eve Ball and has donated all monies to the Akron Inner City Scholarship Fund.

Employment and Economic Programs

In 1964 the employment opportunities for Akron's blacks were seriously lagging. Although Negroes constituted 13 percent of Akron's population they comprised only 6 percent of its labor force.³² Blacks who were

³⁰Ibid., 15 June-22 June 1974.

³¹Ibid.

³²Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Fortieth Annual Report Revolution of Participation," Akron, Ohio, 1965.

professionally prepared or possessed a skill were still encountering difficulty in being hired, and blacks who had little or no training met with even less success.

In 1965 David Wilson, ACSC&UL's job development and employment director, took measures to ameliorate a part of the problem through the implementation of a "Skills Bank Project" to centralize the professional, technical, and scientific skills of Negroes residing in the Akron area. Thus, the agency had an available pool of referrals for local business and industrial firms.¹¹

Securing employment to elevate the economic status of the poor was a part of ACSC&UL's, CAC's, and Model Cities' programs. Employment of personnel to staff and operate the anti-poverty projects provided many and diverse jobs for numbers of the unemployed or underemployed. Other attempts to provide opportunities for work were conducted through job preparation training programs. A few will be cited to indicate the types of programs in existence.

The On-the-Job Training (O.J.T.) Program funded by the Department of Labor was instituted in 1966 under the direction of the ACSC&UL. The program led to the placement of over 340 disadvantaged persons in a variety of businesses and industries from 1967 to 1968 and was reputed by government officials as one of the most

¹¹Ibid.

successful O.J.T. programs in the nation.³⁴

The ACSC&UL's Labor Education Advancement Program (L.E.A.P.) was in operation by 1969. Its major purpose was to recruit black youth for apprenticeship training programs in the building and construction industry.³⁵

That same year a CAC program, the United Neighborhood Council Economic Development Program (EDP) was implemented. It originated when citizens from diverse neighborhoods convened to create a program to promote economic development in Akron. The program has offered various business services to the Akron minority business community including: small business management training and counseling; management, technical, and economic assistance; and provision of an Akron's minority business directory.³⁶

Two programs to advance blacks economically were developed in 1970 through Model Cities.³⁷ One program, the Career Opportunities Program operated by the Akron Board of Education, also sought to increase the level of education of its employees. The participants in the

³⁴Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Forty-third Annual Report Now or Never," Akron, Ohio, 1968.

³⁵Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Forty-fourth Annual Report," Akron, Ohio, 1969.

³⁶"NAACP Freedom Fund," Akron, Ohio, 1974.

³⁷City Demonstration Agency, "Toward a Model City," Akron, Ohio, 1971.

program worked as paraprofessionals at schools in the Model Neighborhood while continuing their teacher training courses at the University of Akron.

The Economic Development Corporation (EDC) became operational late in 1970 and consisted of three divisions-- manpower, economic development, and communications. The manpower activities included involvement with other agencies or programs, e.g., CAC's Summit Training and Retraining for Increased Development and Experience (STRIDE) program; the ACSC&UL, EDC Equal Employment office, Model Neighborhood Job Placement; and Ohio Bureau of Employment Service.

The economic development division provided: 1) a consumer protection agency; 2) buying and investment cooperatives; 3) a credit union; and 4) a University of Akron coalition for Model Neighborhood Economic Development. A newspaper was published through the communication division.

From the advent of the civil rights movement to the time of this writing many opportunities for improved employment have been opened to blacks. Negroes have obtained jobs in various types of business and financial establishments, governmental positions, educational, cultural, and medical institutions, social agencies, etc. Although blacks have been hired in all kinds and levels of employment, some of their positions have represented mere "tokenism." An ACSC&UL staff study, completed in 1973, indicated that

Black employment progress in Akron business and industry during the period 1960 through 1970 was less than desirable especially on the high paying white collar classification. (In 1970, Blacks held only 7.1% of the white collar positions in Akron.)³⁸

Studies of employment of blacks in Akron, conducted by the local NAACP, have also indicated that blacks have not yet been hired in many areas of city government in proportion to their numbers and qualifications.³⁹

One of the more recent attempts to upgrade employment opportunities and employees' fringe benefits was not a part of the war on poverty per se, but has helped to improve the working and economic conditions of domestic workers. In 1971 the Akron Household Technicians, Inc. was organized by Aerieal Fuller, the organization's president. From an initial group of four members, the organization had grown to a membership of over 120 by the close of 1974.

Mrs. Fuller had a personal interest in organizing and improving the working conditions for domestic workers, for as she has stated:

No matter how much education you had at the time when I was coming along, all there was to do was to go to work in someone's home.⁴⁰

³⁸Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Black Education and Employment Program," Akron, Ohio, 1974.

³⁹NAACP Freedom Fund, Akron, Ohio, 1974.

⁴⁰Interview with Aerieal Fuller, 1316 Hardesty Boulevard, Akron, Ohio, 30 December 1974

She reared her children as a domestic worker and later worked with the Summit County Welfare Department.

Partially due to her leadership, efforts to include household technicians in the minimum wage legislation reached fruition.⁴¹ Mrs. Fuller has conducted workshops to train the members of the organization in parliamentary procedures and legislative processes so that they could be knowledgeable about legislation affecting their working conditions.

Improving living standards of
the lower socioeconomic population

Some of the programs which came into existence to fight poverty in Akron aimed to improve the general living conditions of the poor. Examples of such programs were Poor Peoples Headquarters, directed by Marian Hall; Project ENABLE (Education and Neighborhood Action for Better Living Environment), cosponsored by the ACSC&UL and the Family and Children's Service Society, the Urban League's Neighborhood Service Center, and the United Services for All.

Two Model Cities Programs, Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC) and Guardian, were created to improve the general living environment of the Model Neighborhood area. While NDC worked toward improving housing and

⁴¹Ibid.

providing auxiliary services through park development, relocation, rental, and architectural assistance, Guardian provided environmental services, i.e., weekly trash and garbage collection and rodent extermination.⁴²

A few advancements were also made in the area of housing since the civil rights movement. In the mid-1960s the Akron City Council passed a Fair Housing Law and the Akron community lent their support.⁴³

The need for improved low-cost housing among Akron's low economic population was met in part by the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority's integrated multi-family housing developments and its high-rise complexes for senior citizens. One particularly successful housing development was that of Channelwood Village. A 1973 booklet provided the history of that project.⁴⁴

The Channelwood Village Project was sponsored by the local chapter, Eta Tau Lambda, of Alpha Phi Alpha--the oldest and largest predominantly black fraternity in the country. It was the outgrowth of a response to the Federal Housing Act of 1963 which extended an invitation to organizations to participate in building homes for low- and moderate-income families.

⁴²City Demonstration Agency, "Toward A City," 1971.

⁴³Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Fortieth Annual Report," Akron, Ohio, 1965.

⁴⁴"Channelwood Village Brochure," Akron, Ohio, 1973.

Because of the leadership of Atty. James R. Williams and the donation of countless man-hours in meetings and negotiations, ground was broken on 29 October 1971, and the construction of Channelwood Village began. Almost one year later, the development was completed, and dedication ceremonies were held on 21 October 1973. Ergo, the fraternity had achieved two significant goals they had provided homes for Akron's citizenry and they had developed a socially and economically integrated community.

Three of the streets in Channelwood Village were named for fraternity brothers who were members of the local graduate chapter and who had served the fraternity nobly. The men were also noted for their community and civic contributions toward making Akron a better place in which to live. Tate Terrace was named in memory of Earl Bruce Tate, Sr., who was the former executive director of the YMCA's Glendale Branch, Dunbar Drive was named in honor of Dr. John W. Dunbar, a local retired dentist; and Fleming Drive was named for Atty. Artee Fleming, a retired barrister who currently resides in Columbus, Ohio.⁴⁵

Residential segregation in Akron had increased from

⁴⁵Three other streets have been said to be named for Negroes. Beverly and Mann Courts in North Akron are supposedly named for Beverly Mann--one of Akron's well-to-do black citizens in the early 1900s. Black Street is claimed to have been named for John Black who lived on Windsor Street (one street west of Black Street) early in the 1900s.

1960 to 1970 despite the legislation supporting open housing. According to a 1972 study on residential segregation in the Akron area one of the conclusions indicated that the barriers had not fallen for "Akron and its suburbs are more segregated in 1970 than they were in 1960."⁶

On the positive side, however, constructive efforts have been made. The Fair Housing Contact Service, West Side Neighbors, Inpost, and the Lane Improvement Association have each made valuable contributions to the community.⁷

Black Pride in Akron

As black power, black pride, and black history received greater emphasis during the 1960s and 1970s, more programs emerged and some former programs were updated. Typical of the latter was the Elks Oratorical Contest in which students had been participating annually and encouraging black pride as early as the 1930s.

The local lodge of the I.B.P.O.E. of W. had been organized in the mid-1960s into the Pride of Rubbertown No. 1594 and the new lodge continued to hold the annual

⁶H. F. Coye, Jr. and Robert McGraw, "Residential Segregation in the Akron Metropolitan Area," Akron, Ohio, 13 July 1972.

⁷Akron Commission on Civil Disorders, "Report on Civil Disorders," p. 33.

contest. Although the majority of the subjects for orations were related to the United States Constitution--and most of the former topics remained--the number of topics was increased to sixty-three and the contest was updated. Some of the following topics reflected the new content: The Anti-Poverty Program, the Negro, and the Constitution; The Civil Rights Act of 1960 and the U.S. Constitution; A Guarantee for Full Participation in the Anti-Poverty Program, Headstart, Adult Education, Medicare in Relationship to the Constitution; Open Housing, Vietnam and the Negro--Now and After; Passive Resistance; and Dr. Martin Luther King's Dream.⁴⁸

Many of Akron's contestants who participated in the contest advanced to the state, regional, or national level. In addition to those mentioned in an earlier segment of the study (p. 255) other winners who advanced beyond the local level included: Blanford Fuller, Albert Cox, and Kim Parker. Patricia Warren, formerly of Canton, Ohio, won the national Elks Oratorical Contest in 1970. She is currently a newscaster at Akron's radio station WAKR.⁴⁹

Blacks continued to celebrate the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and the one hundredth

⁴⁸I.B.P.O.E. of W., Department of Education, "National Oratorical Contest, Rules and Regulations," Memphis, Tennessee, 1968, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁹Interview with Aerial Fuller, 30 December 1974.

observance, held at Central High School and sponsored by the Tea Time Study Club, was a memorable occasion.

Mrs. Mary E. Allen had initiated the celebration in Akron in the same manner as it had been observed in the South. After her death in 1932, the program was not commemorated until 1953 when the Tea Time Study Club renewed interest in the occasion.⁵⁰

The observance ceremonies in 1966 began with a motorcade--which included many civic-minded citizens; black and white professional and business people; representatives from black organizations; a Sunday School class, and many local government officials. The singing of the Negro national anthem, the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, musical selections, and an address by a prominent speaker comprised the program's activities.⁵¹

The interest in black history was evident in 1960 as both young and old persons enthusiastically responded to the excellent series of lecture-discussions on Negro History presented by Dr. Edgar A. Toppin, Professor of History at the University of Akron, with Horace Stewart as moderator. The program was attended by a multiracial

⁵⁰"Souvenir Program of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation," Akron, Ohio, 1963.

⁵¹"Souvenir Program of the One Hundred and Third Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation," Akron, Ohio, 1966.

audience with an average of 250 persons in attendance.⁵²

The topics presented by Professor Toppin at the Negro History forums follow

1. Africans to the New World: Rescued from What?
2. The Plantation Slave Was He Content?
3. Freedom Through Civil War: On a Platter or Earned?
4. Negroes in the Reconstruction Legislature: Proven Unfit to Govern?
5. Washington-DuBois Controversy on What the Negro Needs: Who Was Right?
6. Supreme Court Decision of 1954: Revolution or Evolution?⁵³

Further evidence of interest in black history and the manifestation of black pride occurred in September 1969 when the Tea Time Study Club began working toward the recognition of "Crispus Attucks Day." The members' great concern was "that all children know that the black American fought, worked and died to make this country free."⁵⁴

A few months later Mayor John S. Ballard issued a proclamation declaring 5 March 1970 as "Crispus Attucks Day," and ceremonies inaugurating the commemoration of the event were held at South High School. Rev. I. T. Bradley, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, presented the address and William V. Wallace, Jr., of the Summit County

⁵²Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Thirty-sixth Annual Report," Akron, Ohio, 1961.

⁵³Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Schedule of Third and Fourth Quarter Activities," Akron, Ohio, 1960.

⁵⁴Interview with Bertha Moore, 30 December 1974.

Historical Society, offered remarks.⁵⁵

Another manifestation of black pride was the initiation of the Miss Black Akron Pageant in 1971 sponsored by Souls Reoriented. The winners of the annual contest were: Rose Ann Woods, 1971, Henrietta McDay, 1972; Delma Lucas, who was also Miss Black Ohio, 1973; and Gina Maddox, 1974.⁵⁶

In the fall of 1974 William Threatt, Jr., president of the ACSC&UL's Board of Trustees, announced the presentation of a nine-week series of black history programs to be sponsored by the ACSC&UL. Aimed at presenting a balanced and more complete view of the black experience, topics included: Black Studies, The African Heritage, Slavery; Black Poetry, Drama, and Literature; Black Politicians, Black Business People; The Law and the Black Community; the Black Church and the Civil Rights Movement; and Black Education and Employment.⁵⁷

Gains - Individual and Organized

The gains that black residents made from 1960 to the present time were partly a result of their years of

⁵⁵"Souvenir Program of Crispus Attucks Day," Akron, Ohio, 1970.

⁵⁶See Akron Beacon Journal, 9 September 1971, p. B12; 22 July 1972, p. B1, 20 August 1973, p. B1; (Akron) Reporter, 20 July-27 July 1974.

⁵⁷(Akron) Reporter, 28 September-5 October 1974.

perseverance against oppression--which helped to set the stage for the civil rights movement--and partly a result of events which grew out of the civil rights movement--civil rights legislation, a heightened level of black consciousness on the part of whites and blacks; the concept of black power, etc.

Such gains were reflected in many areas of employment, as the competencies and abilities of Negroes were finally being recognized and respected (although some of that recognition was forced by legislation which required the employment of blacks). Thus, the opportunities for advancement followed many avenues that were once unattainable, and frequent honors were increasingly bestowed upon Negroes. This portion of the study will indicate some of the positions, honors, and everyday accomplishments obtained by Akron's blacks in various fields, either through their individual or organized endeavors.

Fields of Specialization

Law and government

As the 1960s began, Councilman Edward Davis was a member of the City Council, representing the third ward for a second term. Blacks were becoming more involved in political matters and whites were beginning to support black candidates. By 1968 when Davis received the Brotherhood Award, he had been elected to his sixth term

of office. Davis, long active in community efforts to improve the city, received the honor because he had "played a tremendous role in helping to close the gap between Negroes and whites in the community."⁵⁰

Two of Akron's elderly black barristers, Atty. Artee Fleming and Atty. Alexander Russell were recognized by the local press in 1963 when they were selected to be featured in "Biography in Brief."

Fleming had been a lawyer in Saint Louis, Missouri prior to coming to Akron in 1920. He worked for a short time in the Miller Rubber Co. in Akron while he awaited his attorney's license from the state of Ohio. According to his biographical portrait, Fleming believed that he was the first Negro attorney to practice regularly before the local Common Pleas Court and also the first Negro to carry a case to appeal.⁵¹

When Russell came to Akron in 1927, he found employment as a production worker at Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. For nine years he worked as a laborer before entering Akron Law School in 1936. A year later he secured a position at the Ohio State Employment Service. Upon graduation from Akron Law School in 1944, Russell took Ohio's bar examination and placed second out of the

⁵⁰Akron Beacon Journal, 9 February 1968, p. B1.

⁵¹Ibid., 5 May 1963, p. F3.

six hundred who took the examination that year. He began his practice immediately and soon afterwards went into the real estate business--which grew through the years to be larger than his legal practice.⁶⁰

The mid-1960s were marked by a few more advances for Negroes in positions in the city's government. Opie Evans became the executive director of Akron's Civic Unity Council and served the citizens of Akron in that capacity for approximately five years.⁶¹

Atty. Arthur Snell had been employed as assistant police prosecutor as early as 1962. By 1964 he had been promoted through a series of positions before becoming first assistant to County Prosecutor James Barbuto. He served in that position until his untimely death in 1967. Two years afterwards a plaque was erected at the County Safety Building in his memory.⁶²

As citizens were being relocated by urban renewal in the mid-1960s, Robert Brown was a very positive influence in lessening the trauma that frequently attended their moving. Appointed in 1966 as social service coordinator in the Relocation Division of the city's Urban Renewal Department, Brown supervised the survey's referral

⁶⁰Ibid., 7 July 1963, p. C3.

⁶¹Interview with Opie Evans, 1164 Winton Avenue, Akron, Ohio, 29 December 1974.

⁶²Akron Beacon Journal, 8 November 1969, p. B1.

program for the families and individuals in the Opportunity Park area. He directed emphasis on solving the residents' social problems in addition to finding them new homes. Prior to that position, Brown successfully coordinated Lane Community School, a pilot program designed to upgrade the community through the provision of educational and recreational services to members of low-income families residing in the Lane-Wooster area.⁶³

In 1967 three Negro attorneys received significant appointments and contributed substantially to Akron's growth and development. Atty. William E. Fowler, Jr. was named to the Board of Appeals and Review of the U.S. Civil Service Commission and became the first Negro to serve on that board. In prior positions he had served as an assistant state attorney general, having left that post in 1961 to become a special assistant to the U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy in the organized crime and racketeering section.⁶⁴

Atty. W. Howard Fort's appointment by Governor Rhodes to serve as a trustee of the University of Akron (then a state university) marked the first time a Negro had held that position.⁶⁵ Seven years later Fort was elected as

⁶³Ibid., 5 October 1966, p. F1, 27 June 1968, p. E14.

⁶⁴Ibid., 3 January 1967, p. B1.

⁶⁵Knepper, New Lamps, p. 310.

chairman of the University of Akron's board of trustees.⁶⁶ He also had the distinction of being the first black officer on the board of the Akron Area Chamber of Commerce when he was first appointed to the executive committee. Fort served as president of that board in 1973.⁶⁷

The third noteworthy appointment occurred when Governor Rhodes named Atty. Joseph D. Roulhac to succeed Judge Evan J. Reed on the Akron Municipal Court bench. Roulhac thus became the first Negro judge in Akron's history.⁶⁸ In the following election, he was elected to serve as municipal judge and currently serves in that position.

As the decade neared its end, a Negro was named as director of the City Demonstration Agency (C D.A.) and Akron's second Negro councilman was elected. Frank Lomax III assumed the position of C.D.A.'s director in 1969, and his broad experiential background was beneficial in helping him implement the Model Cities Programs. He had been an outstanding athlete, a teacher, a CAC employee, director of North Akron's Elizabeth Park Opportunity Center, and a planning associate in group work and recreation with United Community Council (UCC).⁶⁹

⁶⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 27 June 1974, p. C9.

⁶⁷Ibid., 27 February 1973, p. C3.

⁶⁸Ibid., 26 May 1967, p. B1.

⁶⁹Ibid., 21 February 1971, p. D3.

Akron's second Negro councilman, Atty. James R. Williams, was elected in 1969 to represent the city's fourth ward and continues to serve in that position. Williams has been active in community, civic, fraternal, and political organizations for many years and has received numerous honors. Some of his notable awards have included: "Individual Achievement Award" from Akron Chapter of the NAACP in 1967, "Outstanding Achievement for Volunteer Service" from the UCC of Summit County in 1968; Akron Urban League's "Outstanding Community Leadership Award" for work on Channelwood Village Housing Development in 1973; and YMCA Service Award in 1974.⁷⁰

By 1970 Edward V. Brown had become the director of the Human Relation Commission for the city of Akron and presently serves in that capacity. In Brown's prior position at the ACSC&UL, his outstanding leadership as director of Economic Development and Employment was instrumental in that department's developing programs that acknowledged the "New Thrust" and effected social change.

Early in 1971 a black graduate architect, William M. Threatt, Jr., became rehabilitation administrator in the City of Akron's Department of Planning and Urban Renewal, Urban Renewal Division. His responsibilities entailed effecting rehabilitation of residential and commercial

⁷⁰"Personal Data Sheet, James R. Williams," Akron, Ohio, 1975.

structures in urban renewal areas. Threatt's prior background had well qualified him for that position for he had been assistant to the school architect for the Akron Board of Education from 1965 to 1971 and had also worked on a part-time basis as a graduate architect since 1967. In addition to his administrative responsibilities in local government, he was the codesigner and project coordinator for the new Second Baptist Church building currently under construction in Akron.⁷¹

For several decades there were very few black patrolmen or deputy sheriffs in the Akron area. In recent years more black officers have been hired, and an Akron chapter of the Black Law Enforcement Officers Association was formed in 1972. William Ellison, who had been on the force four years prior, was elected president. According to a declaration of that organization

The Black Officers in Akron, individual citizens and members of various social organizations of the Black Community, are bound by a common goal; the building of a strong Black Community . . .⁷²

The organization also seeks to promote relations that will benefit all people. Among its several aims and goals are the following

⁷¹"Resume of William M. Threatt, Jr.," Akron, Ohio, 2 January 1975.

⁷²"Declaration of Black Law Enforcement Officers Association," Akron, Ohio.

To insure fair and impartial law enforcement services to all citizens within the Summit County boundaries regardless of race, creed, or national origin.

To elevate, enhance and maintain the "police image" of the Black Policeman, specifically.

To work openly, for passage of better and more acceptable federal and local laws, statutes, and ordinances that will provide law and order with justice to all citizens, Black and white, and other minority groups.⁷³

A major accomplishment for the black community occurred in 1973 when eight firefighters were hired, namely, Stanley Anderson, Lee Bethune, Ronald Woods, David Goodwell, Juacquine Donnie, William Stevens, Charles Gladman, and Waddell Jeffries. As far as can be determined, they were the first black firemen in the city.

Two Washingtonians, Atty. Emmer Lancaster and Sterling Tucker--both former Akronites--had become active in the government in posts in Washington. In the fall of 1974, Tucker was elected to city council chairman, the post second only in power to that of the city's mayor. About the same time Lancaster returned to Akron after resigning from thirty years of administrative government work. (He left Akron in 1940 to become Advisor on Negro Affairs in the U.S. Department of Commerce.)

Tucker, born in Akron in 1923, grew up shining shoes and selling papers. While a student at the University of Akron, he was one of the first black busboys in

⁷³"Aims and Goals of The Black Law Enforcement Officers Association," Akron, Ohio, 1971.

one of Akron's most fashionable restaurants. Despite Ohio's public accommodations law, it was the restaurant's policy to refuse to serve Negroes. One Sunday, on a day off, Tucker and a friend of his (another busboy who worked with him) took their dates to the restaurant for dinner. Although the foursome was served, Tucker and his friend were fired.

A University of Akron graduate, Tucker has been a civil rights advocate all of his life. He worked at the ACSC&UL for several years, then served as executive director of Canton's Urban League before becoming head of the Urban League in Washington, D.C. He has gained a national and international reputation in the area of civil rights--traveling abroad as a lecturer for the U.S. State Department. Tucker has also worked as vice-chairman and one of the organizers of the 1963 March on Washington, and served as number two man to the National Urban League's Whitney Young.⁷⁴

Lancaster, born in Akron in 1898, returned to Akron permanently and is active again in the Negro Twenty-five Year Club (which is currently headed by Florence Minson). He is working on a restoration project to have John Brown's Memorial restored in time for the celebration activities of Akron's Sesquicentennial. The monument was

⁷⁴Washington Post, 26 October 1974, pp. D1, D3.

dedicated by the Negro Twenty-five Year Club in 1938.⁷⁵

The most recent political appointment of real significance occurred in March 1975 when Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller appointed a black Akronite, Thaddeus Garrett, Jr., as his Special Assistant for Urban Affairs. The appointment of twenty-six-year-old Garrett made him the highest ranking black on the vice-president's staff and the youngest assistant to either the president or vice-president.

Garrett, the Chief Assistant to Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and a member of the Ohio State Board of Education, was ordained as a minister in the AME Zion Church and has become associate minister to Rev. Eugene Morgan at Akron's Wesley Temple AME Zion.⁷⁶

Over a period of five decades, Leon Gordie, an Akron resident since 1917, had been active in politics and government. He had held positions in local and state government including deputy county auditor and state liquor inspector in his younger years and had run for office twice. (In 1921 Gordie was a Democratic candidate for city council and twenty-seven years later he was a candidate for state legislature.) As the years passed he pursued his political interests and was active in the Tire

⁷⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 19 November 1974, p. B3.

⁷⁶(Akron) Reporter, 29 March-5 April 1975.

Town Democrats.

During the 1960s, Gordie was honored on three separate occasions. Plaques in his possession reflect the contributions he has made to the Akron community. In 1960 he received an award from the Tire Town Democratic Club which read, "In appreciation of your leadership and unending efforts in behalf of all of Akron." A second plaque awarded to Gordie in 1966 by the ACSC&UL read, "In recognition of the valuable contributions you have made as a pioneer in the field of civil rights." His third award--the Samuel T. Kelly Award--was presented to him by the Akron Branch of the NAACP in 1968. Named in honor of the Negro attorney, widely known as a fighter for civil rights in Akron, the Samuel T. Kelly Award is one of the highest awards presented by the local NAACP. The plaque read, "Presented to Leon Gordie for outstanding contributions in the area of civil rights."

Gordie had long admired national black figures who had undergone hardships to elevate themselves and the black American. As testimony of that respect Gordie acquired two coins which are prized possessions. One is a silver half-dollar with the profiles of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver side by side. It was issued in 1952. The other coin, a Booker T. Washington silver half-dollar, dates back to 1946.⁷⁷

⁷⁷Interview with Leon Gordie, 8 November 1974.

Blacks in military careers

A few young black men in Akron pursued military careers as early as the 1940s and 1950s and by the mid-1960s had attained high ranking positions--for blacks at that time. Among the Akronites, or the former natives of Akron, who retired from U.S. Army military careers and their ranks at retirement were: Felix McDavid, colonel, Spurgeon Moore, lieutenant colonel; Dan Thomas, major; and Lawrence Wallace, captain. McDavid was one of the first black Akronites who became a commissioned officer,⁷⁸ and Moore received the Army Commendation Medal for twenty-four years of military service.⁷⁹

Two former residents of Akron who are presently engaged in military careers are Ronald Baskin and Clarence Thompson. Baskin has attained the rank of lieutenant colonel in the army,⁸⁰ and Thompson is presently in the air force.⁸¹

Blacks in business and industry

By the early 1960s only a few opportunities existed for Negroes who sought employment other than

⁷⁸ Interviews with Spurgeon Moore and Mary Chapman, Akron, Ohio, 4 April 1975.

⁷⁹ Akron Beacon Journal, 4 May 1967, p. B11.

⁸⁰ Interview with Spurgeon Moore, 4 April 1975.

⁸¹ (Akron) Reporter, 12 October-19 October 1974.

factory work. One black who set his sights higher and dared to be different--to resign from the relative security of a steady, well-paying factory job--was William McMillan, a graduate of the Akron Art Institute.

He went into industrial designing and began as a designer apprentice with Scherr and McDermott, the only Akron firm which would give him the opportunity to demonstrate his ability. McMillan, the first and only Negro designer on the firm's thirty-man team, was instrumental in making his colleagues conscious of the consumer potential of the Negro market.

The talented creator used his unusual ability to originate ideas, transform them to the drawing board, and produce concrete designs. The Oriental motif of the bar at Yanko's restaurant, a creation of McMillan's, exemplified that talent.⁸²

Another area of industry in which few blacks had pioneered before 1960 was the field of engineering. However, as the decade began, blacks were enrolled in engineering courses at the University of Akron and, as far as can be determined, in 1962 Walter Head became the university's first black graduate in mechanical engineering. One year later Archie Berry and Leroy Bronner attained

⁸²"Industrial Designer," Ebony Magazine, April 1961, pp. 39-40.

bachelor of science degrees in electrical engineering.⁸³

By the mid-1960s George W. Mathews, who knew the harsh realities of an impoverished childhood, had become one of Akron's wealthiest Negroes. Mathews, born on a cotton farm in 1887, was the eldest of ten sons. He was poorly educated, for he was only able to attend an elementary school five miles distant for about three months a year. High school was virtually inconceivable.

Poor economic conditions forced Mathews to leave home at age twenty-one and seek employment in Montgomery, Alabama. Unsuccessful in securing a job, he became extremely destitute and was compelled for some time to depend solely upon food from garbage cans in order to survive. As time passed, Mathews worked as a stockboy and subsequently as a hotel porter before saving enough money to invest in a restaurant.

In 1920 he attended the Dempsey-Willard championship bout in Toledo and stopped in Akron on his return trip South. Witnessing the prosperity in Akron--a growing city--he decided to remain.

As the years passed Mathews conducted several successful business enterprises: an eleven-room boarding house, a hotel, a barber shop, and a beauty parlor. Early in his business ventures, his request for a loan was

⁸³Interview with Archie Berry, Akron, Ohio, 4 April 1975.

denied by a bank in which he later owned stock.⁴⁴

Many years of personal sacrifice and service resulted in substantial prosperity and, in 1964, Mathews generously contributed \$25,000 to the University of Akron to establish an endowment fund for students demonstrating ability, potential, and financial need. S. H. Brightman, executive vice-president of the First National Bank and Dr. Edgar A. Toppin, Associate Professor of History at the University of Akron, counselled Mathews in arranging the gift. Thus, his noble gesture insured for others the educational opportunity which he himself had been denied.⁴⁵

Horace St. John Stewart, another black businessman, was also vitally concerned about the education of Akron's citizens. Although photography was his profession, he devoted an almost equal amount of time to community affairs.

Stewart had opened his photography studio in 1934 at 11½ North Howard Street and operated his business there until his death in 1968. He participated frequently in news photography courses at Kent State University and won awards at national conventions. His professional work had been displayed at O'Neil's and the Akron Public Library.

Some of his participation in community activities

⁴⁴Akron Beacon Journal, 2 February 1958, p. D3.

⁴⁵Ibid., 19 February 1964, p. A1.

involved presenting lectures on Negro history and leading discussions in the Akron Public Library's Great Books Program. He was recognized throughout the community as a scholarly "educator," and in 1968 he became Akron's only Negro to have a school named in his honor. In action taken on 1 April 1968 the Akron Board of Education adopted a resolution to name the school located at 1199 Wooster Avenue, Horace St. John Stewart Primary School.**

One year later the concern of eleven black men regarding the unrest prevalent among Akron's black youth led them to take actions toward a civic contribution that would simultaneously foster black pride and promote racial harmony.

The men--employees at Goodyear Aerospace--discussed Akron's racial conditions during their lunch breaks and decided that the best contribution that they could make to effect change would be to provide both black and white citizens with information on black history and culture. Thus, a more enlightened public could work toward racial accord. In addition, two other equally important goals were to provide a business incentive to black youth and to encourage them to seek materials on their heritage. Thus, Momconbeac, Inc., a black retail store, was established.

**"Akron Board of Education, Resolution #68-32." A framed copy of the resolution is located in the office of Rev. Eugene E. Morgan at Wesley Temple AME Zion Church, 104 North Prospect Street, Akron, Ohio.

Joseph Miller of the First National Bank; Vernon Odom, executive director of the ACSC&UL; and Dr. Wilfred B. Bozeman lent their assistance and support to the praiseworthy endeavor. The company's name came from using parts of the corporate's slogan and goal Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve. Company officers in 1972 included: Thomas J. Spencer, president; Charles Hill, vice-president; Rayfield Wade, treasurer; and Edward West, secretary.

The business, opened in March 1969, was the first successful all-black-owned and black-managed retail store in Akron, and its clientele was 50 percent black and 50 percent white.⁶⁷

Blacks had made some progress in terms of advancements in industry as in other areas. At the close of 1974, the resignation of one of Akron's prominent black leaders in the labor unions resulted in the promotion of another black as his successor. In December 1974 E. James Peake was appointed as the new director of the Fair Practices Division of the United Rubber Workers International. He replaced James Turner who retired and assumed the full-time presidency of the local NAACP.

Peake had assisted Turner for three years and also worked as a special union representative for pensions and

⁶⁷"An Experience in Brotherhood," Goodyear Aerospace Profile, Spring 1972, pp. 8-9.

insurances. His new responsibilities entail protecting URW members from discriminatory practices."⁸

Blacks in mass media

In the field of journalism, Negroes had published black newspapers sporadically over a period of fifty years or more. For two years in the 1960s (1963 through 1965) Opie Evans published news regarding Akron's black population in The Akronite. It was initially a newspaper, but changed to a magazine format in 1964. When Evans ceased its publication in 1965, he presented the news about Akron's Negroes on his weekly television show, "Highlights in Brown," broadcast on television station WAKR."⁹

In addition to publishing a newspaper and broadcasting, Evans has written several noteworthy articles. One which appeared in Motor Travel, a publication of the Akron Automobile Club, was prefaced by the following comments from Roger T. McCloskey, vice-president-manager:

In place of my regular comments this issue I am publishing a letter written by one of our members, Opie Evans, 1164 Winton Avenue, Akron, to his son upon the son's receiving his first driver's license. The wisdom of Mr. Evan's thoughts and remarks concerning safe and responsible driving is excellent, and could well serve as a model to guide other parents with sons and daughters coming of driving age."¹⁰

⁸"Akron Beacon Journal, 24 December 1974, p. B2.

⁹"Black Newspapers in Akron, Ohio."

¹⁰"Management's View," Motor Travel, August 1970, pp. 2, 8.

Evans also collaborated with Dr. Louis Carabelli to compose the "Dentists' Creed" which appeared in the Bulletin of the Akron Dental Society.⁹¹

On 30 September 1969 another black newspaper, The Reporter, was published, with Atty. William R. Ellis serving as editor. The newspaper, published weekly, is circulated to the public high schools in Akron, Barberton, and Kent, and to a number of colleges which include: Central State University, University of Tuskegee, Wilberforce University, University of Pennsylvania, Ohio State University, and the University of Akron.

The paper's policy is to report factual news; to play down crime, to unify people, to communicate through the newspaper; and to include current history.⁹²

On the local newspaper staff of the Akron Beacon Journal a black journalist, Albert Fitzpatrick, currently holds the position of managing editor. He joined the Beacon Journal staff as a reporter in 1956 after being graduated from Kent State University. In 1973 Fitzpatrick was honored by the university when he was named journalism alumnus of the year.⁹³ He also received a very high honor when he was selected as one of fifty editors to screen the

⁹¹"The Dentists' Creed," Bulletin of the Akron Dental Society, March 1966, p. 10.

⁹²"Black Newspapers in Akron," and Interview with Walter Arms, University of Akron, Akron, Ohio, 29 April 1975.

⁹³Akron Beacon Journal, 20 October 1973, p. B8.

1975 Pulitzer Prizes.⁹⁴

Black educators and students

Black educators have aspired to a number of positions over the past fifteen years--teachers, principals, directors of special programs, school psychologists, and college professors. More black teachers have been hired in the public school system, and black educators occupy some administrative positions.

Since 1960 black educators in the public school system have also been featured in "Biography in Brief" in the local press. Two of the earliest to be honored thusly were Martin Chapman and Ambrose Brazelton.

The biographical portrait of Chapman detailed his early life. Born and reared in Milledgeville, Georgia he resided there until completing the eighth grade when his parents brought the family north for a better opportunity in life. He worked at assorted odd jobs while obtaining his high school education, graduating from Garfield in 1939.⁹⁵

Chapman attained a bachelor's degree from the University of Akron before embarking on a teaching career. After serving an assistant principalship at Thornton Junior High and principalships at Crouse and Margaret Park

⁹⁴Ibid., 2 January 1975, p. A24.

⁹⁵Ibid., 29 July 1962, p. E3.

Schools, he became Akron's first black junior high school principal in 1972, being assigned to Goodyear Junior High School. The following year he became Akron's first black senior high school principal when he accepted the position at Garfield High School. The 1974 senior class of Garfield High School was the first class in Akron's history to graduate under a black principal.⁹⁶

Three accolades have been bestowed upon Chapman in the past few years. In 1972 he was honored by the citizens of Akron when he was chosen to receive the Distinguished Citizen's Award, presented by Mayor Ballard and approved by City Council. The award is presented for outstanding service to the Greater Akron community.

Chapman was also awarded the Freedom Foundation Award--one of the highest educational awards--in 1972 during his principalship at Crouse Elementary School. One year later he was presented with the University of Akron's Alumni Honor Award. The award honors graduates who have distinguished themselves in their specific fields of endeavor and for rendering service to the Greater Akron community.⁹⁷

Ambrose Brazelton, known to his friends and colleagues as "Braz," began teaching in 1952 at Bryan

⁹⁶Interview with Martin Chapman, 9 March 1975.

⁹⁷Ibid.

Elementary School. He soon distinguished himself as a physical education teacher who was concerned not only with the child's physical well-being, but with his total development--social, emotional, and academic--as well. Under his able direction, excellent drill teams and tumbling teams were developed. Brazelton was known to dispense one dollar for each "A" on the report cards of his former students who returned from junior high school to see him on report card day.³⁸

Unlike most physical education teachers, he has emphasized self-competition rather than competitive sports. Regardless of the child's height, weight, or color, Brazelton's philosophy has been to help each child develop into his own best self.

In all of the many activities in which he has participated, he has provided valuable leadership to youth. Such activities included participation in the Touchdown Club's Fun vs. Vandalism campaign, the ACSC&UL's evening recreation program, Wesley Temple's Sunday School classes (he served as superintendent); and the annual Soap Box Derby.³⁹

Brazelton, a Freedom Foundation Award winner in 1963, joined the Ohio State Department of Education two

³⁸Akron Beacon Journal, 25 November 1962, p. E3.

³⁹Ibid.

years later as supervisor of elementary physical education. In 1971 he was appointed by Ohio's State School Superintendent Martin W. Essex to direct the Model Cities Technical Assistance Office.¹⁰⁰

A current resident of Columbus, Ohio, Brazelton has become a nationally prominent educator who has lectured and given physical education demonstrations throughout the country. Still, some of his most cherished memories are events that occurred in Akron 1) the Bryanorama--a special program put on by the Bryan students at the ACSC&UL on a Sunday afternoon; 2) a "This is Your Life" program--a program dedicated to him prior to his leaving the Akron school system; and 3) two Bryan School drill team performances--one for a North Akron regional PTA meeting and another for an Ohio State Physical Education convention.

One of his most recent rewarding experiences was having the privilege of addressing the International Convention of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. He was particularly gratified because 1) he was a black man delivering a keynote address to an audience of 3,500 people, and 2) he was asked to speak by an association that was academically oriented rather than oriented toward physical education.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Interview with Ambrose Brazelton, 2311 Garden-dale Drive, Columbus, Ohio, 6 December 1974.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

In 1964 a biographical portrait of Abbie Willacy's life indicated that she had taught in Washington, D.C. before coming to Akron. It was in her assignment there that Mrs. Willacy realized for the first time that there were children less fortunate than she had been. Years later, as a member of the staff of the Akron school system, she continued to help the less fortunate and was known for her positive approach in aiding children to build their lives.

Mrs. Willacy was appointed in 1964 as a resource teacher for a special services program directed toward terminating the cultural lag prevalent among children residing in inner-city districts.¹⁰² Subsequently, she was promoted to a principalship at Crosby School and is currently the principal at Barber Elementary School.

Dr. Willa Player, a former Akron resident, received a federal appointment in 1966 when she was named as director of the Division of College Support in the U S. Office of Education. Prior to her appointment Dr Player was the president of Bennett College, having served in that capacity since 1956. She had been on the staff there since 1930.

The distinguished educator was Akron's first and only woman to become president of a college, and she was

¹⁰²Akron Beacon Journal, 22 November 1964, p. H3.

the first member of her race and sex in the city of Akron to earn a doctorate.¹⁰³ She received an Ed.D. degree from Columbia University in 1948.¹⁰⁴

Dr. Oscar Ritchie, active in community affairs in the Greater Akron community, was an outstanding educator who made significant strides in his own education and in educating others. He rose from a porter in a Cleveland theater to become the first Negro to serve on a faculty at a state university in Ohio. Dr. Ritchie, a sociology professor, began teaching at Kent State University as a graduate assistant in the mid-1940s. After completing the first year of his doctoral courses at the University of Wisconsin in 1949, he returned to Kent State University as an assistant professor. His doctorate was conferred at New York University in 1958.¹⁰⁵

Edith Ritchie, widow of Dr. Ritchie, was one of the originators of the Portage County Head Start Program.¹⁰⁶ She has taught in the Akron Public Schools at the elementary, junior high and senior high school levels and currently teaches English at North High School.

¹⁰³Ibid., 8 March 1966, p. B1.

¹⁰⁴Robert C. Cook, ed., Who's Who in American Education, 19th ed. (Nashville Who's Who in American Education, Inc., 1959-60), p. 1169.

¹⁰⁵Akron Beacon Journal, 17 June 1967, p. B8.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

Since 1970 a black band director, a black counselor, and two black administrators of educational programs were among those honored in "Biography in Brief."

Spurgeon Moore, a former army officer, pursued a second career after retiring from military service. His musical background and training were put to advantage when he decided to become a music instructor at Central High School. Later, as band director at South High School, he demonstrated his leadership, not only in establishing a first-rate band, but in enlisting community support to provide the band members with new uniforms and instruments.¹⁸⁷

Moore is presently an assistant principal at North High School, and is active in civic and community organizations. Common themes throughout all of his endeavors have been his respect for people, his support of an integrated society, and his maintenance of high standards of performance.

In 1971 George C. Miller was promoted to Director of Supplemental Services of the Akron Public Schools. Prior to his attaining that position, Miller had been a teacher, Akron's first black counselor, Akron's first black elementary school principal, and the Director of South High School's Skills Center.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 25 July 1971, p. D3.

He has always been an educator who believed in children and considered teaching an act of faith.¹⁰⁰ Miller, an innovator, has reputedly been an unorthodox and successful educator. His rare insight has enabled him to perceive needs and assess strengths and weaknesses almost instantly. He has demonstrated that ability both in the school system and at the ACSC&UL where he has tutored and counseled in evening sessions for over twenty years.

NORMA Marcere, formerly a counselor and school psychologist with the Akron Public Schools, has written several articles regarding racial prejudice. One of her noteworthy articles, "Genteel Violence," appeared in Good Housekeeping several years ago. "Thanks for the Memories" --the story of her life as one of the first black residents in North Canton, Ohio--is one of her unpublished articles. She has also written accounts of her problems in acquiring employment and her experiences as a black person in white restaurants.

Mrs. Marcere's character has been indicated in some of her writings as well as her thoughts as reflected in two of her remarks which follow.

Schools should start training courses for parents.

When I look at other people, I think about similarities, not differences.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 7 May 1972, p. D3.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 9 December 1973, p. E3.

Late in 1974 a biographical sketch on Andrew Bradley McClain noted that the young black educator was the director of the Upward Bound program at Western Reserve Academy. He had formerly worked in the Akron Public Schools at Hilltop House--a program to help youngsters who had difficulty in adjusting to the regular daily educational program.

McClain had also worked in Upward Bounds for several summers and was particularly concerned about high-ability students who had reached high school status with no real educational foundation. He believes that basic educational skills are crucial prerequisites to successful lives.

His ability to understand and believe in the less fortunate may stem partially from his family background. His great-great grandfather had been a slave and was influential in setting an example of courage, industry, and pride. McClain has taken pride in his heritage and, like his ancestors, has made his life productive. (An account of his ancestry has been noted in a foregoing section of the study regarding the lineage of his mother, Margaret McClain on pp. 274-75.)

The young educator, whose father died when he was only six, paid tribute to his mother as being an incredible person who kept his family going after the death of

his father.¹¹⁰ His mother has taught in the Akron Public Schools for many years and is currently a remedial reading teacher at Lincoln School.

For several decades black college students were not generally recognized by many organizations other than black fraternities and sororities. In recent years, however, they have been inducted into various campus organizations at white colleges and have been honored as nominees to Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities. In 1974 two black Akronites--Margretta K. Moore and Randy J. Edwards--were among those so honored.

Miss Moore, a student at Kent State University, was one of thirty-one students from that university to be selected on the basis of scholarship, leadership, participation in academic and extracurricular activities, citizenship, and service to the university.

She was a senior, majoring in music. Her other activities included membership in the Black United Students; participation in cultural planning and affirmative action programs in the Human Relations Department; giving piano instruction to children residing in Ravenna's Skeels-McElrath area; and participation in residence hall government.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 29 December 1974, p. E3.

¹¹¹ (Akron) Reporter, 1 February-8 February 1975.

Randy Edwards was graduated from the Ohio State School for the Blind before taking summer courses at the University of Evansville (Evansville, Indiana) and enrolling at Central State University in the fall of 1972.

Edwards, a political science major, would have graduated in 1975, but met his death early in 1974 after a short illness. After suffering the loss of his vision through two separate accidents early in his teens, he fought to overcome his handicap and went on to attain honors in both high school and at college. During his high school career he was selected the Most Valuable Track Athlete and achieved the National High Jump Record for the Blind in 1972. Edwards was one of the first two blind students to attend Central State University and in 1974 received the university's Male Student of the Year Award.

In some of his diverse college activities Edwards served as president of Circle K--a service organization; secretary and public relations director for Alpha Phi Alpha; business coordinator of student government, student senator; president of the Dormitory Council, member of the Gospel Choir; treasurer of the Political Science Club, and editor of the Political Science Newsletter.¹¹²

¹¹²Data Sheet in the Personal Files of Georgia Edwards, mother of Randy Edwards, Akron, Ohio, 1975. ✓

Black athletes

A number of black Akronites have been outstanding athletes--in high school, college, semiprofessionally, or professionally. To single out their individual attainments would necessitate another study. Therefore, only a few will be documented herein. Those selected for illustrative examples were the black athletes inducted in the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame and a participant in the Olympics.

To date fifteen black Akronites, selected from a variety of sports, have had the distinction of becoming members of the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame. In 1957 Gorilla Jones was selected for his outstanding boxing career as indicated in an earlier portion of the study (p. 193). Three years later Fritz Pollard, the outstanding halfback from Brown University, received the honor (pp. 165-66) documented Pollard's accomplishments). The contributions of William Bell (pp. 191-92) and his brother, Dr. Horace Bell (pp. 226-27), inducted in 1965 for their football prowess, have also been noted in earlier chapters of the study. In 1966, Andrew "Andy" Averitt was chosen for membership because of his earlier talents on the basketball court (p. 227).

The athletic records of the other inductees and some of their remarks regarding their various accomplishments follow.

Although Alex Adams had demonstrated his ability in football, basketball, and track at Garfield High School, his outstanding collegiate and coaching record in basketball and track were the basis for his being selected for induction in 1968. Some of his various honors throughout his college career included: 1) being named to the UP All-American basketball team, 2) being an NCAA high jump champion; 3) being All-Ohio 100- and 220-yard dash champion in 1961; 4) being chosen as the University of Akron's most valuable player in basketball for two seasons; 5) earning the coveted Mike Gregory Memorial Award; and 6) with Climon Lee, being named as co-Zip Athlete of the Year in 1961.

Adams taught in the Akron Public Schools for a few years and became Akron's first black head coach of both a minor and major sport. He was named head track coach in 1964 and head basketball coach in 1966, coaching both sports at Firestone High School. Under Adams tutelage the cross country team won four city and four district championships, and one city series basketball championship. He is currently an assistant basketball coach at the University of Akron.¹¹³

Don Clark, known for his brilliant football career in high school, college, and as a professional player, was selected as an inductee in 1969. Clark, a Central High

¹¹³Akron Beacon Journal, 18 October 1968, p. B4; Interview with Alex Adams, Akron, Ohio, 18 February 1975.

School athlete, had been named to the All-City team four times in high school and was honored as Beacon Journal Player of the Year and a member of the All-Ohio team in 1954. His collegiate record was also impressive. His star performance, which led the Ohio State University team to an undefeated season and a Rose Bowl victory in 1957, resulted in his being voted to the All-American teams by virtually every wire service. In his professional career with a Canadian team, the Montreal Alouettes, Clark was selected as an All-Pro and set a league record with a 106-yard touchdown run.¹¹⁴

A baseball star, Bobby Nash, and a distinguished football player, Lu Wims, were inducted in 1971. Nash, a former all-around athlete at West High School, won fame as a pitcher in the amateur ranks in the late 1940s. His unusual ability was demonstrated in 1948 when he pitched the Borden Auto team to the American Baseball Congress finals by hurling thirty-three scoreless innings and allowing only three hits. He was named the tourney's outstanding pitcher that year.¹¹⁵

Dr. Lu Wims was honored twice in 1971 when he was enshrined in two Halls of Fame--the College of Wooster Sports Hall of Fame in the spring of the year, and the

¹¹⁴ Akron Beacon Journal, 12 October 1969, p. B3.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 30 May 1971, p. B3.

Summit County Sports Hall of Fame later that fall. Wims had starred in three sports at South High School (football, basketball, and track), before progressing to an outstanding athletic career in college. He was a two-time All-Ohio Conference defensive end in football; named to the conference's second team in basketball; and set two track records--an indoor shot put mark of 48-7 and the outdoor discus throw of 163-2½.¹¹⁶

In remarks regarding some of his educational accomplishments, he credited three persons in particular with helping and encouraging him to attain his aspirations: a teacher, Mrs. Lois Saperstein; his sister, Sara, and a Wooster College benefactor, Charles McDermott.¹¹⁷

Wims became head basketball coach at South High School in 1969 and coached the team to a city series championship in 1971. He is currently Athletic Director and head basketball coach at Central State University.

Elmore Banton, a noted trackman, and Tommy Dingle, a football star, were among twelve others enshrined in the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame in 1972. Banton, an Ohio University alumnus, had a phenomenal collegiate cross country record which included some of the following honors: a two-time All-American; a two-time All-Ohio individual

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 28 September 1971, p. A22.

champion; the Mid-American champion, NCAA individual champion; and athlete of the year at Ohio University.¹¹⁸ The former Central High School graduate had won a scholarship to college and thanked two people for their special interest in him--his sister, Alberta, who "drummed" it into his head to go to college, and his college coach "who took a chance on a 130-pound weakling."¹¹⁹

Dingle, a tremendous record-breaker at Wooster College, was also the recipient of the Mike Gregory Award. At the time of his induction into the Hall of Fame, Dingle held ten football records at Wooster College.

Recalling how he got his start in football, he talked about his childhood experiences of playing football and cited his older brother, Willie--an end and a good player--as being an inspiration and guide to him. (Rodney Dingle, his younger brother, was also an outstanding football player.) Dingle's credits also extended to high school and college teammates and coaches at East High School and Wooster. He described his enshrinement as "his finest hour."¹²⁰

Three notable athletes, Martin Chapman--a football player; Harry Simpson--a baseball player, and Ronald

¹¹⁸Ibid., 27 September 1972, p. C3.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 17 October 1972, p. D4.

¹²⁰Ibid., 26 September 1972, p. D9; 17 October 1972, p. D4.

Delaney--a boxer, were inductees in 1973.

Chapman had received All-Conference and All-Ohio honors as an end on the University of Akron football team in the 1940s.¹²¹ An account of his induction paralleled his determination on the football field with his determination to acquire an education.

Chapman cited several people as being influential and instrumental in helping him set his sights toward becoming an educator or giving him moral support in life. He indicated that his mother had been a great inspiration to him and on her advice he had aspired to become a teacher. In a comparison of black pride during his childhood and black pride in the 1970s, Chapman stated:

They talk about the black revolution now. I knew I was somebody way back then. My family told me so, my church told me so and I had black teachers who told me so in my home town of Milledgeville, Ga.¹²²

Chapman also commended Mike Krino, the first head coach to accept a black assistant, and the Garfield PTA-- which offered him money to buy shoes and a graduation suit --as being among those unforgettable people who helped him.¹²³

Simpson, a former major league pitcher with the Cleveland Indians, the Kansas City Athletics, and the New

¹²¹Ibid., 29 July 1962, p. E3.

¹²²Ibid., 12 October 1973, p. B9.

¹²³Ibid.

York Yankees, came to Akron after retiring in 1959. He began his career in 1946 with the Philadelphia Stars in the Negro National League. Five years later he signed a contract with the Cleveland Indians and remained in professional baseball until retirement. Simpson was employed at Goodyear Aerospace at the time of induction into the Hall of Fame.¹²⁴

Ronald Delaney, a former West High School athlete, was an undefeated boxer in his three-year career as an amateur, and his professional record stood at fifty-three victories, three defeats, and four draws. His most publicized fight took place in February 1955 at the Akron Armory when he defeated Johnny Saxon, the welterweight champion, in a nontitle bout.

The fight which Delaney considered most memorable, however, was his defeat of Holly Mims at Madison Square Gardens. In 1954 Delaney was ranked fourth nationally in the middleweight division, and that same year Ring Magazine named him as Fighter of the Month.¹²⁵

In 1974, Gus Johnson was enshrined for his basketball prowess. During his outstanding career he was a five-time All-Pro with the Baltimore Bullets and a member

¹²⁴Ibid., 9 October 1973, p. D9.

¹²⁵Ibid., 5 October 1973, p. B6.

of the 1970-71 World Championship finalist team.¹²⁶ Johnson had attended Central High School where he was a key player early in his high school career.

Les Carney, a star trackman at Ohio University, came to Akron after graduation in 1959 and became employed at O'Neil's as an assistant buyer. Intent on representing the United States in the Olympic games in Rome, he continued to train and practiced in the evenings at the University of Akron, assisted by coach Tom Evans.

He captured a place on the United States' team in July 1960, and on 3 September 1960 won a silver medal, placing second to Italy's Ilvio Herruti. Carney ran the 220 in 20.5 seconds, and was one of the few trackmen from the U.S.A. to win a medal that year.¹²⁷

Black librarians

As the decade began Sarah Lindsey was branch librarian of Wooster Branch Library having been appointed to that position in 1958. She remained in that post until 1961 and was followed by Mrs. Evelyn Cage who became branch librarian in 1962.¹²⁸

Mrs. Mildred Wright (sister of Mrs. Evelyn Cage)

¹²⁶Ibid., 8 October 1974, p. D5.

¹²⁷Ibid., 14 October 1968, p. B1.

¹²⁸Interview with Mrs. Curtice Myers, Akron, Ohio, 4 April 1975.

joined the Akron Public Library staff as a children's librarian in 1960. She was appointed as branch librarian in 1970 and is presently serving in that position.¹²⁹ Mrs. Wright has been particularly effective in helping to establish the successful reading program at Wooster Branch Library, sponsored in conjunction with the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Blacks in medicine

Dr. Melvin Farris, a battler of discrimination in all of its forms, had fought specifically to eliminate segregation in Akron's semiprivate hospital rooms prior to the 1950s. But he had learned to confront life's problems years earlier in his childhood, and he continued that battle throughout medical school. An account of his struggle to become a doctor through sheer determination, countless hours of hard labor at all kinds of jobs, personal sacrifices, and the financial assistance from classmates and several scholarships, reflected the respect that he earned as he triumphed over adversities.

Farris, an honor graduate of Lorain High School in 1934, once received financial support from the Lorain Rotary Club. Later in his sophomore year of medical school, when he didn't have money to continue, his all-white classmates chipped in three dollars apiece to pay

¹²⁹Akron Beacon Journal, 29 November 1970, p. F3.

his tuition.

Throughout his adult life Farris has been active in community affairs and has fought for equality and educational opportunities whether personally involved or not. He has devoted many hours of his time toward making Akron a better place in which to live.¹³⁰

Blacks were beginning to make gains in diverse areas of medicine and by 1961 a Negro was president of District One of the Ohio Society of Medical Technologists. James Stenbridge, who was known to many Akronites as a pianist in a jazz band, attended Ohio State University and graduated in 1959 with a bachelor of science degree in bacteriology. He trained for one year as a medical technologist at St. Thomas Hospital before joining the hospital's staff.¹³¹

A number of significant advancements occurred for black physicians beginning in the 1960s. As far as can be determined, in 1964 Dr. Luther Robinson became the first black doctor to complete a residency, in pediatrics, at Akron Children's Hospital, and in that same year Dr. Russell Platt was the first black physician to complete a residency, in internal medicine, at Akron City Hospital.¹³²

¹³⁰Ibid., 22 May 1960, p. D3.

¹³¹Ibid., 13 June 1962.

¹³²Interview with Dr. Luther Robinson, Akron, Ohio, 4 April 1975.

By the late 1960s Akron's black doctors had not only become specialists, but a few had also begun to sub-specialize. Dr. Haynes B. Robinson, Jr. became a pediatric pathologist and is currently employed in that position at Akron Children's Hospital. He had graduated from medical school at Ohio State University and completed residencies in pediatrics, general pathology, and pediatric pathology at the State University of New York in Buffalo.¹³³

Dr. Hayes Davis subspecialized in nephrology having studied that branch of medicine at University Hospital of Case-Western Reserve from 1971 to 1974. He attained his medical degree from Tufts University, School of Medicine in Boston, Massachusetts ¹³⁴

Davis was honored in the fall of 1974 at a reception sponsored by Mt. Zion Baptist Church in recognition of his being appointed as head of the nephrology department at Akron City Hospital. He became the first black in the city's history to become a full-time head of a medical department in any of Akron's hospitals.¹³⁵

By the early 1970s Dr. Wilfred B. Bozeman served as chief of obstetrics and gynecology at Akron General

¹³³Interview with Dr. Haynes Robinson, Jr., Akron, Ohio, 4 April 1975.

¹³⁴Interview with Dr. Hayes Davis, Akron, Ohio, 11 April 1975,

¹³⁵Ibid; (Akron) Reporter, 23 November-30 November 1974.

Medical Center, and Dr. John Poulson served as chief of staff at St. Thomas Hospital.¹³⁶

A local black doctor who has made several advancements within the past fifteen years is Dr. E. Gates Morgan, a general surgeon. Morgan had the distinction of being the first black physician in Akron to become an officer in the Summit County Medical Society, serving as treasurer in 1967. In 1971 he was elected as president of the society and has served a total of eight years in various offices on its executive advisory board.

Morgan has attained three specialties in his medical career and currently practices all three he has been a general surgeon for nineteen years; has practiced psychosomatic medicine for fifteen years using hypnotherapy and hypnoanalysis techniques; and has practiced acupuncture for one-and-a-half years.¹³⁷

In January 1975 Dr. Luther Robinson was appointed as a representative of the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine on the Admissions Committee which will recommend admission of students to the combined B.S.-M.D. program of the University of Akron. (The Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine is a consortium of the University of Akron, Kent State University, and

¹³⁶ Interview with Dr. Luther Robinson, 4 April 1975.

¹³⁷ Interview with Dr. E. Gates Morgan, Akron, Ohio, 11 April 1975.

Youngstown State University) Robinson is also an officer of the medical staff at Akron Children's Hospital.¹³⁸

Early in 1975 there were black residents in Akron hospitals who were training in the following diverse specialties ophthalmology, orthopedics, urology, pediatrics, internal medicine, and obstetrics and gynecology.¹³⁹

Blacks in the arts

A number of young black poets emerged in the 1960s as black pride, black literature, and black language became more in vogue.

One who longed to become a poet but never saw his dreams fulfilled was Jerry Herbert, who died at age twenty-one after a short illness. A graduate of South High School, Herbert had spent many hours developing his talent. Several of his poems had been published in the Akron Beacon Journal, and he was described by one reporter as having an uncanny way of putting his finger on a problem through verse.¹⁴⁰

Herbert, one of eight children of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Herbert, had a deep respect for his family and had written several poems about his parents which reflected the guidance, strength, and love they had given their

¹³⁸ Interview with Dr. Luther Robinson, 4 April 1975.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Akron Beacon Journal, 20 August 1972, p. A34.

children.

Another young Akron poet, Lloyd P. Terrell, was honored in February 1975 when the editors of the National Poetry Anthology selected one of his poems to appear in their 1975 publication. The poem entitled "I Remember" was written by Terrell in honor of the famous contralto, Marian Anderson. Terrell, a student at Paine College, plans to publish a book of poetry, Thoughts on Paper, in 1975.¹⁴¹

As a part of the educational program jointly sponsored by Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and Wooster Branch of the Akron Public Library, Thomas M. Sistrunk, a local black poet, accepted an offer to teach young people how to develop their creative writing talents.

Sistrunk, who has published a series of his poems, has recorded some of his poetry, has made numerous appearances on radio and television programs, and has spoken at area high schools.¹⁴²

A former Akronite, Linda Brown Bragg, has achieved national recognition as a poet. Mrs. Bragg, who teaches in the Black Literature and Black Studies Department at the University of North Carolina, published a book of poems, "A Love Song to Black Men," which was released in

¹⁴¹ (Akron) Reporter, 15 February-22 February 1975.

¹⁴² Ibid., 23 November-30 November 1974.

February 1975.¹⁴³

In the field of art, Edith Player Brown, a local black artist, has gained recognition for her contemporary paintings which are abstract expressions with references to nature. She has won several Akron Art Institute awards and has had one-man shows locally at Packard Gallery and the Akron Art Institute, and at Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Her paintings, which are a part of permanent collections, include one at the Akron Art Institute, "The Third Hour"--a depiction of the crucifixion--and two abstract paintings at the Akron Public Library. One of her paintings is exhibited in the main office of the Akron National Bank, and several others are in the offices of Madison, Madison, and Madison, architects in Cleveland, Ohio.¹⁴⁴

Perhaps one of the most versatile and unusual nationally known former Akronites is a musician, Len Chandler, a black poet-singer. Chandler had been the subject of a Time Magazine article in 1968 when he was a singing news commentator at radio station KRLA in Pasadena, California. He was assigned to write and sing three numbers a day for their 9 00 A.M., 12:00 M, and 3:00 P.M.

¹⁴³Interview with Edith Player Brown, Akron, Ohio, 7 March 1975.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

news broadcasts.

According to a news article, some of Chandler's instant music

is topical, some is philosophical, some is delivered simply with his voice and guitar, some mixes multiple voices (all Chandler's) with guitar, oboes, English horns, flutes, and an assortment of percussion effects, all played by Chandler. Some of the songs are short, but many run three or three-and-a-half minutes in length.¹⁴⁵

While obtaining his bachelor's degree from the University of Akron, Chandler wrote twenty-three ballads, chorus numbers, and novelty tunes for a 1958 production (at the university) of his own musical comedy "Love's Here at Last."

The talented musician earned his master's degree from Columbia University, became interested in folk music, and has traveled as a folk singer making appearances at New York's Carnegie Hall, the Greek Theater in Los Angeles, Newport's Folk Festival, and on soul shows on television.¹⁴⁶

A former Akronite, Kermit Moore, a world-renowned black cellist, continued to play at recitals in New York and other large cities throughout the 1960s. His solo appearance with the Symphony Orchestra at Philharmonic Hall in New York's Lincoln Center evoked seven curtain

¹⁴⁵Los Angeles Times, 3 November 1968, Calendar, p. 12.

¹⁴⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 19 March 1970, p. D2.

calls.¹⁴⁷ In 1974 Moore conducted the Symphony of the New World in a program of compositions by five black composers, held in New York City.¹⁴⁸

An accomplished musician in the area of black church music is Bettye R. Palms, music minister of Greater Bethel Baptist Church in Akron.

Mrs. Palms, who worked as a validator at the Summit County Welfare Office in 1970, had attended the University of Akron fifteen years prior, and music instructors at that institution had predicted a successful future for her as a coloratura soprano or as a concert pianist.

Church music, however, was the most important thing in her life. Mrs. Palms' soul interpretations of anthems, spirituals, and gospels has resulted in their being recorded by the church chorus on long-playing albums.

At age twelve she became choir director at St. John Christian Methodist Episcopal Church on Berry Avenue, and by age sixteen she was pianist at Providence Baptist Church. Six months later Mrs. Palms accompanied the choir at Greater Bethel Baptist Church. As music minister, she selects the music for the services, arranges it, and teaches the chorus members to sing it according to her

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 21 May 1967, Arts Section, p. 19.

¹⁴⁸New York Post, 25 February 1974.

soul interpretations.¹⁴⁹

Blacks and religion

The strength provided by black churches has always been significant in the lives of Negroes. In the tumultuous times of the civil rights movement, as in other times, the leadership of pastors was crucial. Akron's black ministers, like ministers elsewhere, sought and encouraged racial harmony and supported the quest for civil rights.

By the mid-1960s black churches were not only involved in programs to strengthen their own churches internally but were also involved in community activities to close the gap between those who had been more fortunate and those who had been less fortunate. One example of their support was their participation in the Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U) sponsored by the ACSC&UL.¹⁵⁰

The growth of Akron's black religious institutions both in membership and numbers has been encouraging.¹⁵¹ A description of the programs of a few congregations follows to illustrate the internal development of Akron's

¹⁴⁹Akron Beacon Journal, 11 January 1970, p E3.

¹⁵⁰Akron Community Service Center and Urban League, Inc., "Forty-first Annual Report: Action Now to Close the Gap," Akron, Ohio, 1966.

¹⁵¹A list of Akron's black churches is included in appendix 3.

black churches.

A number of new church structures were erected between 1960 and 1975. Early in the 1960s ground was broken for the new Antioch Baptist Church and Rev. Dr. Upshaw assumed the job of general contractor. He saved the congregation substantial funds as he worked alongside of them doing the manual labor necessary to build the edifice. The new worship center with an educational unit was dedicated on 3 June 1962.¹⁵²

St. Paul AME Church had undergone numerous building improvements under the pastorship of Rev. G. Lincoln Caddell who pastored from 1957 to 1970. Rev. Dr. Caddell, a graduate of Payne Theological Seminary and Wilberforce University, was a profound theologian. In 1956 he received the Alumni Citation of Honor from Wilberforce University. He was elected to the board of directors of Payne Theological Seminary in 1958. In 1966 Rev. Dr. Caddell was listed in Who's Who in Negro Clergy¹⁵³

Following Rev. Dr. Caddell's pastorship, Rev. Simon Perkins, Jr. became minister of the church. Under his pastorate, membership increased, attendance doubled, and a new church was erected. Groundbreaking ceremonies occurred in June 1971. Three years later, Rev. Harold

¹⁵²"Program of Antioch," 1962.

¹⁵³(Akron) Reporter, 21 December-28 December 1974.

Ashby became pastor of St. Paul AME Church and is presently serving as pastor to that congregation.¹⁵⁴

Centenary United Methodist Church has moved twice during the past fifteen years. In 1960 it was located at Wooster Avenue and Raymond Street. Seven years later the church opened its doors to the youth in the area and housed the Wooster Avenue Youth Center in the building's basement. Several ministers served the church between 1960 and 1975. Their names and years of pastorship follow: Rev. C. A. Talbert, 1959-62, Rev. Robert Wynn, 1962-66; Rev. Karl L. Bucey, 1966-68; Rev. Walter Weston, 1968-72; Rev. Robert Talbert, 1969-71. Rev. Donald E. Grant assumed the position in 1972 and currently serves as pastor. Under Rev. Mr. Grant's pastorship the church relocated to its newly built structure on Superior Avenue.¹⁵⁵

The congregation had copastors, Rev. Walter Weston and Rev. Robert Talbert, between 1969 and 1971. A few years after his pastorship at Centenary, Rev. Mr. Talbert became Superintendent of Akron District of the United Methodist Church which includes the areas of Summit County and western Portage County.¹⁵⁶ Centenary is the only

¹⁵⁴"Condensed History of St. Paul," 1951, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵⁵"Souvenir Program Fiftieth Anniversary of Centenary," 1968.

¹⁵⁶Akron Beacon Journal, 30 December 1973, p. E3.

primarily black United Methodist Church in the Akron district and has had white pastors.

In the mid-1960s Rev. William Hawkins, pastor of Akron's Greater Bethel Baptist Church, initiated a program entitled SHARE (Self-Help and Re-Education) to inspire Negroes to help themselves and to improve their position in the community. Phase One of the program was designed to provide emergency service to indigent Akronites, both black and white. Phase Two was established to sell shares to interested citizens to provide capital to purchase a nursing home, laundromat, and restaurant. Thus, jobs would be provided for skilled and nonskilled persons.¹⁵⁷

The internal strength of Wesley Temple's congregation was built through a number of programs developed by its pastor, Rev. Eugene E. Morgan. Under Rev. Dr. Morgan's leadership, a Christian Education Building was erected in 1963. The Brotherhood of Wesley Temple was organized a year later to promote the men's involvement in the church. Fifty men have met monthly for breakfast, fellowship and to hear the remarks of guest speakers. To further strengthen the organization of the church, a Presidents' Council was formed which consisted of all of the presidents of the various organizations within the church.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 3 December 1965, p. A5.

¹⁵⁸"Wesley Temple One Hundredth Anniversary," Akron, 1966.

Rev. Dr. Morgan became the first Negro to serve on the Akron Board of Education and served as the board's president for one term. In March 1973 a testimonial dinner was given in his honor. Among other honors were receiving the governor's award for community action in 1973 and being granted an honorary doctor of humane letters from the University of Akron.¹⁵⁹

The Robert Street Church of God has also developed programs to strengthen its congregation and provided an educational project for youngsters in the community. In the summer of 1974 the church sponsored a project entitled Reading Excellence Acceleration Program (R.E.A.P.). The program, conducted for six weeks, was designed to improve reading comprehension and word discrimination skills and to promote reading enjoyment. It served primary children in the Robinson School area and enlisted the cooperation of the school system.¹⁶⁰

The church also planned to strengthen the family through its proposed marriage enrichment laboratory--a program structured to promote understanding of marriage and to help marriages grow.

Members of the congregation of Second Baptist

¹⁵⁹Akron Beacon Journal, 4 March 1973, p. E3; 10 March 1973, p. A9.

¹⁶⁰Literature in the Personal Records of the Robert Street Church of God, Akron, Ohio, 1975.

Church attended groundbreaking ceremonies for their new building in the fall of 1974.¹⁶¹ Rev. Stanley Lynton, the pastor since 1942, has furnished his members with the kind of spiritual strength which has sustained him throughout his life. His father died when he was only six months old and his mother's death occurred when he was still a young child. Raised in Cleveland by an aunt he was taught to "be anything you want, but be the best."¹⁶² Rev. Dr. Lynton, who views life as "a chance to be a servant rather than a slave," was the first Negro president of the Akron Ministerial Association. He served three years as chairman of the Interfaith Committee of the Council of Churches and was a charter member of the Citizen's for Progress.¹⁶³

Black humanitarians

A number of blacks have been selected for the local newspaper's feature "Biography in Brief." Most have been chosen for business or professional reasons, but several have been cited for their humanitarianism--their everyday efforts to make the world a better place in which to live, to make each day a little brighter for others.

London Stone, a Goodyear employee, had a minimal formal education but took a particular interest in safety

¹⁶¹ (Akron) Reporter, 28 September-5 October 1974.

¹⁶² Akron Beacon Journal, 1 May 1966, p. F3.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

when he worked a second job at Acme Safety Products. Believing in safety as a philosophy of life, Stone has taken years of Red Cross training on the subject; has contributed award-winning safety ideas to Goodyear; and has become a first-aid man and male nurse for his church, Greater Bethel Baptist.

When the Acme Safety Products Company was dissolved, Stone found a second job at Akron General Medical Center where he has become a real morale builder. Appreciative of the dedication the nurses give to others, he felt they should be recognized. His policy has been to invite groups of the hospital staff to be his guests at dinner and if unable to accompany them, he has the restaurant charge the bill to his account. According to the news article, "It really does show there is someone who cares."¹⁶⁴

Cleathus Johnson, one of the founders of Prince of Peace Baptist Church and a devoted church worker, has contributed hours of happiness to others through his routine hospital visits to patients--many of whom have no family close by, or would have had no visitor at all if it weren't for Johnson.

When he first began visiting, his routine was simply to visit room by room to greet the patients and ask

¹⁶⁴Akron Beacon Journal, 14 October 1973, p. H3.

how they felt. As time passed, Akron City Hospital granted him the privilege of calling at nonvisiting hours because his attention was so beneficial to certain patients and a necessary contact with the outside world for many who were confined. Johnson later joined the hospital volunteer staff after retiring from Firestone Tire and Rubber Co.¹⁶⁵

John Robinson, stricken in the prime of life by multiple sclerosis, has also demonstrated the qualities characteristic of humanitarians. According to his biographical portrait he has spent many of his painful hours planning activities for others who are handicapped. An illustrative case is a cultural program which he organized for the members of Handicap Action wherein he has taken them to the Akron Public Library hoping that it will benefit both the handicapped and society.

His strength of spirit is reflected in his words.

It's time mankind, and that includes the handicapped, started taking a long, hard look at itself . . . They (the handicapped) will become better citizens. Knowledge is power¹⁶⁶

Opie Evans has spread joy among both the young and old, black and white, in Akron. In 1973, he visited a class at Grace School and taught them about economic power based on personal experience in his own life. Evans gave

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 25 March 1973, p. F3.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 14 December 1969, p. E3.

each youngster a dollar and a choice--to spend the dollar or to double its value by opening a savings account at a local bank.¹⁶⁷

About one year later, Evans purchased a motor home in which he takes senior citizens for outings wherever they wish to visit. He does it "because he likes people."¹⁶⁸

Two black women, Dorothy O. Jackson and Pauline R. Kirk, have made significant contributions toward helping the handicapped. Dorothy Jackson worked as director of public relations of Goodwill Industries in the 1960s and through a scholarship which they provided her, she learned to communicate with the deaf. During a certain period of each day, she taught sign language to staff members and workers who could hear in order to enable them to talk with the deaf.¹⁶⁹

In 1967 Pauline Kirk enrolled in a course in Braille transcription at the University of Akron so that she could learn to copy books for the blind. Mrs. Kirk, now an accomplished certified transcriber, has also taught classes in transcription at the Red Cross headquarters. In addition, she has worked as a volunteer in the class

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 12 February 1973, p. B1.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 18 February 1974, p. A6.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 27 February 1966, p. J3.

for visually handicapped children at Crouse Elementary School.¹⁷⁰

Two other black women, Emma Jean Stewart and Ida Lou Talley, have contributed immeasurably to the growth and development of children. Mrs. Stewart founded the Martin Luther King Center, a chartered youth activity center which is located in a converted church building approximately a block from her home on Bell Street.

The center was actually started in the basement of her home where she had given countless hours of devotion and guidance to children teaching them about love, respect, right, and wrong.

She doesn't use the words "good" or "bad" in her descriptions of children's behavior, but has preferred to express her beliefs about children's conduct thusly

Children need a chance to turn around and look at things, and then maybe grow in a different direction from where they started.¹⁷¹

Mrs. Talley, like Mrs. Stewart, has known the joy that comes from helping others. She has been an outstanding community worker, volunteering her time to the Girl Scouts and several PTA organizations since 1951. In 1963 she received an award for her work with the Girl Scouts and four years later was elected to the board of

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 7 April 1974, p. F3.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 26 December 1971, p. D3.

the Western Reserve Council of Girl Scouts. In 1968 Mrs. Talley was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in the Ohio Congress of Parents and Teachers

The example of her life has been living proof of the philosophy of believing in one's self, and she once provided an unforgettable lesson to youngsters to instill self-confidence in them. After several children had told her, on a given occasion, "I can't do it," she had them write "I can't" on a piece of paper. While the children watched, Mrs. Talley dug a hole, requested that they drop their "I can't's" in it; and buried the "I can't's" that day. Her demonstrative lesson caused the youngsters to think twice about saying "I can't."¹⁷²

Summary

A civil rights movement was underway throughout the nation by the 1960s as blacks used nonviolent approaches to resist the discrimination and oppression which had for so long been a part of their lives.

College students became involved in the movement and participated in sit-ins, freedom rides, marches, and other nonviolent tactics to draw attention to the inequality that prevailed in America. As their approaches were answered by fire hoses, clubbings, the use of police dogs, etc., the mass media aired the violence and the

¹⁷²Ibid., 8 June 1969, p. D3.

entire world viewed the horrendous treatment of black Americans and white sympathizers.

In the mid-1960s federal programs were initiated to help the poor and to respond to the frustrating circumstances engulfing their lives. As these programs were being implemented, scattered violent outbreaks were erupting nationwide as hopeless ghetto dwellers expressed their hostility through looting and burning.

Towards the decade's end the emergence of black power and black pride was omnipresent for blacks had been the focus of national and international attention. Multiple changes occurred on a nationwide scale as blacks gained recognition--and black became beautiful and respectable.

The local response to the civil rights movement mirrored the national events as Akron's black residents responded with protests, programs, and pride.

Black Akronites, empathizing with blacks throughout the country, demonstrated their sentiments through participation in marches, and later in participating in six days of civil disturbance.

Anti-poverty programs were developed and funded through Summit County CAC and Model Cities, and the ACSC&UL--which historically had had a philosophy of social service--redirected its emphasis toward social change.

Most programs which attempted to break the poverty

cycle focused on upgrading education, economic development, employment, and general living conditions.

Black pride was evident in the continuance of programs that had existed prior to the civil rights movement --the Elks Oratorical Contest and observance of the Emancipation Proclamation Day--and through the development of new programs. A series of black history lectures and discussions was initiated; a "Crispus Attucks Day" was proclaimed; and a "Miss Black Akron" contest emerged.

Testimony of the advances made by blacks was most evident in their broadened areas of employment--both vertically and horizontally. Blacks were working in significantly more fields; they were starting to be employed in policy-making and decisions, they were being appointed as board members of important organizations in the city; and they were in positions to help other Negroes.

The diverse areas in which Negroes were employed included: law, government, military service, business, industry, mass media, education, libraries, ministry, medicine, athletics, and social work.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In 1825, when the city of Akron was founded, the institution of slavery was becoming a national issue, and diverse approaches to solve the slavery question and the Negro problem in America were being proposed, i.e., colonization, abolition of slavery, and resistance to slavery through escape.

As the various movements began, sentiments regarding slavery and freemen were reflected in varied opinions both between and within states. Although Ohioans did not support slavery, they were sharply divided in their acceptance of freemen in the state, and "Black Laws" were enacted to regulate the lives of blacks and mulattoes.

Since Akron was located in the Western Reserve, blacks residing in the city were treated more humanely and received strong support and protection from the abolitionists in the area. Several Underground Railroad stations passed through the city and fugitive slaves were assisted on their way to Canada in the years prior to the Civil War.

During the Civil War, several of Akron's black men served in regiments from Ohio and other states. Some of them had been born free, but at least one--who settled in Akron after the war--had escaped from slavery prior to enlisting in the service.

Although the war terminated the practice of slavery, racial barriers prevailed and Akron's black citizens recognized the need to unify in order to progress. By the century's end, three black churches had been organized, a minute number of black business enterprises were in operation; a civic club was founded, two black political clubs were established, and two colored benevolent and secret societies were formed.

The city's first riot occurred at the turn of the century when a Negro, Louis Peck, was accused of assaulting a six-year-old girl. He was arrested in Akron, but was subsequently transferred secretly to a Cleveland jail after mob rule prevailed. A crowd had advanced on the city jail in an attempt to enter forcibly and remove Peck.

In ensuing actions 1) police fired on the advancing rioters, accidentally killing two children; 2) the enraged crowd returned hours later, burned City Hall and damaged and destroyed other properties; and 3) martial law had to be declared.

After calm was restored, and trials could take place, forty-one persons were prosecuted and Peck was

imprisoned at the state penitentiary. Years later, he was granted an unconditional pardon upon presentation of evidence that he had not received a fair trial.

In the first decade of the 1900s, black residents experienced gradual growth politically and socially. They had become more cognizant of their lack of representation in the city's government and therefore organized a political club to give united support only to the political party which would act in their behalf.

Socially, Akron's black residents were establishing local chapters of national social organizations to uplift Negroes either through self-help and/or through improved race relations. Among the early organizations oriented toward self-help were the secret and benevolent societies such as the Daughters of Jerusalem, the I.B.P.O.E. of W. (the Negro Elks), the Grand United Order of True Reformers, and the Knights of Pythias. The Loyal Legion of Labor, supported by many of Akron's prominent white citizens, sought to elevate the black man's position while simultaneously creating racial accord.

Although slavery was ended, "the Negro problem" had not been eliminated by the Civil War, and diverse solutions to the "problem" were proposed by blacks and whites, professionals and laymen. Lecturers generally advised blacks to acquire an education and encouraged whites to understand Negroes

A marked change in Akron's racial composition occurred between 1910 and 1919 as significant numbers of southern blacks and whites migrated to Akron during World War I. The Negro population rose sharply from 525 to 5,580 and was accompanied by drastic changes in attitudes toward Negroes. Racial hostility prevailed and blacks were confronted with the terror tactics and "Jim Crowism" practiced in the South.

Segregated environments served to develop black cohesion, black consciousness, and black culture. More black churches were formed and became key institutions in the lives of Negroes, black political and social organizations increased, and black professionals and businessmen were beginning to secure a black clientele. As the decade neared its end, a powerful organization, the local NAACP, was organized, and a Colored YMCA was formed to attend to Negroes' social problems.

Black students in Akron rarely completed high school and a college education was almost nonexistent. Those who did attend college generally enrolled at Wilberforce University. One or two Akronites attended the University of Akron by the late 1910s.

By 1920 racial oppression was one of the characteristics of the city of Akron following the influx of southern Negroes in the prior decade. Protests and resistance were the responses on the part of Akron's black

population.

Black citizens, realizing their slow progress politically, began to seek public office themselves and pressured for political appointments of Negroes to positions in local government. Their efforts resulted in very minimal gains. Two blacks were appointed in the police department and a few other political jobs were secured by 1930.

The plight of blacks was protested through speakers who educated whites about Negroes, and Negroes demonstrated their pride in blackness through participation in programs related to black history.

While some economic growth was evident, the majority of blacks were restricted to menial employment. Economic advances, although slow, were manifested through several changes: 1) blacks engaged in a variety of businesses owned or operated by men and/or women, 2) the number of black professionals had increased to four black physicians, three dentists, five attorneys, and two pharmacists, 3) a Negro business league was formed to promote black business, and 4) a black finance company was instituted to grant Negroes loans.

The black social environment in Akron embraced cultural, athletic, community, educational, and religious activities. Black churches continued to occupy a vital position in the lives of Negroes, serving as houses of

worship, lecture halls for speakers, and a social outlet where leadership was developed and fellowship was extended.

The ACCW, a social service agency to assist blacks, grew out of the efforts of the Colored YMCA, and the NAACP continued to fight racial discrimination on all fronts. Both organizations became prominent in the black community and addressed most of its problems.

Blacks were beginning to realize the value of an education and families and organizations encouraged youngsters to complete their high school educations. But the depression years were particularly difficult for Akron's Negro families (blacks were the last to be hired and the first to be laid off) and the need to secure employment frequently prevented them from completing their education.

Despite the hardships they encountered, Negroes were making progress. Black athletes were gaining recognition; a black elementary school pupil had won the Akron Spelling Bee; more Negroes were completing high school and advancing to college (with assistance from local black organizations) and other black associations were founded to advance Negroes, socially, culturally, and civically.

As the 1940s began the chief problem confronting Akron's Negro population was one of economics, for blacks continued to be underemployed regardless of their educational attainment. Both militant strategies and dialogues were utilized by black organizations to effect a change in

the hiring policies of Akron's business and industrial leaders, but most endeavors met with recalcitrance.

In the black social environment, churches and organizations remained supportive in their attempts to motivate Negroes to further their educations, recreational programs were increasing, and blacks were participating in more cultural activities.

Living quarters for most black Americans were in older neighborhoods, and Akron's Negro population was the most ill-housed of the city's residents. Thus, they continued to fight for slum clearance projects, the elimination of racial barriers related to purchasing or renting homes, and the eradication of vice conditions in their communities.

In spite of the tremendous and unending obstacles, Akron Negro residents persevered. Gains were minimal, but each step led to a higher one and by 1950, a few black teachers had been employed; a black nurse was hired in a local hospital; a black lawyer had become assistant law director, and Negroes were pursuing outstanding musical careers.

The 1950s witnessed marked advancements in employment as major breakthroughs occurred. For the first time in the city's history, Negroes were beginning to be hired in jobs that were outside of the realm of domestic work or common labor. Even though blacks were hired with

reservations as to the number and type of employment given them, and the jobs were not high-paying positions, they were finally being recognized as being capable of performing at a level higher than that of custodial work.

In the next decade, the national civil rights movement was reflected in Akron as Negroes participated in the activities which dominated the 1960s--black protests, anti-poverty programs, and the manifestation of black pride.

Negroes took part in the local marches and the March on Washington, Akron witnessed a six-day civil disturbance; Black Akronites played key roles in developing, staffing, and operating anti-poverty programs, and as Akron's older Negro residents took a renewed interest in black pride, Akron's youth--black and white--began to learn about Negro history for the first time in their lives.

By the 1970s blacks had advanced to positions unattainable only ten to fifteen years prior. Within the past five to ten years Negroes 1) have begun to hold administrative, policy-making positions in their various fields of employment in white organizations; 2) have begun to study and specialize in fields formerly closed to them; 3) have been appointed to sit on governing boards that effect the lives of Akron's citizenry, and 4) have advanced to positions in white organizations which have

enabled them to render assistance to other blacks and thus advance the city as a whole.

Conclusions

The historical inquiry of black history in Akron has been written from scattered and fragmented data. However, absence of data does not indicate that information does not exist, but rather that the restrictive element of time limited the writer to focus on those records known to be available. While the generalizations are necessarily speculative, the findings that are reported herein are substantiated by data that were reflected throughout the study. Conclusions revolve around seven areas that were predominant in the inquiry: Negroes' appraisals of their circumstances, the role of the black church; black awareness, the strength of Akron's Negro residents; white support of Akron's black citizens; economic conditions of Negroes; and the education of blacks.

In regard to Negroes' appraisals of their circumstances, the available data have indicated the following:

1. Prior to the Civil War, blacks convened to protest their treatment and to determine the best measures to protect themselves from the atrocities of the Fugitive Slave Law
2. By the late 1890s and continuing for many

years hence (i.e., 1901, 1910, 1915, 1920, 1928, 1942) blacks formed political clubs to protest their lack of representation in governmental affairs

3. As early as the 1910s Negroes wrote letters to the editor protesting vice conditions in their communities, discriminatory conditions confronting returning veterans; the presence of "undesirable" blacks in their neighborhoods; and lack of political support

4. In 1913 blacks presented resolutions to the mayor seeking protection from the racist tactics that occurred on North Hill

5. In the 1920s Negroes filed a petition in court to protest the activities of the Ku Klux Klan

6. By the 1940s Negroes participated in militant affirmative action programs to obtain decent jobs, and blacks engaged in dialogue throughout the 1940s and 1950s to protest discriminatory hiring policies

7. The 1960s witnessed Negroes being involved in civil rights marches, the eruption of a six-day civil disturbance; and blacks making demands for equality

Therefore, the writer concludes that black residents in Akron have been a strong, courageous, and determined people who have not been apathetic and voiceless in their reactions to prejudicial treatment, but have protested for over one hundred years, utilizing the avenues at their command. Moreover, although blacks had very limited

educations in the early 1900s, they confronted their problems intelligently--expressing themselves in a literate way and through commendable, thoughtful behavior.

Findings related to Akron's black churches reflected their various uses and functions as follows.

1. As early as the 1890s speakers came to churches to discuss the Negro problem, Negro progress, black pride; to plead for political unity, etc.

2. In 1903 a reception was held at Second Baptist Church for delegates to the Loyal Legion of Labor, and in 1913 festive ceremonies took place at said church to commemorate the semicentennial anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation

3. By the 1910s a church was established in Akron as an outgrowth of the large influx of southerners migrating to the city

4. Families were fed at Wesley Temple during the depression years, and a few decades later Antioch Baptist Church provided classes in Christian Education

5. From the 1960s to the present time, Akron's black churches have been involved in educational programs to uplift Negroes; enlarge opportunities for youths; strengthen marriages, etc.

6. Several of Akron's successful black musicians--Smith, Brazil, Fleming, and Palms--developed their musical backgrounds in their respective churches at very early ages

Therefore, the writer concludes that Akron's black churches have played a vital role in the development of Akron's black families, serving them in several capacities.

First of all, the black church has fulfilled its primary responsibility in serving as a religious institution, a house of worship, and a source of spiritual strength.

Secondly, the black church has been an educational institution providing an educational setting for black families and black organizations, and a lecture hall for orators.

Thirdly, the black church has served as a social institution, being a social hall for receptions and celebrations and an organization that addressed the social problems of Negroes.

Finally, the black church has been a cultural institution which has perpetuated black culture through its music, its dinners and its spiritual support.

Data on black awareness yielded the following information:

1. As early as the 1870s blacks were celebrating the anniversary of the Fifteenth Amendment
2. The semicentennial anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation was commemorated through a festive program in 1913
3. Blacks contributed to the Akron Centennial

celebration in 1925 through their participation in an all-black chorus which offered a program of Negro spirituals and readings

4. In 1927 a civic organization initiated the annual observance of the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation

5. The decade of the 1930s witnessed the I.B.P.O.E. of W. (the Negro Elks) sponsoring their annual oratorical contest in which participants spoke on some aspect of black history and the United States Constitution, the Council of Negro Women sponsoring Negro Health Week activities and black history contests for high school students; the Negro Art Club presenting a Negro art collection to the Akron Art Institute; representatives from diverse black organizations participating in dedication ceremonies for the John Brown Memorial, and black citizens extending a ceremonious welcome home when MacNolia Cox, Spelling Bee champion, returned from Washington, D.C.

6. In the 1960s black was recognized as beautiful and respectable and by the early 1970s "Crispus Attucks Day" was established through a mayoral proclamation

Therefore, the writer concludes that although black pride flourished in the 1960s and blackness gained some measure of respectability, the concepts of black pride, black consciousness, and black culture have been prevalent and exhibited since the early years when black pioneers

were settling in Akron.

The strength of Akron's black residents was evidenced in the findings which follow

1. During the 1850s black families demonstrated strength by remaining in Akron despite the fears brought on by the stringent Fugitive Slave Law. Conversely, those Akronites who fled to Canada also exemplified strength--the strength involved in risking their lives to travel on the Underground Railroad

2. Prior to the turn of the century, Negroes were engaged in activities oriented toward self-help. They established benevolent and secret societies, organizations to effect social uplift; clubs to create political awareness; and churches to strengthen spiritual growth

3. In the 1910s Negroes reflected courage and stamina when they resisted white terrorism--individually and collectively--in events on North Hill

4. By the mid-1920s blacks had united to form organizations to protect themselves from the harsh realities of discrimination, to assist needy families; and to render diverse social services to the black community

5. The inner strength that it took to motivate black children to aspire to unseen and only hoped for rewards was exemplified decade after decade. Encouragement, pride, strength, love, and admiration were passed on within the intimacies of the family circle as is reflected

in the findings throughout the study, i.e., data related in the lives of Rollin Smith, Dr. Robert Burton, William and Horace Bell; Margaret and Bradley McClain, the Dalmas Moore family; Herbert Bracken; the Dumas Robinson family, Mary Holmes; Dr. Lu Wims, Elmore Banton, Tommy Dingle; Martin Chapman; Rev. Stanley Lynton; Rev. U. S. Munnerlyn, etc.

Therefore, the writer concludes that throughout their history black Akronites have exhibited resilience, adaptability, perseverance, and strength--positive attributes, both necessary for survival and worthy of emulation.

Available data related to white support of Akron's Negro population yielded the following findings:

1. As early as the 1830s abolitionist's sentiments were being voiced. However, by 1850 abolitionists were actively assisting fugitives who passed through the city on the Underground Railroad and were protecting free blacks from the malevolence of the Fugitive Slave Law

2. During World War I white support was overshadowed by widespread white hostility that began when large numbers of southerners from both races migrated North

3. White citizens joined black citizens in protest marches during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and since that time whites have eliminated many of the racial barriers that retarded black progress

4. Encouragement, respect, financial assistance, and/or countless hours of volunteer work have been given to Negroes by supportive white citizens. Data reflected in accounts of the lives of Dr. Melvin Farris, Elmore Banton, Tommy Dingle, Martin Chapman, Dr. Lu Wims, and the annual reports of the ACSC, gratefully acknowledged white residents who had concerned themselves enough to provide assistance

Therefore, the writer concludes that the white citizens who have assisted black people and black causes have remained supportive regardless of the increase in the black population, for they have viewed blacks as people rather than colors.

Furthermore, the strides which black Akronites have made have occurred with the immeasurable aid of white citizens who have been committed to making democracy an active process and equality its by-product.

In regard to the economic progress of Akron's black residents the data has indicated that

1. From the city's founding until the turn of the century, most blacks were unskilled workers employed as common laborers, working in servant occupations; or employed in custodial capacities

2. A few Negroes had acquired property, but the masses were unable to purchase either homes or land during Akron's pioneer days

3. As blacks migrated to Akron in the 1910s they found employment in factories, but worked in the low-paying, menial positions

4. By 1920 a few Negro professionals and businessmen and women were operating diverse establishments. Yet racial discrimination caused the majority of blacks to continue to work as laborers or domestics regardless of their educational levels

5. In spite of economic hardships a black finance company was formed to help Negroes obtain loans and in the 1930s a Negro business league was organized to promote black business. Blacks suffered the hardships of the depression years more than any other people for they were the last to be hired and the first to be laid off

6. The number and types of black businesses had increased by the 1940s. However, most Negroes continued to be unemployed or underemployed as racial discrimination perpetuated status quo conditions notwithstanding the fact that blacks were furthering their educations

7. By the 1950s the first major breakthrough occurred in the hiring practices of business and industry. Blacks were employed in capacities that had always been closed to them in preceding years

8. Civil rights legislation of the 1960s forced the employment of blacks in fields which were formerly limited to whites. Businesses, industries, and government

complied through "token" employment of Negroes, but have increasingly hired more blacks in positions of increased responsibility and commensurate pay

Therefore, the writer concludes that the major problem for Akron's black residents has been an economic problem. Black Akronites have never acquired employment that would provide them with an economic power base, for one hundred and twenty-five years had passed (from 1825 to 1950) before black people in Akron were recognized as being capable of performing jobs other than as unskilled laborers.

Moreover, it has only been since the civil rights movement--within the last fifteen years of the city's 150 years' history--that changes in policies for hiring blacks have occurred and opportunities for gainful employment have been extended to Akron's Negroes

The findings in regard to the education of blacks in Akron have revealed that.

1. The family circle has been a primary educational setting for Negro families where they have learned about love, strength, pride, joy, and the importance of an education. Data on persons featured in the local newspaper's biographical sketches (presented in chapters throughout the study) and persons mentioned in the foregoing segment on the strength of black families (pp. 410-11) indicated that they were "educated" by family members

2. An important part of the education of some blacks--George Mathews, Herman Poole, Opie Evans, Amos Forman, etc.--was self-initiated for they studied and taught themselves, in informal settings, about things in which they were interested

3. Black organizations have provided educational settings and promoted educational advances for Negroes as evidenced through the annual Elks' Oratorical contest, the ACCW's vocational preparation programs; the Council of Negro Women's black history contest, the NAACP's awarding the Lancaster Trophy for outstanding scholarship, the American Legion, John Fulton Post No. 272's sponsorship of boys to Buckeye Boys' State, career clubs sponsored by the Frontiers of America, and sororities' and fraternities' educational programs for children

4. Black churches have historically served as educational institutions for Akron's black families (pp. 407-8).

5. Black newspapers have been published sporadically in Akron since 1922 in attempts to have a better informed Negro population

6. Blacks have continued to advance their educations in the formal public school setting and in universities and colleges

Therefore, the writer concludes that the education of black Akronites has occurred in numerous educational

settings through the efforts of many educators from the earliest years in the city's history through the present time.

Recommendations

The black history of Akron has indicated that man's inhumanity to man had occurred in this city as it has in the deepest parts of the South. Black Akronites have suffered the theft of their labor; the confinements of discrimination; the humiliation that attends assigned subordinate status; and the frustrations resulting from confrontations with ignorance. For one of the largest problems in establishing racial accord is that each generation claims to be blameless for the actions of the prior generation yet lives in the midst of the turmoil without developing procedures to solve the problems at hand.

Improvement in Akron's race relations calls for the highest virtues in men to solve the "racial" problem. Studies of this kind can provide a reflective beginning. Viewed from this perspective the writer offers the following recommendations:

1. That the study be utilized as a resource for educators in their various educational settings
2. That the history of black residents in Akron be taught not as a recitation of names, dates, and places, but

as a documented account of trends, themes; practices; and how people face and address their problems. Furthermore, that the research be used as an open-ended study that raises more questions than it answers, having no right and wrong answers. Hopefully readers will seek reasons for why racial progress has occurred or why it has not occurred--and then provide those things necessary to effect the changes that will produce racial harmony

3. That this inquiry serve as a guidepost to the exploration of the vast areas yet unexplored. The various facets of Akron's black history, i.e., black churches, black organizations, black biographies, black education, etc. would constitute valuable historical inquiries

4. That educators teach history to students as a "human interest" story--wherein humans learn to be interested in the lives of others and respect others both for their similarities and their differences

5. That the methodological approach to teaching history in the schools be such that students learn history from writing history. Thus, they would learn to verify and search out truth (as much as possible) using the methodologies of external and internal analysis and external and internal criticism

6. That a "Black History of Akron Center" be instituted which would house relics, biographical data, taped oral traditions, pictorial and personal records, etc.

7. That persons in the black community be utilized as resources to visit various educational settings throughout the city in order to relate to others the Negro residents' contributions to the development of the city

8. That blacks resurrect or revitalize some of the programs from the past and strengthen their communal ties within the black community. Moreover, that blacks whose lives have become more advantaged reflect on the earlier years of disadvantage and lack of opportunity, and devote a portion of their efforts to attending to the immediate needs of the masses of blacks who are not yet so comfortable

9. That Akron's black history be written biographically, for many of the biographical sketches of blacks are inspirational and representative of what black masses could accomplish if given guidance, inspiration, and economic opportunity

10. That "educators" consider black minds as "mines"--productive resources to be tapped in order to advance mankind, regardless of race. For if an individual is deprived of his right to develop his talents and further himself, then the entire community has also been deprived of the talents of such a man

11. That research be conducted on the history of the development of black programs at the University of Akron and their implications for the community

12. Finally, that the black youth of each successive generation attempt to emulate the strengths and pride that the generations before them have exemplified

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

**Letters from Civic Leaders Supporting the
Need for a Local Black History**

AKRON COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER & URBAN LEAGUE, INC

250 EAST MARKET STREET

AKRON, OHIO 44308

Telephone 64-3104



October 4, 1974

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THOMAS J. SPENCER

MRS. CLAUDIA STEPHANS

LAWRENCE M. STREET

WILLIAM M. THREATT, JR.

Mrs. Shirle McClain

865 Packard Drive

Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Mrs. McClain:

You and I have discussed the possibility of writing a history of Blacks in Akron for a long time. I have discussed the pros and cons of such a book with my wife, children, and many other persons in this city. After weighing the subject carefully, I feel that, like us, there are many adults and especially children who do not understand how far Blacks have come in this community, and how much further we have to go to really become an integral part of Akron.

I suppose, just as Black history in America might seem unimportant to some segments of our society, so will the history of Black people of Akron be looked upon in the same manner. I have found, however, that after the significance is taught properly, people begin to look upon it in a different light.

I certainly would give my endorsement and help to such a delightful venture into the past.

It has always been a pleasure to talk to you about the history of Blacks and their contributions to our society.

To have not remembered that, in some ways, people are like trees, that is, if there are no roots, there is no future.

Sincerely,

Vernon L. Coom
Executive Director

VLC:mj

"Building for Equal Opportunity"

affiliated with United Foundation of Summit County, the National Urban League
and the United Community Council



JOHN S. BALLARD
MAYOR
SPURD V. BROWN
DIRECTOR



ROOM 431
SECOND NATIONAL BLDG.
AKRON, OHIO 44308
375-2417

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

November 5, 1974

Mrs. Shirle McClain
865 Packard Street
Akron, OH 44320

Dear Mrs McClain

During our recent conversation, I was very much interested to learn of your consideration to conduct research on the subject of Negro or Black history in the City of Akron. Recorded history, as you well know, serves many vital functions in any society. Several of the most important of these functions, in my estimation, are that it provides for future generations a heritage, offers a source of identity, presents an account of how a particular socio-economic-political order of a particular population has developed to a certain point, and describes causes of such development. To my knowledge, such an accounting of Negro or Black history in the City of Akron does not exist.

I believe that it is important to the general welfare of our community as a whole, and to Negroes or Black people in particular, in the City of Akron that initial research on some aspect of Negro life in Akron be initiated. In my capacity as Director of the Akron Human Relations Commission, I have observed a feeling and expression of isolation and alienation among segments of the Black population, young and old, native Akronites, and persons having moved to Akron from other locations. Generally the stated cause of such feelings and expressions is that the majority population in Akron has in the past, and continues today, to contrive methods to limit or deny opportunities for the growth and development of Black citizens in Akron.

While I believe that the above does have some degree of validity, harboring such thoughts on the part of Black citizens serves only to obscure the positive role that Black citizens have played in the development of the City of Akron. Please understand that I am not speaking condescendingly about those persons to whom I am making

November 5, 1974

2

reference My point is that in the absence of objective research about accomplishments and significant contributions of Black citizens in the development of Akron, the negative feelings and expressions of Blacks will dominate. Such feelings and expressions (often disruptive) create and perpetuate racial and inter-group tensions in our community, thus affecting the general welfare of citizens of the city in a negative way.

I believe that objective research on aspects of Negro life in the City of Akron could do much to strengthen the ties of many Black citizens to the City of Akron, and simultaneously show to the majority community that the Black citizens in Akron have played roles in this city's development different from the traditional stereotype roles.

If you do decide to conduct research in this most important area, I will be most anxious to assist you in whatever way that I can.

Sincerely,



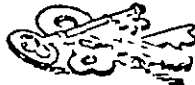
Edward V. Brown
Director

EVB cdv

BOOKS ARE KEYS



ALPHA LIBRARY COMMITTEE INC.
P. O. Box 182
Akron, Ohio 44329



Edith G. Wright, Librarian
Rosa A. Barber, Youth Coordinator

Edwin L. Perms, Chairman
Ed Wright, Vice-Chairman
Bessie Jenkins, Secretary
Walter Reed, Treasurer
Richard Jenkins
Robert Under
Raymond Brown
Richard Cook
Wayne Hendricks
William Miller
George Smith
John James
Dr. Luther Robinson
John Cook
John Sparks
Kathie Washington
Doris Wilson
Joseph B. B. B.

November 11, 1974

Mrs. Shirle McClain
865 Packard Dr.
Akron, Ohio

Dear Mrs. McClain:

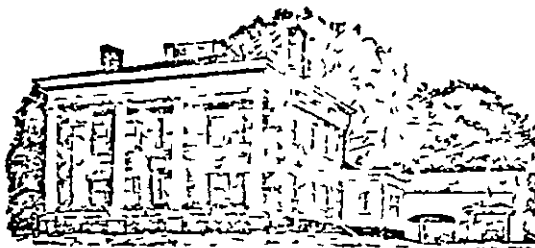
It is my understanding that you are contemplating devoting time and effort towards developing and reducing to written form a history of "E books in Akron". As chairman of the Alpha Library Committee, Inc., I would like to strongly encourage and urge you to pursue this intent of yours for it is greatly needed and would not only prove to be a satisfying experience to you but one that would be of tremendous value to this community.

Akron's Black History, as rich as it is, is little known and I know of no written compilation of any significant aspect of it. As an organization committed towards working with young people and libraries and stimulating reading we would certainly hope that you pursue this endeavor and feel free to call upon any of us if we can be of any concrete assistance.

Sincerely,

Edwin L. Perms, Chairman

SPECIAL PROJECT OF ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY INC.



Standard 1234

THE PERMANENT EMBROIDERY 1827

Telephone 216/555-1100

THE SUMMIT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

350 Copley Road

Akron, Ohio 44320

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John F. Miller, Vice President

Martha Day, Vice President

Joey W. Mann, Treasurer

William V. Wallace, Jr., Secretary

George W. Sapping, Ph. D., Secretary

November 15, 1974

Mrs. Shirla R. McClain
865 Packard Drive
Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Mrs. McClain:

We are very happy indeed to hear that your University of Akron dissertation will be a history of Akron's black citizens and the contributions they have made to the community's development.

It is especially appropriate that you undertake this project as we begin Akron's Sesquicentennial year. It's time to take stock of the progress that has been made in the 150 years since Akron's founding. Surely our black residents have contributed importantly, and I am sorry to say that we have very little information available on their specific contributions. Your dissertation will help complete the record and will enable us to answer the questions about Akron's black people that we are being asked with increasing frequency.

We heartily endorse the subject you have chosen and will be pleased to assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely yours,

William V. Wallace, Jr.
William V. Wallace, Jr.
Director

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AKRON - SUMMIT COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

AKRON OHIO 44326 TELEPHONE 216-762 7621



November 19, 1974

Mrs Shiris McClain
865 Packard Drive
Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Mrs McClain

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the subject you have chosen for your dissertation and to offer encouragement. In my opinion well-researched and well written Akron historical writings are important to our understanding of the background of our community.

Your subject, an 'Akron Black History, as I see it, would be a unique contribution for the edification of young people and adults. There seems to be very little written but much to be said about the contributions of Akron's Black people for the betterment of this locality and for the nation.

May I extend to you best wishes in your worthwhile project and offer whatever assistance I or the library staff can give you as your research develops.

Sincerely yours,

John H. Rebenack
John H. Rebenack
Librarian

JHR/jc

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president

C. FLAKE McDOWELL SR.
vice president

WALTER E. deBRUIN
secretary

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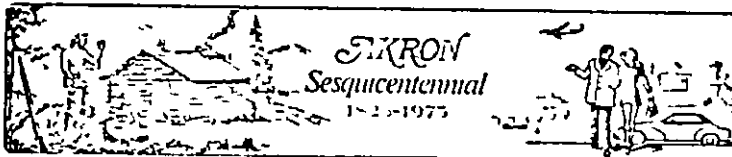
RON G. FISHER

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librarian

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Richard P. Orr
Summit County Inspector
Mayor

House City Council Resolution 698, December 11, 1973 Akron Sesquicentennial, Inc. was named as the official agency of the City of Akron and of the community in celebrating the Sesquicentennial of the City of Akron and the 50th anniversary of the United States of America and to unite in support thereof the community and civic organizations in the purpose.

John E. Kaiser
Executive Director

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House City Council Resolution 698, December 11, 1973 Akron Sesquicentennial, Inc. was named as the official agency of the City of Akron and of the community in celebrating the Sesquicentennial of the City of Akron and the 50th anniversary of the United States of America and to unite in support thereof the community and civic organizations in the purpose.

Mrs. Shiria McClain
865 Packard Drive
Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Mrs. McClain

You are to be commended for your dedicated efforts in researching Akron's black history.

Bill Threatt and I have been working together since early in the year on Akron's Sesquicentennial program and quite often the subject of conversation leads to the contributions blacks have made to Akron's progress through many years.

And one or both of us said at such times we felt sure Shiria McClain's work would add considerably to the record of black accomplishments in Akron.

If there is any way this office can be of help to you please do not hesitate to call on us or, if you wish, call Bill Threatt of your needs.

Sincerely,

John Kaiser
John E. Kaiser
Executive Director

November 25, 1974

**BEACON
JOURNAL**ALBERT E. FITZPATRICK, MANAGING EDITOR
AKRON, OHIO 44320 — TELEPHONE (216) 375-8257

November 26, 1974

Mrs. Shirla McClain
865 Packard Drive
Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Mrs McClain:

I think your dissertation on the history of Blacks in Akron will be very valuable to this community

Since this information is difficult to obtain and very sketchy in many areas, your findings should serve as a guidepost for many institutions and agencies in our community

If I can be of any assistance in this endeavor, please do not hesitate to call on me

My best wishes.

Sincerely,

Albert E. Fitzpatrick
Albert E. Fitzpatrick

AEF/rn

Dear Abner,
 As teacher, principal and
 account superintendent, I
 advise the Union public school
 for more than forty years may
 major interest and concern
 be at the major different
 in quantity, not only to
 that one to all students, an
 honest picture of who and
 what make our country. The
 great nation is in fact, has
 been finding authentic
 materials making the
 important contributions made
 by each citizen.
 Therefore, to meet
 or face our English class

Mrs. Abner J. Dean,
 815 Oakwood Drive
 Akron, Ohio
 Abner, Ohio
 652 Mull Ave. #118

accomplishments in war
and politics Readers
present a completely unrealistic
picture of home life in
America. Science books
gudgingly mention a few
black scientists.

I am pleased, therefore, to
learn that you plan to
write a dissertation dealing
with local black history.
While there has been some
progress made by nationally
published textbooks,
recognition of the work of
area blacks & black
organizations is almost
completely lacking.

I would hope that your
writing might capture some
semblance of the wholesome
spirit of neighborliness that
once characterized life in
much of Akron.

I repeat. I am grateful

to you for undertaking
this important task
God knows, and we should
know! That many people
must do many things if we
are to reverse a growing
trend toward polarization
of the races, a trend
which could eventually
destroy the Akron and the
America we love

Sincerely,

A. J. Dillebury

December 3, 1974



December 3, 1974

Mrs Shiria R McClain
865 Packard Dr
Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Mrs McClain

We at MOMCONBEAC were delighted to learn that your dissertation topic will deal with the history of blacks in Akron, Ohio

As you know, much of our merchandise is related to Black History and Culture. Many of our customers are black youth. Of particular interest to them is the nonfiction material concerning the contributions and accomplishments of black Americans.

It would seem then, that the history of black Akronites could have a tremendously positive impact upon Akron's young black people.

We are hopeful that church, civic, and historical organizations as well as the educational institutions of Akron will be made aware that such information will soon be available.

Because we view the potential for building more positive race relations as greatest among young people, we are especially hopeful that this information may subsequently be adapted, published and made available to all of Akron's youth, both black and white.

MOMCONBEAC is pleased to endorse your dissertation topic. The information is urgently needed and long overdue. The citizens of Akron are indebted to you for what we are certain will be an outstanding contribution to the entire city.

Yours very truly,

Thomas J Spencer
Thomas J Spencer
President



AKRON BRANCH
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

476 W MARKET STREET AKRON OHIO 44303 PHONE 376-2887

December 6, 1974

Ms Shirla McClain
 865 Packard Drive
 Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Ms McClain

The Akron Branch NAACP supports your efforts of documenting a historical account of the black citizens' involvement in a proper historical sequence in the development of the Greater Akron area

It is relevant at this period of our local history, particularly when we are nearing the sesquicentennial of our development. Further, at this time, a broadly based citizens' group is proposing ideal goals for the Greater Akron area of which the future of black progress may well be influenced by the long and short range goals adopted and supported by this citizens' group. Goals for Greater Akron Area future history will forecast its success or failure

In addition to the aforementioned significance of your effort, a relevant historical documentation of black progress and black participation in Akron can serve as bench marks to the young emerging black community. It is particularly important to all ethnic groups that they understand their peoples' contribution to the progress of their society, thereby enabling them to value their freedom and their rights

May your efforts to document the historical involvement of the black citizens in Akron be successful, and if the Akron Branch NAACP or I can furnish any documentation or assistance in fulfilling your objective, our services will be available to assure the success of your endeavor

Respectfully,

William L. McMillan
 William L. McMillan
 President

WLM cb

AKRON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING • 70 NORTH BROADWAY AKRON OHIO 44308

OFFICE OF
SUPERINTENDENT

December 11, 1974

Mrs. Shirla R. McClain
865 Packard Drive
Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Mrs. McClain

The Reverend Eugene E. Morgan, Jr., has asked that I respond to your letter of November 21, 1974 regarding your dissertation and its research. I am doing so with the consent of the Akron Board of Education.

As Superintendent, I would be most interested in your line of historical inquiry as you prepare for your dissertation. Once completed, I would be pleased to read your dissertation and share it with both the Board Members and the staff. Needless to relate, your research could be valuable to this school system and, of course, to the entire community.

With this indication of interest, please be assured of the Board's best wishes for your success.

Sincerely,



Conrad C. Ott
Superintendent of Schools

CCO EF

THADDEUS GARRETT JR
MEMBER - 14TH DISTRICT



RES. 679 WINTON AVENUE
AKRON OHIO 44320

State Board of Education

December 11, 1974

Mrs. Shiria R McClain
865 Parkard Drive
Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Shiria.

I was most pleased to know that you have begun a research project on the history of Akron's Black people. What a contribution this would be to the education systems of our community and state.

Our nation has been seriously lacking in not having the necessary exposure to contributions of its Black founding fathers. Our community of Akron has been even more deprived in this area. The Black people in Akron have played a vital and undeniable role in the development of the community. I would hope that your research, and perhaps subsequent revelations could upon completion be shared with all of us.

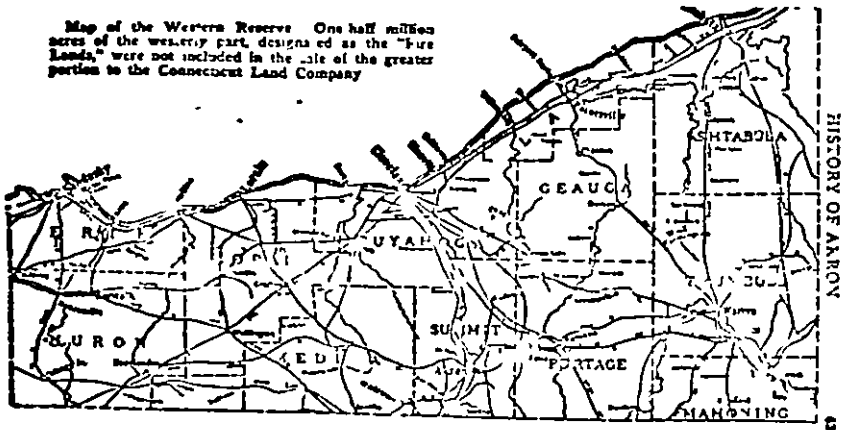
Sincerely yours,

THADDEUS GARRETT, JR
Member
State Board of Education

TG dej

Appendix 2

Maps



Map 1. Map of the Western Reserve after Akron was founded and Summit County was created. In Fetzer, Centennial History of Akron, p. 63.

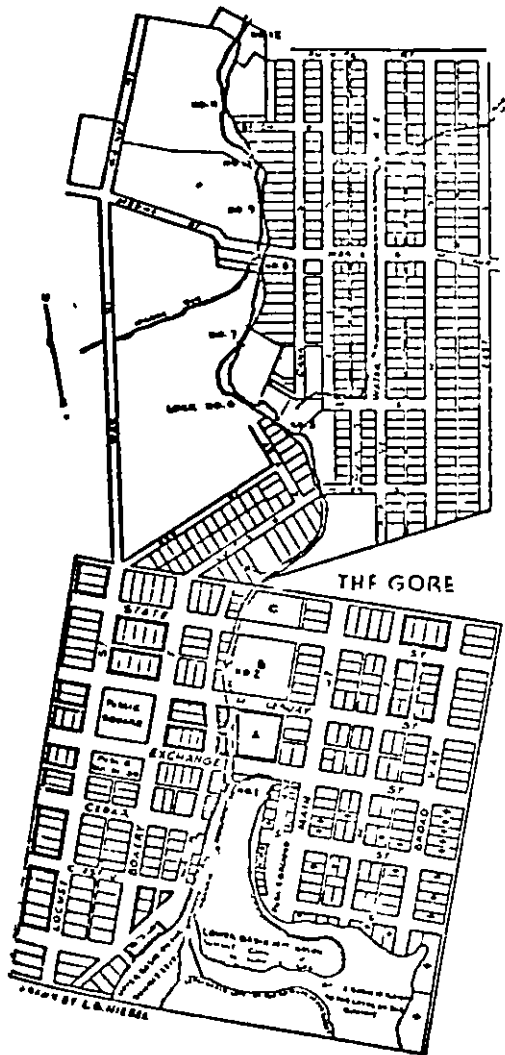
Permission to use the map was granted by the Summit County Historical Society.



One of the earliest maps of the Western Reserve published in 1803

Map 2. Map of the Western Reserve prior to the founding of Akron and Summit County. In Grismer, Akron and Summit County, p. 31.

Permission to use the map was granted by the Summit County Historical Society.



THE TWO ORIGINAL AKRONS

The square town at the bottom of this map was founded in 1825 by General Simon Perkins and Paul Williams.

The irregularly shaped town at the top originally called Cascade was first planned by Dr. Ezekiel Crosby and General Perkins in 1833.

For many years the two towns were known as North Akron and South Akron. Between the two towns there was an intense rivalry and as a result the first churches were built in the "neutral ground" which separated the two communities called "The Gore."

North Akron and South Akron were originally connected only by two streets Bowery Wooster and Locust Oak. South Akron's Main Street did not connect with its counterpart in North Akron which had two names, Akron Street south of Mill Street and Water Avenue north of Mill. The connection was made when North Akron was replatted in 1835.

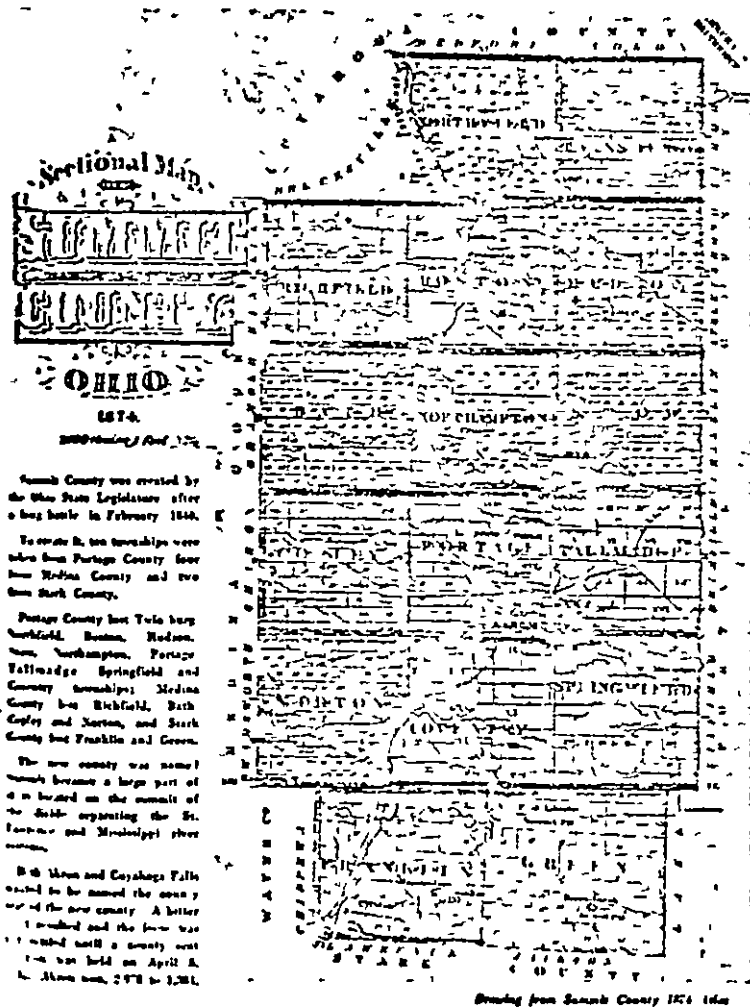
It will be noticed that in South Akron a number of blocks are outlined in black and many lots are marked with a cross. These blocks and lots were deeded by General Perkins and Williams to the State of Ohio as an inducement for the state to locate the Ohio Canal on its present course instead of through Middlebury.

Perkins and Williams also gave the state all the land needed for the Upper and Lower basins and the canal proper.

Locks in the canal are designated by numbers, from 1 to 12.

Map 3. The original Akrons. In Grismer, Akron and Summit County, p. 97.

Permission to use the map granted by the Summit County Historical Society.



Map 4. Map of Summit County showing its townships. In Grismer, Akron and Summit County, p. 129.

Permission to use the map granted by the Summit County Historical Society.



Map 5. Ohio's Underground Trails.

Permission for use granted by the publisher.

Appendix 3

Official Records

A copy of the deed as amended
in the County of ...
Office

Charles H. Gray, of Lewis & Clarke, Trustees
Know all men by these presents, that I, William
H. B. ... (in ... 2100) the grantor for the
sum of \$2000 ... of full ...
of George W. Crouse ... do give grant
beginning and ending ... to the ...
his successors & assigns the following described
premises situated in the City of ...
& State of Ohio, and known as part of Lot No. (294)
on the Plan filed of ... & numbered
of ... in ...
of ... County Ohio, in ... H. Page 10 1920 &
the portion thereof which is here by conveyed is bounded
& described as follows to wit: Beginning at a point
East

1878 - to the beginning - be it some more or less, but
subject to all legal highways: To have & to hold the
above granted & bargained premises - with the
appurtenances thereto - belonging unto the said ...
his successors & assigns for use & benefit the said premises
shall be used kept maintained & improved as a place
of ... worship for the use of the ...
of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in
the United States of America, subject to the discipline
usage & constitutional appointments of said church
as from time to time are revised & declared by the
General Conference of said church & its annual conference
in whose bounds the land here is or hereafter shall be
the said ... do for any city or town ...
said ... with the land there: his successors & assigns
Charles H. Gray
& C. H. N. O. A. A. B. Smith

Portion of a legal transaction between George W. Crouse and Wesley Temple AME Zion Church

Physicians' Certificates on Diploma.

1880 Board of Medical Registration and Examination, STATE OF OHIO

This Certifies that Ferdinand Harcourt Simpson
of the County of Summit State of Ohio having presented
to the State Board of Medical Registration and Examination satisfactory
evidence that he received the degree of M.D. from Western
University located in the City of Cincinnati
State of Ohio on the 12th day of June 1874
is hereby authorized as a Graduate in Medicine to practice Medicine and
Surgery in the State of Ohio in accordance with and subject to the pro-
visions of "An Act to Regulate the Practice of Medicine in the State of Ohio," passed February
27th, A. D. 1896



Given under the hand and seal of the Ohio State Board
of Medical Registration and Examination at the City of
Columbus this 27 day of June 1896

J. R. Hollman Secy
Frank Himes M.D. Pres

Witnessed in the office of the Probate Court of Summit County, State of Ohio,
the 1 day of August A. D. 1896

W. M. Anderson Secretary
W. C. Bond Clerk

13th day of November A. D. 1974

NATHAN KOPIK
Judge and ex-officio Clerk of said Court

By Chas. R. Simpson
Deputy Clerk

Dr. Ferdinand Simpson's certificate to practice medicine.

CERTIFICATE.

H71^d

I HEREBY CERTIFY, That *Harrington Simpson*
 is a citizen of the United States and of the State of Ohio, that he has resided in
 said State for one year last past that he is over 21 years of age, of good moral
 character, that he has REGULARLY and ATTENTIVELY studied Law under my
 tuition, ^{at the Western Reserve Law School} for the period of *2* years and *7th* months
 from *Sept 17th 1901* to *Aug 3rd 1904*
 and that I believe him to be a person of sufficient legal knowledge and ability to
 discharge the duties of an Attorney and Counselor at Law, and would therefore
 respectfully recommend his admission to the Bar

Thomas M. Atglen
Dean Western Reserve Law School

Dated at *Cleveland O*

.. *Aug 3rd 1904*

Atty. Harrington Simpson's certificate to practice law.

NAME <u>SIMPSON HARRINGTON</u>			
ADDRESS <u>AKRON, O.</u>			
DATE OF REGISTRATION _____ REGISTRATION No. _____			
NAME OF PRACTICE _____			
LOCATED AT _____			
	DATE OF EXAMINATION	RECEIVED	APPROVED
FIRST EXAMINATION			
SECOND "		PAID	X X
THIRD "			
FIVE YEAR PRACTICE IN STATE OF _____			
DATE OF ADMISSION TO PRACTICE IN OHIO <u>JULY 22, 1904</u>			
JOURNAL No. <u>19</u> PAGE No. <u>550</u> REMARKS _____			

Card in file on lawyers at the Clerk's Office of the Ohio Supreme Court.

Volume 48
Page 1

State of Alabama } Before me
 Macon County } M. B. Abernethie
 Judge of Probate in and for
 the State & County of Macon
 personally appeared B. C. Stevens who on oath says
 that he has held a first grade license to teach in
 the public schools of this State for thirteen years,
 eleven years of which term he has been actively engaged
 in teaching.

Sworn to & subscribed }
 before me this } B. C. Stevens
 5th day of June 1899. }
 M. B. Abernethie }
 Judge of Probate }

Beall Steven's certificate to teach in the State of Alabama.

Tracing the historical site upon which Wesley Temple
AME Zion Church currently stands.

#5.

The Monarchy of
England,

to

The Connecticut
Colony.

Release and Grant

April 23, 1762.

Premises - The territory in Ohio and Pennsylvania, North of the 41st parallel, which territory includes what is now known as the "Connecticut Western Reserve."

Note:- England claimed that North American Continent by discovery, by virtue of the voyages of John and Sebastian Cabot, along the Eastern or Atlantic Coast. She also acquired possession of a portion of same along the Great Lakes, on both sides, by conquest from the French in the year 1760.

1. Property of the Monarchy of England, 1762.

#4.

The Connecticut Colony by
the State of Connecticut,

to

The General Government
of the United States,

Release of Political
Jurisdiction by deed
dated September 14, 1786.
Consideration Release of
all claim to land and soil
of premises known as "Conn-
ecticut Western Reserve."

Premises - Bounded on the East by the West line of Pennsylvania; on the South by the 41st parallel, on the North by parallel 42° 02', on the West by meridian line 120 miles West of the West line of Pennsylvania. (Includes the land described in caption).

Note:- After the Revolutionary War the question of the numerous British Grants to the several colonies became a matter of dispute between the General Government and such colonies. The Connecticut Colony grant was settled by above release and deed shown at Item #5.

2. Land acquired by the Connecticut Colony as a
part of the Western Reserve.

#21.

Samuel Parkman,
Sarah Parkman,
wife,

to

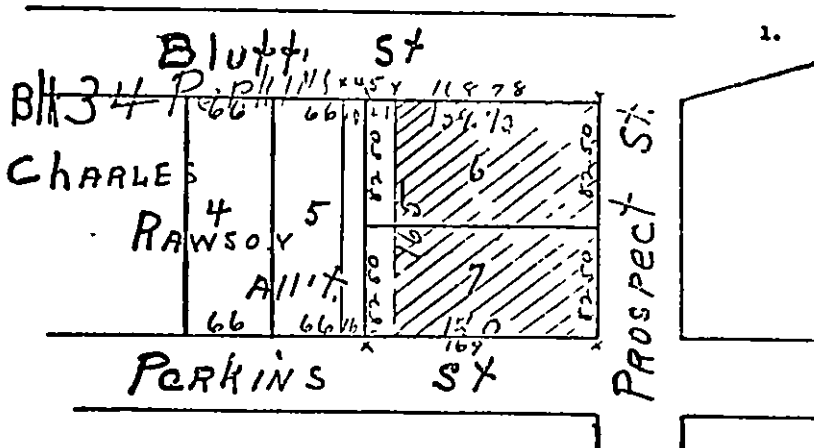
Simon Perkins.

Warranty Deed
Consideration \$2700 00.
Dated March 9, 1816
Filed April 24, 1816.
Recorded Vol. B, Page 421.

Premises:- -x-x- The whole of Tract #7, excepting 300 acres on the East end of said tract belonging to the State of Connecticut and is supposed to contain in the tract hereby sold 1,404 acres, and is bounded North on the lots Nos. 5 and 6, South on lot or Tract 8, West by the Portage Path, and East by the 300 acre tract aforesaid.

Note:- Wife releases dower and signs but does not acknowledge or appear in the granting clause.

3. A portion of the Western Reserve was purchased by Simon Perkins.



4. Current site of Wesley Temple AME Zion Church.

Source: Bankers Guarantee Title and Trust Co., "Abstract of Title and Incumbrances, 1762-1924." In the records of Wesley Temple AME Zion Church.

Proclamation

TO THE PEOPLE OF AKRON:

Whereas Marguerite Jamison Fleming of 439 Cusack Street, Akron, Ohio, has rendered a commendable service to the religious, social, civic and cultural development of this community through her efforts in the field of music; and

Whereas From a humble beginning, Marguerite Jamison Fleming has climbed to the heights of musical achievement by surmounting the obstacles and barriers peculiar to the pathway of a pioneer; and

Whereas Through application, courage and determination, Marguerite Jamison Fleming has achieved her goal and in so doing, has played an important role in inspiring and shaping the musical destinies of others; and

Whereas The efforts of Marguerite Jamison Fleming as a member of the piano teaching staff of the Akron Public Schools serving the young people of this community is deserving of special commendation.

Now, Therefore: I, John S. Ballard, as Mayor of the City of Akron, Ohio, do here and now proclaim Sunday, June 24, 1967 as

MARGUERITE JAMISON FLEMING DAY

in the City of Akron, Ohio and call upon the citizens to recognize the contribution that she has made over the years.

In Witness Whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Akron, Ohio to be affixed this 19th day of May, 1967



John S. Ballard
Mayor
CITY OF AKRON OHIO

Proclamation of Marguerite Jamison Fleming Day.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS: The Negro Twenty-five Year Club of Akron, Ohio has petitioned the Council of the City of Akron, Ohio to approve the erection and dedication of a memorial to the memory of John Brown, abolitionist and Harpers Ferry, Martyr which approval thereof has been secured, and plans for the dedication and erection have been formulated but active construction of said memorial has been delayed because of the lack of funds, and,

WHEREAS: It has been suggested that negotiations be entered into for the furnishing of labor by the Works Progress Administration of the United States Government wherein the Negro Twenty-five Year Club agrees to furnish all material for the erection of said memorial conditioned upon the United States Government supplying labor herewith as aforesaid,

BE IT RESOLVED, that The Negro Twenty-five Year Club of Akron, Ohio authorize James Martin Lancaster to negotiate with the Planning Commission of the City of Akron, Ohio for the erection of said memorial under the terms and conditions as aforesaid.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Negro Twenty-five Year Club of
Akron, Ohio.

<u>James M. Lancaster</u>	<u>Julius C. Cook</u> Honorary President
<u>Pearl G. Christian</u>	<u>Edna P. Christian</u> President
<u>Emmett Christian</u>	<u>Charles H. Stahl</u> Vice-President
<u>Lawrence K. Black</u>	<u>Edna Wiley R.</u> Vice-President
<u>Anna M. M. Mullen</u>	<u>Lucy A. Stahl</u> Secretary
<u>Christine M. Mullen</u>	<u>Blanche M. Mullen</u> Financial Secretary
<u>_____</u>	<u>Barbara M. Mullen</u> Treasurer

Resolution of the Negro Twenty-five Year Club, 1938,
regarding the John Brown Memorial.

Appendix 4

Printed Materials

See old goods at E. De-enberg's New Fashionable Clothing House.

AKRON CITY DIRECTORY

283

Martin & Brown, basement, Academy of Music, n e cor Market and Main

Orth, Jacob, Empire House, n w cor Market and Main

Osborn, Clifton, over 1190 E. Market, cor Water st., 6th ward

Schwab, Tony D., 606 S. Main

Chavis & Hamlin, Sumner House Block, N Howard

Stevenson, Lev., 121 E. Exchange

Stevens, Wm D., 173 S. Main

Yeomans, Mrs. Mary, 1129 E. Market st., 6th ward

Basket Manufacturers.

Bergdorf & Crobarger, 240 E. Furnace

Bath Rooms.

Chavis & Hamlin, New Sumner House Block, N Howard

Martin & Brown, basement, Academy of Music, n e cor. Market and Main

Beer Bottlers.

(See Breweries.)

Bedspring Manufacturers.

Berge, Valentine, 1-4 S. Main

Schmidt, Geo G., N Howard

Beer and Ink Bottle Manufacturers.

Merrill & Sons, 416 S. Main, old No 404

Billiard Halls.

Beebecker's American Billiard Parlors, 134 S. Howard

Cain & Goble, 127 and 129 N. Howard

Empire House Billiard Hall, n w cor Market and Main

Yeomans, Mrs. Mary, 1129 E. Market st., 6th ward

Blacksmiths.

Abler & Decousy, 913 S. Main

Daird, Robert, 105 S. Main

Balden, Charles, 209 Kent st., 4th ward

Cushman Bros., cor S. Howard and Quarry

For a Parlor Suit go to Hubert's. You will find something to suit.

Curtains and Trappings re-paired in the latest styles, at J. Huppert's, N. Main bet. St.

Black barbers, Martin and Brown, and Chavis and Hamlin, listed in an 1879-80 Akron City Directory under barbers and bathrooms. W. D. Stevens was also a black barber.

W. & Johnston, 145 S. Howard St., for Boots and Shoes.

AND SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO

381

J. F. SCOTT,
PIANO TUNER.

Special attention given to Renewing the Tone of
Worn out Pianos

Melodeons and Reed Organs also Repaired and Tuned
Residence, 121 N. Summit St. AKRON O

JAMES M SWEETEN,
PAINTER,

MAKES A SPECIALTY OF

HOUSE PAINTING, GRAINING & PAPER HANGING.

First-Class Work at Reasonable Rates Guaranteed

417 South Forge Street, AKRON, OHIO.

M. A. SMITH,
ICE CREAM PARLORS



Confectioneries, Fruits,

CIGARS AND TOBACCO

A VARIETY OF SUMMER DRINKS

1178 E. Market St., Sixth Ward, AKRON O

HENRY PICKETT

CHAR. J. ALEXANDER

PICKETT & ALEXANDER,

EXCELSIOR WHITEWASHING CO

Pickett's Celebrated Wall Finish.

The best of our Whitewash is equal to two of any other. In appearance it is extra
fine, has a fine gloss and is more durable than any other in use.

Price 60 cts per wall, ordinary size room. No whitewash
in any color.

190 North Howard Street, - AKRON, OHIO

Wolf & Church sell the best French and American Corsets.

For a first class WAGON call on JOHN HEPPERT, First Wagon Manufacturer in Akron

An early black business, Pickett and Alexander, listed
in the advertisement section of an 1883-84 Akron City
Directory.

PROGRAM

-- 1 P. M.

Music—National Negro Anthem Congregation
 Invocation Rev B F Gordon
 Selection Excelsior Glee Club
 Welcome Address Mayor D C Rybolt
 Music Band
 Reading—"The Emancipation Proclamation".....Miss Mervice Allen
 Introduction of Speaker.....Dr C. R. Lewis
 OratorHon. Robert S Abboit
 Selection—Bass SoloMr C. Hawkins
 Collection.....Mr Tom Fletcher, Rev R. A. Jones
 RemarksPresident Leon Gordie
 BenedictionRev J I Monroe

Mrs. Crawford and Rev N H Armstrong have charge of the music and Mrs Mary E. Allen is Chairman of the Program Committee.

REV G G MORGAN, Master of Ceremonies
 LEON GORDIE, President
 BERTHA V MOORE, Secretary

First program of the observance of the Sixty-fourth Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation under the auspices of the Citizens Civic Federation. Akron, Ohio. 1 January 1927.

PROGRAM

1. Patriotic Airs
The Elks Band William R Fowler Director
2. Opening Ensemble Lift Every Voice and Sing
3. Invocation Rev. R. A. Jones
4. Introductory Remarks E. Mer Martin Lancaster
Chairman, The John Brown Memorial Committee
5. Presentation of Memorial Stephen C Gladwin Scriptor
6. Presentation Address Lara P. Christian, President
The Negro Twenty five Year Club of Akron, Ohio
7. Unveiling of Memorial

Officiating:

John F. Iton Post No. 172 American Legion
John O. Brown Ft. Wayne Officers
Presentation of wreaths and flowers.

7. Vocal Selections Mercer F. Bratcher
 8. Acceptance Speeches
 - (a) Hon. L. D. Schrey on behalf of the City of Akron O
 - (b) Gilbert Daley on behalf of the Summit County Historical Society
 - (c) Geo. W. Thompson on behalf of Akron Negro citizenry
 - (d) Hon. Dow W. Harter on behalf of the U. S. Government
 - (e) Donald Brown on behalf of the John Brown Association
 - (f) Hon. Charles W. P. Dick on behalf of the 50 year club of Summit County
 9. Musical Selections The Coleridge-Taylor Chorus,
Floy Debram Dunbar Director
 10. Dedicationary Address Gilbert H. Jones Ph. D.,
Jona University Germany
Dean of College of Education, Wilberforce University
 11. Closing Ensemble America The Beautiful
 12. Benediction Rev. J. P. Photo
- Accompanists
Edith Player Brown
Mrs. Ambrose Q. Braselton

The Negro Twenty five Year Club of Akron, Ohio
OFFICERS

Julia E. Clark Executive President and Founder
Cora P. Christian President
Cora V. Dunlap Vice-President
Kath. Wright Vice-President
Lillian Donagan Secretary
Sister M. Davis Financial Secretary
Lawrence Black Treasurer
Paul L. Christian Chaplain

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

E. Mer Martin Lancaster Chairman

Virginia Judd	Caryle White
A. B. Johnson	Reuel Hinkle
Charles W. Stone	Lida Adams
Leola Grant	Robert Hinkle

Organizations Participating in Flower and Wreath Presentation

The Negro Twenty five Year Club of Akron Ohio Julia E. Clark
 Women's Auxiliary Assoc. for Cause of Community Work, Maude B. Fowler
 Kearsney School Teachers, Division of Adult Education Eva Taylor
 Beta Beta Chapter Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Susan B. Lora
 Sevens Club Vera Forman
 Negro Art Club Edith E. DeLaney
 Chrysanthemum Club Edna Smith
 Gardenia Club Mary L. Haskley
 The Summit County Colored Democratic Club Sherman Scrutshagen
 Akron Branch M. A. C. P. Norma Lindsay
 Council of Negro Women Pearl L. Christian
 Non Part Club Nathan Chapman
 Women's Auxiliary American Legion Rebecca Poole
 Daughters of Jerusalem Jena Graham
 Meadows Club Alva Lindsay
 Barber City Lodge No. 222 William B. Fowler, E. B.

Printed program of the Dedication of the John Brown Memorial by the Negro Twenty-five Year Club, Akron, Ohio, 25 September 1938.

Akron's Black Churches

(From an advertisement in the (Akron) Reporter,
21 December to 28 December 1975)

Antioch Baptist Church
Apostolic Church
Apostolic Church of Christ
Bahi World of Faith
Bethel Temple Church of Jesus Christ
Beulah Baptist Church
Bible Baptist Church
Brotherhood Baptist Church
Centenary Methodist Church
Community Church of God
Christian Alliance Holiness Church
Christian Temple
Church of God
Elizabeth Baptist Church
Evening Light Church of God
Faith Healing Mission
Faith Temple
Faith Temple Church of the Living God
First Apostolic Faith Church
First Born Church of Living God (Andrus Street)
First Born Church of Living God (East Thornton Street)
First Born Church of Living God (North Howard Street)
Friendship Baptist Church
Good Hope Baptist Church
Greater Bethel Baptist Church
Greater Peace Baptist Church
Holy Temple Church
Holy Trinity Church of God in Christ
House of Glory Baptist Church
House of Prayer
Israelite Baptist Church
Jerusalem Baptist Church
Livingstone Apostolic Church
Macedonia Baptist Church
Miracle Revival Worship
Morning Star Baptist Church
Mount Calvary Baptist Church
Mount Carmel Baptist Church
Mount Haven Baptist Church
Mount Lebanon Baptist Church
Mount Liberty Missionary Baptist Church
Mount Nebo Baptist Church

Mount Olive Baptist Church
Mount Rose Baptist Church
Mount Sinai Primitive Baptist Church
Mount Zion Baptist Church
New Gideon Baptist Church
New Hope Baptist Church
New Trinity Baptist Church
North Hill Community Baptist Church
Pentacostal Temple Church of God in Christ
(North Howard Street)
Pentacostal Temple Church of God in Christ
(West North Street)
Peoples Baptist Church [sic]
Phillips Chapel CME Church [sic]
Pilgrim Rest Pentacostal Church
Prayer Tower Church of God
Prince of Peace Baptist Church
Provident Baptist Church
Robert St. Church of God
St. John CME Church
St. Luke Baptist Church
St. Pauls Baptist Church [sic]
St. Pauls AME Church [sic]
St. Pauls Fire Baptise Holiness [sic]
St. Philips Episcopal Church [sic]
St. Thomas Baptist Church
St. Timothy Church of God
Saints Temple Church of the Living God
Shelton's Temple Church of God in Christ
Shiloh Baptist Church
Spiritualist Church
Timothy Baptist Church
Triumph The Church of God
True Light Baptist Church
Truevine Church of God in Christ
United Baptist Church
Victory Baptist Church
Wesley Temple AME Zion Church
Yale St. Church of God
Zion Apostolic Church (Ardella Avenue)
Zion Apostolic Church (South and Washington Streets)
Zion Temple Baptist Church

Appendix 5

Personal Records

DANNER PRESS, INC.

27 NORTH HIGH STREET AKRON, OHIO FRANKLIN 5 012



June 30, 1958

Mr. and Mrs. Beall Stevens
1380 Koradie Avenue
Akron, Ohio

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Stevens:

I am pleased to add my personal congratulations and felicitations to the many you have received on the occasion of your first sixty years of married life.

In this age of rapid marriage, rapid divorce and multiple remarriage, it is a refreshing and heartening thing to see that the great majority of our country-men still do believe in and follow the ancient virtues.

To have lived and worked in harmony for so long a span of time is an achievement that has enriched your souls and benefitted your community.

May I express the hope that you will still have many years of happiness together in the easier part of the road.

Very truly yours,


Fred W. Danner
Senator in Ohio Assembly

FWD:LEM

P. S. Mrs. Danner and I have been married 45 years.

Letter of congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Beall Stevens.

Genealogy of Margaret McClain
(Maternal Side)

