

SETTING UP OUR OWN CITY

The Black Community in Morristown:
An Oral History Project



by Cheryl C. Turkington

Interviews by Helen Baker Conover

"We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others
spoken for us."

John Browne Russwurm, 1799-1851
Editorial, *Freedom's Journal*,
March 16, 1827

"There is no future for a people who deny their past."

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.
1908-1972
Marching Blacks, "Civil War," 1945

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Joint Free Public Library of Morristown & Morris Township
Local History and Genealogy Department

Morristown, New Jersey
1992

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Acknowledgement

This project comprises two parts—the unpublished oral history interviews, of which transcripts are available to the public at the Joint Free Public Library of Morristown and Morris Township (JFPLMMT), and this manuscript, which weaves a rough-hewn ethos from the interviews and a factual account of the black community in Morristown. From the start the project has been a collaborative effort between the JFPLMMT and the communities it serves. This work came to fruition only by the generous assistance of many town residents, colleagues and institutions. My research for this manuscript was not limited to printed materials—had that been the case, this history would have been far more defective than it is. Many of my sources were people who shared with me their intimate knowledge and memories of living in Morristown. With their points of reference, I could then utilize the existing printed sources to their fullest. However any errors or deficiencies in this endeavor are solely my responsibility.

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C.C.T.

August 13, 1992

Turning Memory into History:

The Past As Viewed by Blacks in Morristown, New Jersey

Local historical scholarship may be likened to the artistic skill required for small portraiture. Rather than constructing abstract or representational images on a large canvas, students of local history favor the intimate, easily recognizable details of the past, the small incidents which, when placed within a larger context, mirror a much grander story. Not surprisingly, individuals figure prominently in local history, as do their families, their homes and domestic lives, and the subtle nuances of change perceived over time by those who were there, the veterans of the past. Under these conditions, history is given a recognizable dimension as it is augmented by the memories of anonymous actors and actresses.

The following historical narrative, *Setting Up Our Own City, The Black Community in Morristown: An Oral History Project* and the oral history testimony it introduces, marks an important contribution to the history and the memory of Morristown. In recent years, several New Jersey communities, in seeking to document their black past, have enriched the larger historical mosaic of our State. Many of these locally based projects have taken the form of reproduced manumission

papers, birth records, correspondence by Quaker abolitionists, and scholarly interpretations. Taken collectively, these published works encourage students of New Jersey history to reconsider the past from the vantage point of those for whom the State's history as traditionally written has been for the longest time without meaning.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the text which follows is its historical breadth and the intimacy of its story of black life in Morristown. Drawing upon a wealth of secondary and primary sources, black life in the town is chronicled from the colonial period to the near present. It is a story told with great skill and care, a story useful to blacks and whites alike.

For two generations historians of the Afro-American experience in New Jersey have explored what might be called the paradox of democracy, race relations and black life here. We have learned of the suitability of African bondage in a State that fought against the tyranny of British rule, the agonizingly slow progress toward a general emancipation of African slaves after 1804, the disenfranchisement of black male voters during a time when recent white male immigrants were extended the right of suffrage, the smothering poverty which accompanied black freedom, and the persistent notion by most whites that somehow blacks, though among the State's earliest settlers, were a troublesome presence. In short, we have learned that black historical life in New Jersey involved the creative tension which existed between racial obstacles and the

often vigilant attempts by blacks to make progress in the face of considerable odds against them.

This paradox of racial inequality and exclusion existing alongside political democracy and social opportunity is one of the many subtle themes to be found in "Setting Up Our Own City." We learn of how racial prejudice and exclusion influenced the long journey blacks made toward community development and integrity in Morristown, including the establishment of black residential enclaves, the formation of religious bodies and the centrality of the church in modern life. Also explored here are efforts by local blacks to advance themselves educationally, their enduring search for meaningful employment, the establishment of black businesses, the origin of political expression, and the unique role of social activity in promoting both group consciousness and assimilation. Against a background of local customs shaped by racial attitudes we are reminded, once again, of the most important qualities of Afro-American life in the United States: group survival and grace under pressure. That story, increasingly told on the state and national levels, is brought into sharper focus in this brief history of Morristown's black community. It challenges the prevailing assumption that racial intolerance and black achievement is best understood on a large scale. And it brings into question the long held belief that race relations in America are only ruined when blacks threaten the white population's numerical superiority. In Morristown, as with the County of Morris, blacks have tra-

ditionally been a small minority, never really approaching the so-called "tipping factor," when white animosity against blacks is aroused as the proportion of blacks approach a third of the overall population. Indeed, until the 1950 United States Census, black residents never exceeded ten percent of Morristown's population.

But the greater value of this narrative is to be found in the methodology which inspired it: the testimony of some twenty-six black Morristown residents. Oral history is now generally recognized as having great value in the reconstruction of the past, especially the past of blacks who have left few tangible records of their experiences. As a research tool, oral testimony was used to great advantage in the documentation of the two most significant epochs of Afro-American history, ante-bellum slavery in the Southern states and, more recently, the Civil Rights Movement. Much to its credit, "Setting Up Our Own City" builds upon these two highly valued approaches to a reinterpretation of the distant and recent history. Helen Conover, who began the project more than ten years ago, remembers that during the early years of her efforts "nobody wanted to tackle it," and that many in the town believed that blacks did not have any history there. Through her vision of a past, which embraced her family's life in the town, this effort continued and took on the more substantive form found herein. Like many of those who were interviewed, Conover remembers the bittersweet quality of the town's past, a time when blacks "lived right in the heart of town"; who remembers

"the discrimination back in those days," the many places "we could not go into," and an old black community which was "quite decent and respectable." In comparing the past to the racial anxieties of our times, she says "it seems as if things have gone back to discrimination." Her testimony of growing up black in Morristown, no less than the others taken since 1981, helps to turn memory into historical insight through the images of places where blacks lived, worked and contributed to the social, economic and cultural fabric of their town. That many of the individual and collective memories documented in the tapes are not easily found through other sources makes them all the more valuable to students of black community development; time has eroded that which can only be reconstructed through these testimonies.

Those who participated in the project as interviewees represent a remarkable cross section of Morristown's black community, including nineteen women and seven men. Some of them, such as Gladys J. Lewis, Clara Pinkman, Helen Conover, and Ethel Judson, were born in Morristown in the early twentieth century, at a time when the town's small black community was largely invisible to all but blacks and the most perceptive of white residents. Other interviewees came to Morristown as a part of the Great Migration of the World War I years, while others are much younger, having been born during the baby boom following World War II. The experiences of them all as workers, entrepreneurs, professionals, homemakers and parents are as var-

ied as their ages and origins. Yet in these emotionally rich and historically informed testimonies one senses a common thread of attachment to locale and a recognition of individual triumph over adversity.

But equally important, the testimonies are formidable contributions to our collective memory of life in one of New Jersey's oldest settlements. Morristown's black history has not received the attention long devoted to those in the State's larger cities. In the absence of a chronicle of the dramatic events which mark the perplexity of race relations in our society, black life here has been largely unknown. That is now challenged with this publication. Whatever may have been previously said or written about Morristown, and whatever awaits history students in the future, will to some extent have to account for the reminiscences excerpted here and available in transcript and on audio cassette at the town Library.

The testimonies are individually distinctive, personally validated perspectives of black life in the twentieth-century evolution of a small town, yet they open onto a much larger terrain of historical construction. In Afro-American historical studies, such personalized treatments of the past are invaluable for many reasons, not the least of which is that they show important historical personalities need not be powerful men; certainly they need not be of European ancestry. Moreover, the testimonies reveal how blacks envisioned their lives as an oppressed minority in a way that is consistent with their group's humanistic ethos, and how racism, though formidable, was challenged

by them and by white folks of good will. More specifically, we learn of the pivotal role black women in Morristown played as community leaders, as entrepreneurs and, as one historian has called them, kin keepers. The nuances of class behavior are also to be found in the testimonies, an issue which has long deserved more attention from students of local history.

And so this volume, long-awaited and much needed, brings together the two crucial ingredients needed to understand the life of any community, memory and history. It serves as a testament to one town's recognition of the value of all of its historical voices and experiences. In that sense it also serves as a model for what other towns and cities might do to keep the past alive during a time when both memory and history are increasingly losing their value in our lives.

Clement Alexander Price

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Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Newark

July 28, 1992

History of the Project

The Black Oral History Project began in 1982, when Library Director Marian Gerhart approached Helen Conover and invited her to initiate interviews with black residents of Morristown and Morris Township who might share the experiences of their lives and times. This project was designed to recover a part of the towns' history that might otherwise be lost to the community as townspeople moved or died. Mrs. Conover, a longtime Morristown resident with an avid interest in history and genealogy, proved to be the ideal candidate to take on such a task.

Under the auspices of the Local History & Genealogy Department, the project began with few guidelines. Ten years and twenty-three interviews later, the results of this endeavor stand as evidence of Mrs. Conover's persistence and her determination to add another chapter to the compelling story of the Morristown community.

As funding becomes available, the Library hopes to actively continue the Black Oral History Project by interviewing interested members of the Morristown community.

What is Oral History?

Oral history is the story of people's lives obtained by recording the spoken word of persons who have information unavailable elsewhere about a time or a place. Oral history is inherently populist—it allows all the opportunity to speak their piece. History obtained through such structured conversation is not a statement of fact or even a narration of past events. Each story is founded on memory but based in the present. Often rich in insight, each account recollects a certain time period or event that embodies the character of the interviewee. The personal histories collected recall individuals, neighborhoods, businesses, schools and churches. They offer evidence of the way in which a community helped shape the lives of its residents.

Oral history interviews do not replace the written words of traditional history books. However they can enhance our interpretation of the past by broadening our perspective and by enriching the historical record with anecdotes, emotions or different viewpoints. Oral history interviews add texture and pith to factual accounts.

Oral testimony has long been an important methodology used to document African-American history. For a non-literate people, the oral tradition maintains a vital connection to a way of life that might otherwise erode with each passing generation. For slaves in America who had been violently stripped of cultural and kinship ties, it became the voice—in song and story—that preserved remnants of their heritage and their humanity.

These interviews readily document the relationship between a community and its history. Accumulating local history in this manner is a collaborative effort that insures that access to the information gained is available to the community. By doing so, citizens develop a greater understanding of the town's changing character, and future generations can see the roots of personal historical knowledge that could have been lost to the past. For history to remain accurate and pertinent, all people must have a voice in its chronicles.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN MORRISTOWN

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Slavery and Abolitionist Movement

The earliest census for Morris County (1745) listed ninety-three slaves. At that time no category for freed blacks existed. New Jersey's entire black population of 4,606 comprised 7.5% of the total population in 1745. Most of New Jersey's slaves lived outside of Morris County, particularly during the later antebellum period.

Despite its geographical designation as a northern state—and indeed other northern states embraced slavery during most of the colonial period—New Jersey often supported the South's position on slavery. Due in part to New Jersey's expanding economic ties to the South and its staunch reverence of property rights, antislavery laws received grudging passage in the state house. Many New Jerseyans believed strongly in the primacy of slaves as chattel and feared that complete emancipation would result in economic instability.

One of the earliest voices heard in Morris County to renounce that viewpoint was that of Reverend Jacob Green of Hanover. Reverend Green incorporated the prevailing liberal philosophy of the Revolutionary era into his anti-slavery stance. The irony of a people fighting

for independence while enslaving others was not lost on him. From his pulpit he confronted the human rights issue of slavery and exhorted his congregation to manumit its slaves and rid the colony of such evil. In a tract Reverend Green wrote in 1775 entitled *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great Britain and the Colonies*, he states "What a dreadful absurdity! What a shocking consideration that people who are so strenuously contending for liberty should at the same time encourage and promote slavery!"

In 1786 the slave trade was outlawed. Not until 1804, with the passage of a bill to phase out slavery in the state, did the number of slaves in New Jersey begin to decline. Morristown witnessed a dramatic drop in numbers from a high of 214 slaves in 1810 to 80 slaves in 1820. In 1846 New Jersey legislators enacted a circuitous law providing free status to all black children born after the passage of this bill. Those already slaves would become "apprentices for life"—an incongruous euphemism. By 1850, 278 freed blacks comprised Morristown's black population. No slaves remained in town. However, the 1850 federal census of the United States found 236 slaves residing in New Jersey, nineteen of whom lived in other towns of Morris County. Not until the 13th Amendment was passed in 1865—which New Jersey failed to ratify—was slavery finally abolished.

The economic and human rights issues of slavery impacted Morristown in a number of ways. During the early nineteenth century, Morristown's newspaper, *The Palladium of Liberty*, ran many articles condemning the "infernal slave trade." More conspicuous to us today, however, are the slave advertisements routinely included in local newspapers. They offered black men, women and children for sale and callously described them as they might farm animals or other personal property. Most advertisements described a bondsman's health, age, character and work experience. In Morristown most slaves had experience in farming or domestic work. A January 22, 1818, newspaper notice offered a reward for a runaway slave named Dinah, who had escaped from Easton, Pennsylvania, and was last seen in the vicinity of Morristown. The owner described her as "not artful or very cunning." Yet we must believe Dinah was possessed of some acuity if, despite the certainty of harsh punishment upon her capture, she chose to escape the indignities of slavery in search of human freedom.

The New Jersey Freeman, an abolitionist newspaper, existed in Morris County for a short time during the 1840s. Published in Boonton by John Grimes, it ran for two years and documented state and local antislavery activities, including the founding and organizing of a Friends of Liberty chapter in Morris County. As a branch of the national Liberty Party, the local chapter supported a platform of immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery. In the 1844 elections, the Morris County chapter nominated a slate of candidates for local offices in conjunction with the national Liberty Party ticket. In New Jersey,

To be Sold For Life.

A Stout Healthy Young Negro WENCH, eighteen years old, understands house work, a good baker, Washer and Ironer, and a good attendant on children. She is sold at her own request, apply to the subscriber. **TABITHA PARSON.**
Speedwell, near Morris Town,
Feb. 25, 1817. 66,

2. *The Palladium of Liberty*, 1817 May 8.
3. *The Palladium of Liberty*, 1818 January 8. Many New Jersey newspapers regularly included notices advertising slaves for sale or for the return of runaways.

For Sale.

A SMART, active, thick set, well made, and healthy
NEGRO MAN,

About 20 years of age, slave for life, has been brought up a farmer, and well understands his business. Enquire of the Printer.

Morristown, Jan. 6, 1818. 11,2w.

5 Dollars Reward.

RAN away from the subscriber, on the 17th Dec. last a mulatto Man named Frank, about 5 feet 8 inches high, slim built, with a remarkable natural spot or mark of a purple colour, as large as three fingers, back of the left eye, extending under the eye to the cheek, had on a rorain hat part worn, a homespun Coat of a drab colour, Vest and Pantaloon homespun of a dark brown, strong shoes, laced above the ankle; It is supposed he has changed some of his clothes, is fond of liquor and company, has been lurking round Morristown 8 or 10 days past. Any person taking said fellow and confining him in the Jail at Morristown, shall receive the above reward with all reasonable charges.

Charles Carmichael.

Morristown, Jan. 8, 1818. 11,3w

as in other parts of the country, the Liberty Party fared poorly in the face of Whig and Democratic opposition. However, according to *The New Jersey Freeman*, Morris County's Liberty Party returns, while still small, were the greatest in the state.

The Morris County Colonization Society was another group formed to resolve the issue of slavery. County residents formed the organization in 1850 after Robert S. Finley, a Presbyterian minister from Basking Ridge and a founder of the American Colonization Society (ACS), spoke at a local church in Morristown. Supporters of the ACS—and there were many in Morristown—pronounced their scheme to return free blacks to Africa benevolent, because they believed that America would never be a land of opportunity for blacks. Established in 1816, the ACS transported 12,000 blacks out of the United States over a fifty year period.

The ACS received money from all over the world in support of its cause, including substantial sums from the federal government. The New Jersey Legislature appropriated funds to aid the state chapter of the ACS in its mission. Morris County's local chapter comprised men from such notable Morristown families as Condict, Pitney, Canfield, Voorhees, Tuttle, Cutler and Vail. They afforded instant

credibility to their organization. Local resident Dr. Lewis Condict served as a manager to the New Jersey Colonization Society.

In 1853 the New Jersey Society purchased a 160,000 acre tract on the St. John's River in Liberia for the purpose of African-American colonization. A telling passage of the Society's 1858 annual report praised the grandiose plans of the American Colonization Society and clearly outlined the duality of its mission.

"Certainly, this great Christian enterprise, which promises an asylum, a home for our free colored population, and their elevation to the dignity of freemen,—which aims to redeem a continent from darkness, superstition and crime—which is the

only practicable means of extirpating the iniquitous slave trade, and the ultimate evangelization of Africa, surely such an enterprise deserves the most

energetic assistance of every American citizen, of all philanthropists and Christians

MORRIS COUNTY
Those citizens of Morris County in favor of holding a Convention for the purpose of forming a Liberty Ticket for this County are requested to meet at Mr. Keeps long room in Madison on Wednesday the 15 day of October at 3 o'clock P. M. Let all those who think more of the man, than they do of his hat & coat be in attendance. Able speakers will be engaged for the occasion.
Oct. 1 1845.

4. *The New Jersey Freeman*, 1845 October 1. Morris County's only abolitionist newspaper combined national news with local interest stories relating to the institution of slavery. The local temperance movement also had its cause championed in the newspaper.

throughout the world.”

The ACS aimed to rid America of its black population, but conversely the Society wanted to bring American civilization to Africa. ACS members wanted to inculcate black citizens with American culture, but only if it could be done on another continent far removed from the United States.

In the end, however, black freedmen in New Jersey and the nation overwhelmingly rejected the sophistry of the ACS and prompted its demise. The Morris County Colonization Society, despite its prominent membership, sputtered and vanished from sight.

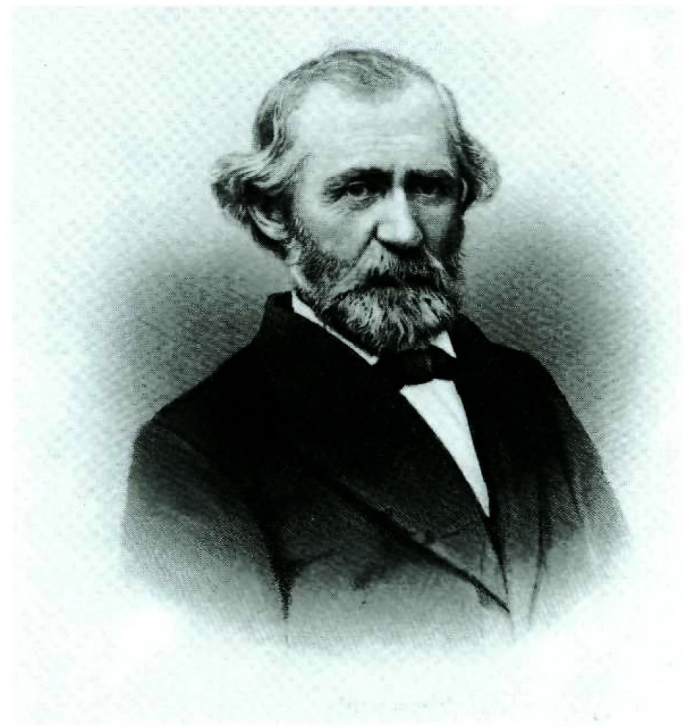
Toward Equal Rights

By 1860, Morris County’s black population dropped to its lowest figure, 687 persons, from 1,027 a decade earlier. Despite the fact that blacks comprised only two percent of Morris County’s population, the Democratic assemblyman from Morris County authored a Negro exclusionary bill on March 5, 1863, entitled “An Act to Prevent the Immigration of Negroes and Mulattoes.” With its passage, any black entering the state would be transported to Liberia or the West Indies.

Supporters of Assemblyman Jacob Vanatta’s bill to prohibit further settlement of blacks in the state anticipated a large influx of blacks in New Jersey following Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, issued January 1, 1863. This critical document—a turning point in American history—that gave human-

itarian freedom to three-fourths of America’s slaves was viewed in New Jersey with fear. The state’s population consistently opposed the Republican antislavery platform. Twice New Jersey rejected Republican Abraham Lincoln’s presidential bids. And in 1862 New Jerseyans voted overwhelmingly Democratic, giving the party unprecedented power to maintain white supremacy in the state. Throughout the country in 1862, Copperheads—the derogatory name given to Northern Democrats who opposed the Lincoln administration—succeeded in winning elections.

In its March 21, 1863 edition, *The Jerseyman*, a newspaper published in Morristown, derided the New Jersey Copperheads for supporting



5. *Jacob Vanatta (1824-1879). A prominent attorney from Morris County, active in public life and Democratic politics, Vanatta served only one term in the New Jersey Assembly.*

Vanatta's bill. The editors fanned the flames of the debate by insisting that soon the public would hear a Democratic speech claiming that "all the calamities we [Democrats] predicted from the President's proclamation would have come upon us. The niggers would have been in bed with our wives and daughters and been reveling in luxury while every white laborer was almost in a state of starvation." Mr. Vanatta's bill aimed to assuage the paranoia regarding racial equality that gripped New Jersey's white population. Though *The Jerseyman* lamented that the bill was sure to pass, later it happily reported that after receiving passage in the assembly, the bill died in the senate.

During the nineteenth century, local newspapers ran many articles regarding racial issues. Public sentiments ran high on all sides and slanted remarks made in the newspapers proved that the nineteenth-century press made no pretense of objectivity. The Democratic Party, which consistently opposed any measure that would elevate the status of Negroes in society, had its voice in the local *True Democratic Banner*. *The Jerseyman* regularly promulgated the Republican Party's platform—its point of view decidedly antislavery. The Republican Party formed in 1854 to combat the proslavery forces determined to expand the boundaries of slavery within the Union, after the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 failed to quell overwhelming sectional differences between the North and the South. Democrats and Republicans were diametrically opposed on the issue of slavery.

Locally, Frederick Douglass's visit to Morristown in June 1865 provoked a typical response from local journalists. A former slave

and nationally-known leader of the antislavery movement, Douglass was a larger-than-life figure whose reputation as an eloquent and effective speaker grew as he addressed countless groups throughout the country and in England on race-related issues. The commanding abolitionist and orator addressed a large audience at Washington Hall on the subject of equality and the law. No newspaper account ever mentioned his thoughts on the topic—his actual remarks. It is ironic that the words of one of America's greatest nineteenth-century writers went unreported in the Morris County press.

In describing the event, *The Jerseyman* extolled Mr. Douglass as a masterful lecturer who held the audience's rapt attention for his two-hour address. The Democratic newspaper exploited Mr. Douglass's visit to deny his racial identity by claiming his talent came solely as the result of white parentage (his father was white). In its June 15 issue, the *True Democratic Banner* assured its reading public that Frederick Douglass "would be called a human mule... This white mulatto is thrust before the public by the black-republicans as a specimen negro, when the simple fact is that his being two-thirds white has made him physically and intellectually what he is." The editors insisted they were speaking for a large majority of townspeople when they disavowed the ideas advanced by Mr. Douglass. The newspaper suggested that the Republican Party was destroying itself by advocating racial equality. "We feel assured that a large portion of the republican party will not quietly submit to remain under the scandalous imputation placed upon them by their leaders, and who consequently do not share in the hypocritical and disgusting solic-

itude for placing the negro on an equality socially and politically with white people." The outcome of subsequent local elections lent credence to such an argument.

By 1870 the black community in Morristown was celebrating, with music and speeches, the ratification of the 15th Amendment, granting African-American men the franchise. In New Jersey blacks gained the right to vote in 1776 only to have it revoked in 1807 by the state legislature. In keeping with its rejection of earlier Reconstruction amendments, New Jersey did not ratify the 15th Amendment. Implementing this new law of the land in New Jersey proved to be a burdensome task.

In the 1870 state elections, many communities resented a black man's right to vote. Some town officials doubted the legality of the federal law because the state constitution still restricted the franchise to white males over the age of twenty-one. The mayor of Princeton, Eli R. Stonaker, demanded a ruling from Robert Gilchrist, the state attorney general. On the eve of the 1870 local elections, state newspapers quoted Mr. Gilchrist's eloquent reply reaffirming a black man's right to vote. Much to the horror of Morristown's Democratic newspaper, in a local election held on March 13, 1870, a New Jerseyan, Thomas Mundy Peterson of Perth Amboy, became the first black citizen in the nation to cast a vote under the 15th Amendment.

With the passage of the 15th Amendment, black citizens in Morristown formed an organization called the Republican Invincibles. The club disseminated information to and provided a forum for the black community on public issues and duties. In an effort to educate

fledgling black voters, members proposed to hold frequent meetings, provide speakers to discuss topical issues and circulate newspapers and relevant documents.

In its April 20, 1870 issue, *The Jerseyman* reported that in town elections, "some 50 colored votes were polled, of which the Republicans got all but four or five." On the day of the election, blacks gathered at Bethel A.M.E. Church, where they met John Whitehead, a prominent white jurist from Morristown and advocate of Negro rights. Typically, the local newspapers used the occasion to further their own political agendas. According to *The Jerseyman* account, Mr. Whitehead, who taught Sunday school at the Bethel A.M.E. Church for over forty years, accompanied the voters to the poll to insure that no man was prevented from exercising his right to the ballot box. The editors of the *True Democratic Banner* described the same scene in the April 14 issue but accused Mr. Whitehead and the Republicans of buying black votes for five dollars apiece.

The ugly viewpoint expressed in the local newspaper suggested that black men in the community would have an onerous time exercising their right to vote under the law. Too often politicians exploited racial issues to further their own agendas rather than including blacks in the political process in a meaningful way.

By 1872 a group of men intent on having their political voice heard formed the Colored Republican Club. More than forty local men, some of them former members of the Republican Invincibles, joined to campaign for the Republican national ticket. Amid rousing

cheers for presidential candidate Ulysses S. Grant and the Republican Party, State Senator James Youngblood delivered an address at the first meeting.

In an effort to educate voters and arouse their interest, the local chapter of the Colored Republican Club sponsored lectures and other events. One such speaker, Henry Highland Garnet, a brilliant black leader and an intellectual, championed the cause of black nationalism. His deeply-held, radical views on slavery and black liberation, religion and racial equality kept him in the national spotlight for much of his life. In August 1872, black and white residents came out in force to hear the clergyman from New York's Shiloh Presbyterian Church speak in the twilight of his career. Recalling the slurs directed at Frederick Douglass during his visit, *The Jerseyman* gleefully reported that Mr. Garnet was "a genuine colored man," whose intellect and bearing was due to his distinct African heritage and not the result of a Caucasian ancestor.

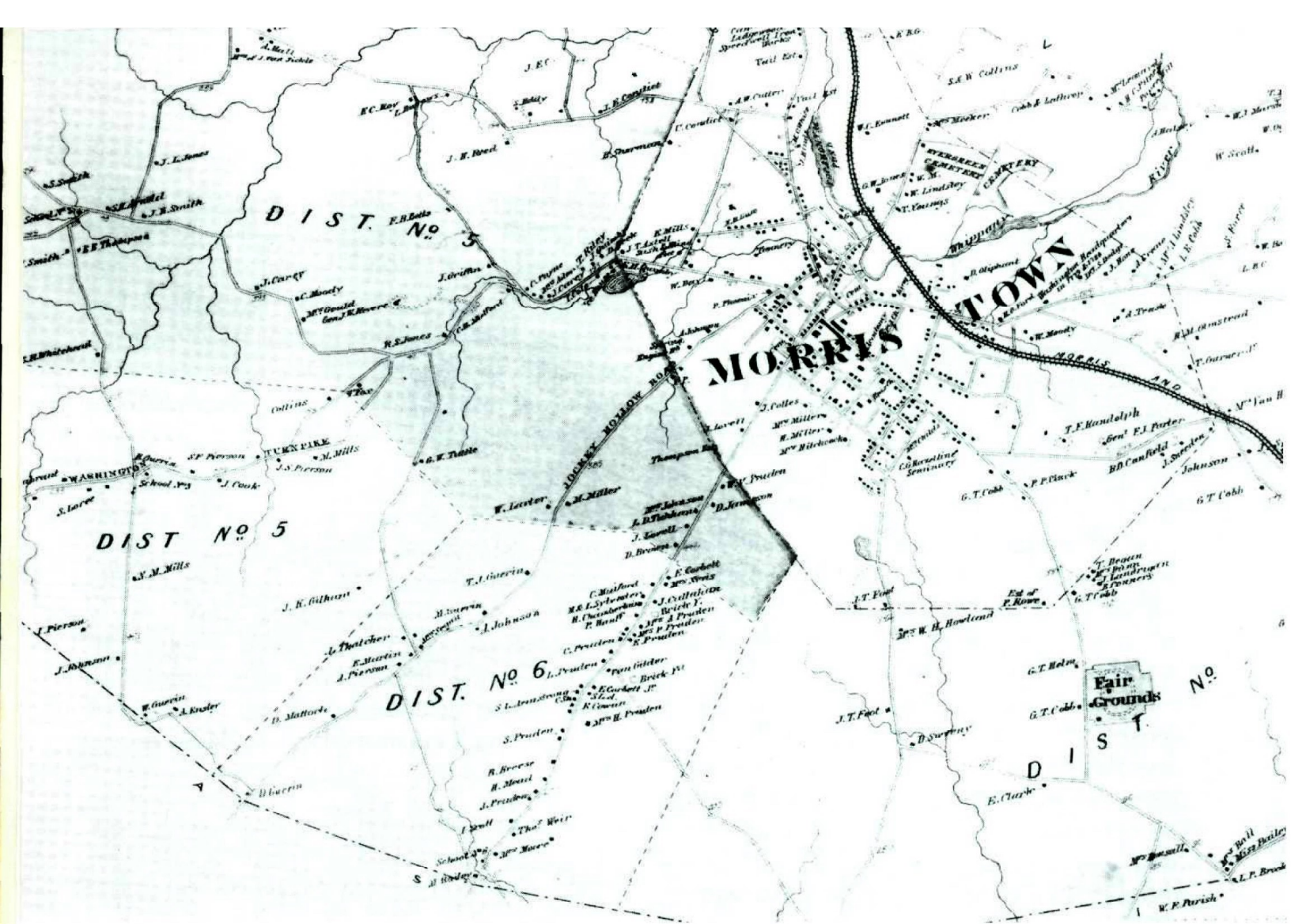
A Place to Live

During the nineteenth century, blacks owned land and houses in Morristown. In the 1940's, Frederick B. Cobbett, lawyer and historian for the Morris County Historical Society, did significant research in this area. His findings show that the best known of these landowners lived on or farmed land on or near Mt. Kemble Avenue, where the seeds of a black neighborhood were planted before the Civil War. Many were former slaves

who bought land outright or had it deeded to them by former owners or employers. Jacob Sylvester owned the land where All Souls Hospital would be built. Other names that appear in early land records include York Mulford and his son Charles, Francis Nevius, Peter Johnson, Cuffee Brown, Joseph Adams, John Saddler and Isaac West.

Over the years black landowners on Mt. Kemble Avenue sold portions of their properties to other blacks. However, by the twentieth century families could no longer earn a living farming small plots of land. Many family members moved to Newark where jobs were more plentiful. The remaining properties were sold off to various interests, and one of Morristown's earliest black enclaves disappeared.

Due to Morristown's continued small black population, no defined neighborhoods emerged as the nineteenth century progressed. According to Town Historian John Pinkman, some of Morristown's oldest black families, such as the Pitneys, Stansburys, Fergusons, Hills, DeGrootes, Van Dunks, DePews, Bakers and Polks, predate the Civil War or arrived here during that era. As was the case in many New Jersey communities, before 1900, these pockets of black families were scattered throughout town. Macculloch Avenue near Market Street housed a number of families. The Teabout family, with a few others, lived on Morris Street. Water Street, Spring Street, South Street, Ridgedale Avenue, Western and Phoenix Avenues and Cobb Place all housed small clusters of black families. As the population increased, a few of these areas became thriving black neighborhoods.



6. Atlas of Morris County, New Jersey, F.W. Beers, 1868, Plate No. 9. The map documents the names of several black families—Brown, Sylvester, Mulford, Johnson, Nevis—who owned land on Mt. Kemble Avenue.

Following the Civil War, Morristown's black population had dropped to fewer than 200 people. Their numbers would remain relatively low throughout the remainder of the century. But the last decades of the

nineteenth century brought great change and variety to Morristown and its population. One consequence of this metamorphosis was the distinct appearance of a black presence in the community.

MORRISTOWN IN TRANSITION

Changes in Townscape

Between 1865 and 1917 more than twenty-five million immigrants came to America in search of a better life, one that no longer existed in their homelands. The Industrial Revolution, with its power-driven, labor-saving machines, engendered tremendous economic growth for this country. By 1890 manufacturing had replaced agriculture as the principal source of wealth in the United States. Fueled by the masses of cheap imported labor, the Industrial Revolution changed the scope of America in ways that still affect us.

During this time New Jersey's population increased substantially, particularly the black population whose number rose as blacks moved from the South to the more industrial North. The greatest increases occurred in the cities and seaside resorts where blacks could more easily find employment in the food and hotel industry or as day laborers.

Morristown too felt the effects of this influx of people to the United States. Various ethnic groups moved into town, found jobs, brought their families to America, and established a new way of life that left its imprint on the community. Irish immigrants settled off James Street in an area known locally as Little Dublin. For a short time upper Flagler Street was home to a small Jewish population. The area of Flagler and Race Streets, as well as Water and Spring Streets, became a thriving Italian neighborhood. With adjoining streets, this area

known as the Hollow, would house European immigrants and Southern blacks for years to come. From 1880 to 1900 Morristown's white population more than doubled to total 11,267.

In the decades leading to the twentieth century, another group of immigrants joined the community. They were businessmen from New York City who made tremendous sums of money in America's expanding industrial economy. Extravagantly wealthy and flagrant consumers, they looked to escape the heat and grime of New York City in the summer. Attracted to Morristown by the beautiful countryside and claims of a restorative healthful climate, they built lavish mansions they called "cottages" and ushered in a time known primarily for its excess and grandeur. Linked to New York City by railway so that the men could attend to their business interests, the residents



7. *River and Flagler Streets, by the Cauldwell Playground, 1919. Few photographs exist that document the early twentieth century "Hollow" neighborhood. Flood damage was the obvious focus of this photo.*

of "Morris County's Great White Way" created an opulent, insular society filled with exclusive clubs and schools and posh parties and events. Along with an affluent enclave of longtime Morristown families, the town reached a new level of social and cultural prominence. This monied class left its mark on Morristown for years to come.

Despite the attention and publicity lavished on the people who filled Morristown's social directory, millionaires did not make up the

majority of Morristown's population. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Morristown was filled with folks who may have derived economic or charitable benefit from the rich, but their lives were relatively untouched by their benefactors' ostentatious lifestyle. These residents, who made up the working class of Morristown, shared the town with the glittering well-to-do but lived, worked and played benignly apart from them. It was to this segment of the community that black residents belonged.



8. Verrilli's Bakery truck, Race Street, 1923.

Searching for a Community's Past

The lives of Morristown's blacks are not as easily traced as those of Morristown's white society. Newspapers seldom mentioned their social activities or accomplishments. Black neighborhoods were rarely preserved. Of those who could read and write, few saved correspondence or diaries. Records of their jobs and livelihoods are long gone. They had no place in the traditional power structure of politics and government. Few had money to pay photographers to capture pictures of family life. And yet the contributions to their community are no less significant because their heritage is more difficult to ascertain. The varied lifestyles they pursued are rich in history and substance. By documenting this segment of Morristown's evolving population, we gain a clearer understanding of the changing community in which we live today.



9. Clockwise from top row: Hun Spencer, Morton Watson, Nat Moses, Doug Satchelle, James Banks, Richard Moss, c.1920.

Economic Conditions

Morristown's black population grew significantly during the last decades of the nineteenth century, tripling its total from 293 in 1880 to 815 by 1900. People came to town from Virginia and, later, after hearing about Morristown, from North and South Carolina. John Pinkman's extensive list of families emigrating from Virginia included the Grants, Watsons, Perrys, Walkers, Whites, Tolars, Burtons, Masons, Catos, Mosses, Jenkins, Skipwiths and the Dallams. From North

Carolina came the Gregorys, Taylors, Spruiells, Grambys, Grandys, Skinners, Mabins, Banks, Lyles, Browns, Scudders and Shaws. From Maryland came the Arnolds and the Dorseys. Other families followed. Many oral history participants can trace their families to these states. Hoping to find greater economic opportunities, blacks found work in town, but they were extremely limited in the types of occupations they could enter.

According to the 10th federal census in Morristown in 1880 the overwhelming majority of black men worked as laborers, toiling long

hours for little pay. Most adult black women worked as laundresses, having the laundry delivered to their home. Washing the clothes on a scrub board, hanging them in the yard to dry, and pressing them by hand contributed to an extremely labor-intensive process. Females in their teens often began work as domestics. In town, blacks were not hired as servants by the very rich, and they were rarely seen on Madison Avenue. This trend continued well into the twentieth century. In her interview, Ethel Judson recalled that blacks were not welcome on Madison Avenue, "where, if you walk through there, you better have some business to walk through there." One of the few exceptions was John Clark Thurmond, who worked for Dr. Martin Smith. In his interview, Mr. Thurmond recalls his experience.

"I never saw another black man or black woman working on Madison employed as cooks and ground maintenance workers. There were Filipinos employed in these private homes. The Smith family liked me well enough to almost include me in the family because I slept with the two boys, Arnold and Tim. I had two rooms, and I had another room with the boys if I wanted to go to sleep or talk with them and what not. I always traveled with the family during the summer. The first of June we were going to Newport, Rhode Island. And then from Newport, we went up to Kennebunk, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts, for another week. And I had as much fun as they did, and more. We had a good time. They were good, kind beings."

More often, blacks worked for the middle class. James Lindsly, a physician living on



10. L. to r.: Matt Pinkman, Jim Gregory, Jim Pinkman, Alec?, Marcel McCleary, Carter Pinkman, 1922. 9 & 10. The men in these two photographs represent some of Morristown's oldest black families.

Morris Street, employed six black females and two black males as servants who lived in with the family and nine boarders. In 1910 the exclusive Miss Dana's School on South Street employed twenty-two servants. Most of the help was foreign-born; only four were black.

Occasionally blacks found work in the early service industries. Some men like James Polk, whose daughter Isabelle later became a respected music teacher in the black community, made their living as coachmen. Jacob Springstead,

JAMES K. POLK

30 years in the employ of the late A. B. Hull on Maple Avenue, begs to inform his friends and the public that he is prepared to receive orders direct or by phone for light livery work. He has first-class equipments for shopping, calling or depot work. Stable, No. 11 Maple Avenue, Phone 67. Residence, 31 Ann Street, Phone 780 W.

11. *The Jerseyman*, 1911 November 17

who lived on Macculloch Avenue, and members of the Bridleman and Huff families worked as hostlers, caring for horses at local livery stables.

Other black Morristonians worked in the restaurant/hotel business. Some hotels and boarding houses regularly employed blacks as waiters, porters or chambermaids, however, they were not allowed to patronize these establishments. Sarah Statts and her husband Benjamin found employment as cooks in the United States Hotel on Park Place.

Few blacks owned businesses by 1890. An exception occurred when two local men assumed the proprietorship of a restaurant on Morris Street. The cafe, which was open from 6 am to 11 pm, seated twenty-five persons. The owners employed four people to assist them. *Business Review of the Counties of Hunterdon, Morris and Somerset, New Jersey*,

published in 1891, described the business and its owners.

"The bill of fare affords a varied assortment of meats, vegetables, fish, oysters, pastry, etc., cooked and served in excellent style and at moderate prices. The firm consists of James B. Seldon and William C. Williams, both natives of Virginia, and both free born colored men, though their parents were liberated from slavery only a short time previous to their birth. They are industrious, ambitious and obliging business men."

In 1897 an enterprising group of black men formed a company and opened a cooperative grocery store. They rented a lot on Spring

12. *Alex Bridleman, Spring Street, 1906.*



Street, near Morris, that they later purchased, and erected a one-story building on it. According to the *Jerseyman*, the group sold stock at \$5.00 a share, and many black residents subscribed. James Seldon, George Yates, William Irving, John Gregory and Morey Grant helped establish the store. As business increased, they expanded the existing structure and varied the inventory. This attempt at economic self-sufficiency was successful for many years. However, in 1916, the business petitioned for bankruptcy and sold to two of its largest stockholders. The building, known as Mercantile Hall, continued to serve the black community as a meeting place for many functions.

Other men supported their families by farming on or near Western Avenue or out Sussex Avenue in the Lake Road area, where many large farms existed. Or they worked in gardening and landscaping. Besides working at the Mercantile Co-op, George Yates, who lived on DeHart Street, was a gardener. He provided board to the only black schoolteacher in town. Josephine Brown taught at the separate Colored School, making forty-five dollars a month as a teacher. Blacks were allowed entrance to few other occupations. A few clergymen, a music teacher, a barber, a seamstress, a dressmaker, a nurse—these people represented rare exceptions to minority labor practices in the nineteenth century.

A COMMUNITY TAKES HOLD

In contrast to nineteenth-century Morristown when black population decreased until almost the end of the century, the twentieth century has witnessed an increase in black population until 1990, when the numbers decreased to 3,733 from a high of 4,145 in 1980. As the black population has grown, so has its active participation in the Morristown community. It was not always this way, however. In this century, the particular challenge confronting blacks has been gaining entrance to a society often hostile to its efforts to progress economically, socially and politically. In Morristown, blacks worked not only to gain access to the community, but also to share a vital role in its development. In her oral testimony, Clara Watson Pinkman likened it to "setting up our own city." Routinely shut out from existing institutions and activities, many aspects of life had to be created anew for the black community. Its accomplishments in this endeavor are many, far greater than those cited here.

Churches

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, African-American churches were a rarity in New Jersey. In Morristown black Christians who wished to worship would attend services at the local Methodist or the First Presbyterian Church. At First Presbyterian, a section of seating was set off for Negroes and in 1808, the seats were converted to pews. Church records do not

mention if black members had to pay for the privilege of pew seating, as was often the tradition. Early church registers of baptisms and marriages and other sources document black communicants and members on their rolls. The earliest recorded names date to the late 1770s. Marriages and other events are listed, often without surnames. Typical is this entry: "Mr. Phoenix's Negro Sussex; m[arried] 18 Nov. 1777, Mary, Negro of Mr. Doty, by their masters' consent."

Members of the First Presbyterian Church also conducted a religious school of sorts, specifically for black residents. The August 1881 issue of *The Record*, a nineteenth-century publication of Morristown's Presbyterian Church, contains a historical sermon by David Irving, D.D. In it he mentions that sometime around 1815, "a few active friends met on Sabbath to instruct the colored people."

An early effort to organize an independent black church occurred in 1843, when a group of people met in an improvised schoolhouse on the property of Theodore Little, on the corner of High and Washington Streets. Reverend James Williams preached there on Sundays, and during the week he taught school there, presumably to black children. Reverend Williams later became one of the first settled ministers to the church in the 1850s. Known as the Bethel Mite Society, the congregation later worshiped in a carpenter's shop on Speedwell Avenue and then in a blacksmith's shop on Morris Street.

Incorporated on December 18, 1843, as the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Morristown, the former Bethel Mite Society purchased land on Spring Street, where it built

a small structure. The building was dedicated in 1849, with local preachers supplying the pulpit until a permanent pastor was chosen. A structure from Macculloch Avenue, secured and hauled to Spring Street, was used as a parsonage. In 1859 the church formally changed its name to the African Methodist Episcopal Bethel Church of Morristown.

Congregants implemented a Sunday School at the church to educate their children. The Reverend Samuel Singleton's brief history of the church states that many white residents helped in this endeavor. Bethel's former pastor mentioned, among others, Isabel Sutphen, Alice Lee, Judge John Whitehead and Minnie Cross as contributing time and effort to the Sunday School. In 1893 the Morristown Free Kindergarten Association got its start in the church's Sunday School room, before moving to larger facilities at William Becker's Park Place residence. Over the years, the Sunday School broadened its scope and size. Oral history participant Mary Turner spoke fondly of the camaraderie and kindness she experienced while teaching Sunday School at Bethel. She remembered the excitement of taking the children on field trips, particularly the annual outing to Coney Island.

The Bethel congregation worshiped at 34 Spring Street until 1874, when they mortgaged their original property and purchased a lot across the street. At that time the church had acquired portions of the old Methodist Episcopal Church building on Morris Street and needed a larger site on which to build. According to the newspaper of the day, pews, windows, doors and other materials from the old church were used in constructing the new building, as well

as galleries and supporting pillars. The church, believed to have cost about \$4,000, was dedicated in the fall of 1874. *The Jerseyman* reported that it presented "a fine appearance."

Sadly, a few years later, the two properties were lost in a sheriff's sale after the mortgage payments had lapsed. In 1878, the local YMCA purchased the second Spring Street site for \$3,800, allowing the congregation to retain use of it.

Church members used their building for far more than religious services, providing the community with a variety of educational programs, entertainments and exhibitions that involved both members and outside guests. By the 1880s the congregation was firmly established in Morristown.

In 1884 an ugly incident reported in *The Jerseyman* brought unwanted attention to the pastor of Bethel but highlighted the church's good standing in the town. The newspaper reported that Pastor J.T. Diggs was accused of fathering a child out of wedlock and he was subsequently arrested for the offense. A jury was convened, but the charges were dismissed after the seventeen year old woman was examined by local doctors. In its February 22 edition, the newspaper staunchly defended the Reverend Diggs' reputation and integrity, stating that not a person in town doubted his innocence. *The Jerseyman* lamented that neither the pastor nor the congregation had been disgraced, but the town, for allowing the minister to languish in jail for three days before settling the matter. Important to note is Reverend Diggs's legal counsel—Mahlon Pitney. One of Morristown foremost attorneys, Pitney was later elected to Congress and he

became an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court.

The YMCA held the deed to the Spring Street property and maintained it for the congregation until 1943, when church members bought back the property from the YMCA. In the same year, the congregation voted to change its name to Bethel African Methodist



13. The "old " Bethel A.M.E. Church on Spring Street, served its congregation for almost one hundred years before being razed and replaced by a new structure, dedicated in 1970.

Episcopal Church (Bethel A.M.E.). Religious services and other functions continued in the Spring Street edifice until 1968, when it was torn down to make way for a new and larger structure. The new Bethel African Methodist

Episcopal Church, with over five hundred communicants, was dedicated in 1970. In December 1987, the congregation held a mortgage burning celebration, a tradition in the black community symbolizing self-reliance and accomplishment. Today the membership surpasses 275 families and continues its active role in the community.

Blacks in the Morris area used Calvary Baptist Church, formed in 1889 with nine members, as an alternative place of worship. After meeting for religious services for some months, members formally organized themselves one Sunday morning in March at Young's Building on Morris Street. Originally known as the First Colored Baptist Church of Morristown, the Reverend Albert M. Lowery of Orange served as first pastor. In 1890 the Calvary Colored Baptist Church of Morristown was recognized as an independent body.

As its numbers continued to grow, the membership searched for a permanent site on which to hold services. It purchased but later abandoned a lot on Sussex Avenue for this purpose. The congregation continued to meet in a number of places until 1894, when it found a suitable site to build on Willow Street. Under the distinguished leadership of the Reverend George E. Morris, the congregation grew to about two hundred and plans for the new building moved forward. The cornerstone was laid in 1895 and by Christmas that year the main building, constructed of wood and seating three hundred, was dedicated. A parsonage was later added at the corner of Willow Street and Evergreen Avenue.

After being known in town as the African Baptist Church or Calvary Baptist, in 1925



14. Calvary Baptist Church, on the corner of Willow Street and Evergreen Avenue, 1941.

the church had its name officially changed to Calvary Baptist Church. At that time the congregation had increased to over 350 persons. A new parsonage was constructed in 1955, during Reverend James Coleman's pastorate. A new church followed in 1960. Edward T. Bowser, a black architect from Orange, New Jersey, designed the building. Building plans for a fellowship hall are now under way. As Calvary Baptist Church has grown—its current membership is about 750—so has its active participation in both church and community affairs.

A second Baptist congregation, created in 1916, resulted from a schism that developed within the membership of Calvary Baptist Church. Calling themselves the Missionary Baptist Church, seventy-nine members separated and began to hold services at the First Baptist Church on Washington Street. The congregation was formally organized in September 1918 under the name of the Union Baptist Church. During that year, the congregation met in a building at 39 Spring Street. In 1919 it moved up the street to a structure it had built at the corner of Spring and Water Streets. By 1937 its ranks had grown to 175 members. The congregation continues to worship at the same address in a new building that was dedicated in 1970.

Like the other black churches in Morristown, membership at Union Baptist has risen steadily over the years, having reached 350 in 1992.

Another church, The Church of God in Christ for All Saints, traces its beginnings to a storefront on Water Street, next door to a saloon. Founded in 1928 as an evangelistic, mission-type denomination, the society's earliest members came from Morristown and Madison, under the leadership of Elder Gilmore. The local city directory called it the Water Street Mission. To the discomfort of many congregants, it held services next door to Pat Ritchie's saloon at 72 Water Street, near Rosevear Lane. Shortly thereafter, the congregation moved down the street to an empty storefront adjacent to Vic's Market. Sometime around 1930, William M. Keith was installed as elder, and the

15. Union Baptist Church, 1926. Church members prepare for the annual outing, organized by local black churches, to Grand View Park in Paterson.





16. Pat Ritchie's cafe, Water Street, 1930.

congregation purchased land to build a church on Rowe Street. Gordon Rogers recalls that while still on Water Street, congregants, when celebrating a baptism, would march from their storefront over to Pocahontas Lake singing "Carry Me to the Water" and conduct the baptism in the lake.

The congregation moved to Rowe Street when the basement of the new structure was completed in 1934. During winters in the cellar, members worshiped around a pot belly stove in their efforts to keep warm. By 1941 the building was completed, and the church was formally incorporated in 1942.

Following the death of Elder Keith in 1965, Gordon Rogers was installed as minister. At that time forty-five adults comprised the membership. Today the church has over 150 members, and it hopes to expand its facilities to meet the needs of its growing membership.

Two other churches—Morristown Church of Christ and Greater New Jerusalem Institutional Baptist Church—are the most recent additions to the black community. Morristown Church of Christ has its roots in Madison, where a handful of people came together in 1944 to worship under the leadership of Evangelist Jackson Simmons. They met in the home of Mattie Poole, on Cook Avenue.

As membership increased, the need to establish a local congregation in Morristown became apparent by 1955. For \$3,500 members purchased the property at the corner of Martin Luther King Avenue and Hervey Street in Collinsville, a neighborhood in Morris Township. Eugene Mitchell, the site's previous owner, had operated a grocery store there, patronized by many residents in the neighborhood. The purchase represented a large responsibility to the small congregation because at that time the average income of its membership was only about sixty-five dollars a week.

Under Brother Jackson Simmons' able leadership the congregation flourished in its new setting. One of the group's greatest achievements occurred shortly after his resignation in 1967, when the congregation implemented a community day care center.

The original building has undergone many improvements, and the congregation continues to worship there. Church members recently purchased property adjacent to their lot, and they are raising funds to expand their facilities. The new church will seat about 300 people. Evangelist Charles Duncan, Sr. has been the minister since 1983.

Members of Calvary Baptist who separated from their congregation founded Greater New



17. As residents using Pocahontas Lake for recreational purposes look on, the baptism immersion proceeds, 1926.
18. Pocahontas Lake, 1926. Congregants readying for a baptism.



Jerusalem. Before the group formally established the church, it worshiped at the Market Street Mission. The church, incorporated in 1973 with Howard Anderson serving as pastor since its creation, is located on Abbett Avenue.

Morristown's independent black churches, begun in the nineteenth century, have long provided focus and stability to those they serve. Over the years these institutions have addressed far more than their congregation's spiritual needs, providing a sense of community and good works, which are visible in myriad ways.

In earlier years the churches also provided

role models for their people by bringing in black speakers and singers and mounting exhibitions that related to black culture and concerns. Typical of these events was one sponsored by Bethel A.M.E. Church, when Bishop B.F. Lee spoke to a large turnout on the issue of race and the disadvantages blacks confronted in the United States. Washington Hall on Spring Street was the frequent site of many church events, including a concert in 1866 given by the Equal Rights Singing Association and an Apron and Necktie Festival in 1873. This benefit required a woman to put on an apron and then find the man who wore

19. Children outside Union Baptist Church preparing to leave on a field trip, 1925.



the matching necktie, resulting in a bit of frivolity for all involved. The social raised forty-six dollars for Bethel A.M.E. Church. In

BE The Concert of the Singing Association connected with the A. M. E. Church of this Town, given at Washington Hall on Monday Evening last, was an interesting one in every respect. On account of the inclemency of the weather it was not so well attended as it would otherwise have been. By request it will be repeated, though the time has not yet been decided on.

20. *The Jerseyman*, 1866 December 29.

later years, local church ministers and congregants emphasized the importance of teaching black history to youth and brought to the public's attention various issues affecting society. Religious leaders shared not only their uplifting faith in God, but also their worldly faith in progress—for their community and their people.

Historically, the independent African-American church was one of the few institutions where blacks could achieve power and status through participation. The many auxiliaries, youth groups, educational offerings, and social and service organizations the churches instituted have broadened the scope of opportunities available to black people in the community. In later years, the experience gained through involvement in church organization and activities would be used in other venues.

Many oral history participants remember the institution of church as an influential force

in their young lives. For Frances Aycox, church activities secured a connection to others in her community and played a prominent role in her growing up. "During my childhood, church was the most important thing there was around to do. When I grew up, there wasn't

NATIONAL NEGRO HISTORY WEEK BEING OBSERVED

Two Meetings To Be Held In Union Baptist Church During Week

Throughout the country during this second week of February which includes the birthday of Abraham Lincoln and approaches that of Fredrick Douglass, schools, churches, and social agencies will pause to pay tribute to these great men who have done so much for the benefit of humanity and the Negro.

Schools will devote an assembly period to some recollection of the life of Abraham Lincoln; Negro ministers will call the attention of their congregations to the lives of both men in the effort to inspire the Negro youth to noble deeds. Committees in almost every city and town have been formed to promote public race meetings so as to stimulate every effort for racial uplift.

Norristown is contributing to this movement to the extent that two meetings will be held in the Union Baptist Church, Rev. L. R. Jones, pastor.

The one, a Lincoln's Birth Day Program to be held on Friday, February 11th at 8:30 P. M. under the auspices of the Ladies' Aid, of this church, Mrs. Puryear, president, Rev. W. E. Smith will be the speaker.

The other is a Lincoln-Douglass Celebration under the auspices of the Community Forum Committee to be held on Monday, February 14th at 8 P. M. Rev. L. D. Ellerson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Newark will be the speaker.

21. *The Daily Record*, 1927 February 8.

all this activity that the children have now. So my life really was centered around Sunday School, Christian Endeavor, and Church." Others recall spending all day on Sunday in services, going home only for meals. Week night worship services were common.

While perhaps not as all-encompassing as they were in the recent past, today Morristown's black churches continue to play a dynamic role in the lives of their members and provide a climate of hope and concern for the entire community.

Education

In her seminal study, *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey*, Marion Thompson Wright discovered that in the early decades of the nineteenth century an increasing awareness of the need to educate blacks existed in religious societies. This prompted many communities to examine the dilemma of educating a separate group of citizens, whom so many believed were second-class. Some communities, like Morristown, initiated basic educational programs.

Providing public education for blacks in Morristown is first mentioned in an 1817 edition of the *Palladium of Liberty* newspaper. A committee appointed by the town to report on the school for "people of Color" was quite pleased with the undertaking. Sixty-five students—both children and adults—met on the Sabbath to attend the school begun in 1815. This endeavor was probably an outgrowth or extension of the First Presbyterian Church's attempt to provide instruction to the town's black residents. Where the lessons took place

remains unknown. The school's primary objective was to impart religious instruction and improve reading and writing skills. The committee deemed forty of the students to be "good readers."

There is also evidence of a small school for black children at the site where Bethel A.M.E. Church met in its earliest years. During the 1840s, the property of Theodore Little included a makeshift schoolhouse where Reverend James Williams preached to a fledgling congregation on Sundays and conducted school during the week.

In a determined effort to educate black children, a small school was later constructed in the basement of Bethel A.M.E. Church at 34 Spring Street. Throughout New Jersey, black churches often offered the only space in which black scholars might be taught. On Spring Street, the teacher had a blackboard and a map; the children sat on benches at long tables. In 1854, the census committee of the original Morris School District counted twenty-one children between five and eighteen years enrolled there. The original Morris School District was incorporated in 1854 and comprised Morristown and parts of Morris Township.

After losing the Spring Street property in a foreclosure action in 1876, the Board of Trustees of the Bethel A.M.E. Church requested that the school district rent a room for the Colored Public School. The Morris School District purchased the former site of the church from John R. Piper in 1877 after he had secured the property at sheriff's sale.

The Morris School District appointed a standing committee annually to oversee the Colored School. With its modest facilities, one teacher and one janitor, the school stood in stark contrast to the Maple Avenue School completed in 1869. Touted as one of the finest schools constructed in New Jersey at the time, the Maple Avenue building was three stories high with twelve classrooms, an auditorium, cloak rooms and closet space. Black residents of Morristown were not allowed entrance to this place of higher learning for another fifteen years.

Although the Morristown Board of Education's census indicated that seventy-nine children attended the Colored School,

The Jerseyman reported that in September 1879 forty children had enrolled in the separate school. In 1881 William L. Brown, who lived near the school on Spring Street, was engaged as teacher at an annual salary of \$650.

In the same year the Morris School District finally took up the issue of integrating the town's schools. Thus far, the state had failed to provide consistent policies or guidelines that would promote equal education for minorities. The issue of school integration was left largely to individual towns, and Morristown was not in the forefront of this movement. Other towns in New Jersey, including neighboring Madison, had already achieved integration. In 1872 both Newark and Paterson

22. Maple Avenue School auditorium, 1909. Until a separate high school building opened in 1918, the Maple Avenue facility housed both grade and high schools. The building was razed in 1956.



passed laws providing all children with equal access to public schools. At that time, *The Jerseyman* lamented, "When shall we have the pleasure of chronicling a like measure of simple justice, and a similar recognition of the 'inevitable' on the part of the Morristown Board of Education?" The answer to that came only when the state legislature forced the hands of towns such as Morristown by enacting a bill sponsored by Senator James Youngblood of Morris County in 1881. The law prohibited the exclusion of any child from a public school on account of religion, nationality or color. The state supreme court upheld the law in 1884.

The Morris School District responded in 1881 by affirming every child's right to be admitted to a public school, provided he or she qualified for admission under the rules and regulations already in place. This was later amended to "public school on Maple Avenue." However, the Colored School continued to operate until fall 1886. At that time, the school was not integrated; it was closed. The school district offered the facility rent-free to anyone willing to establish an industrial school there. Purchased for \$500 by Oscar H. Babbitt the following year, for a short time the building did serve as a vocational school.

Some black scholars did not wait for the local Colored School to close. An article in the *True Democratic Banner* suggests their initial attempts at integration were not entirely welcome. "From eight to ten colored children, taking advantage of Mr. Youngblood's law, have left their own public school and appeared at the Maple Avenue school on Monday. Should the exodus become general it will leave

the colored teacher without a situation, to say nothing of filling some of the rooms beyond a comfortable and advantageous limit."

Despite the new law, segregated schools continued to exist in New Jersey. In some communities both blacks and whites encouraged segregation. Many black parents believed that separate schools would protect their children from the racial insults and indignities they might suffer if forced to attend all-white schools.

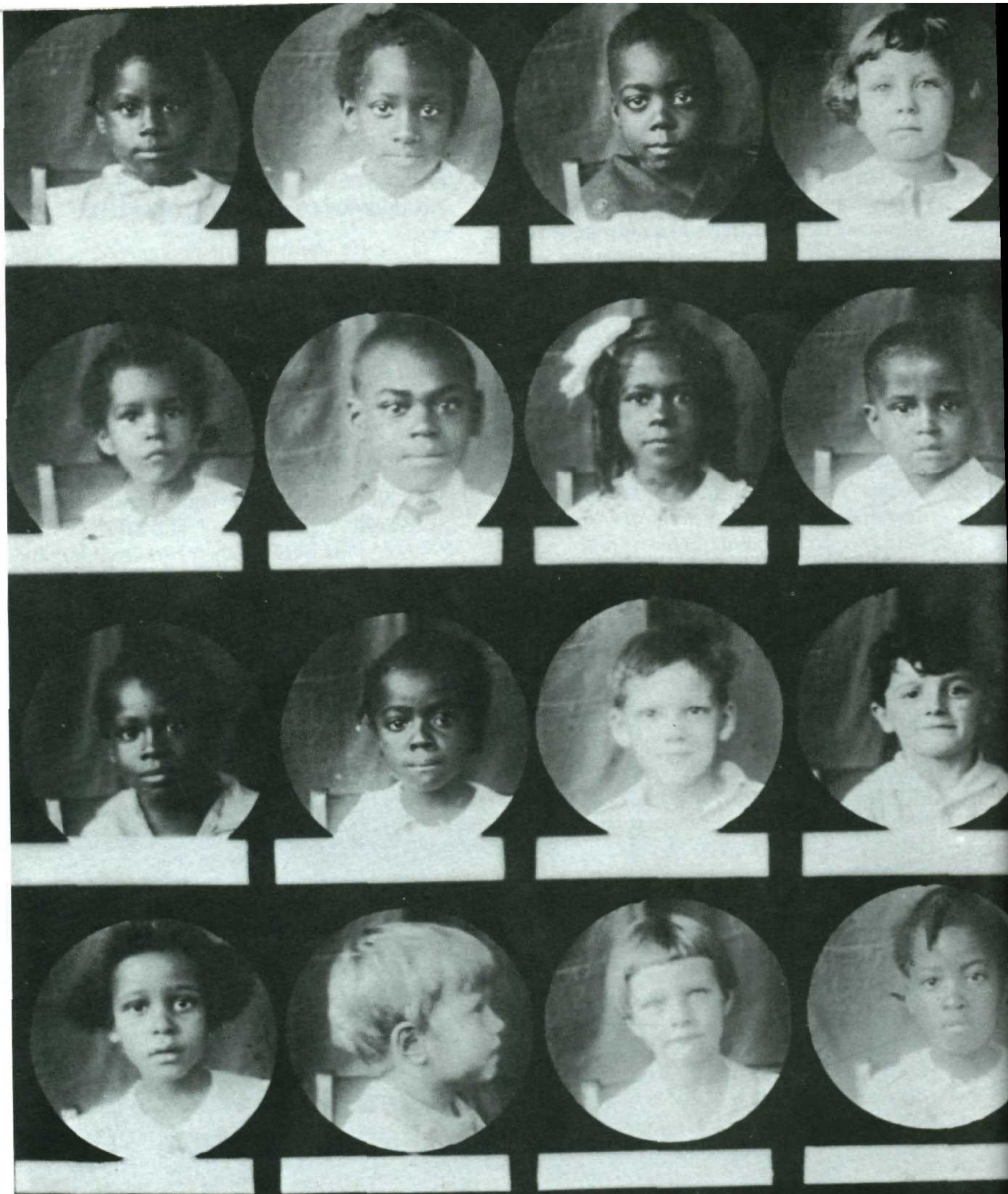
By the 1920s black children were enrolled at Collinsville School, Maple Avenue School, Speedwell Avenue School, and Liberty Street School. Julia Kersey remembers attending the newly-opened Lafayette School in the 1930s.

"There was strong emphasis on reading and writing—particularly penmanship. I remember

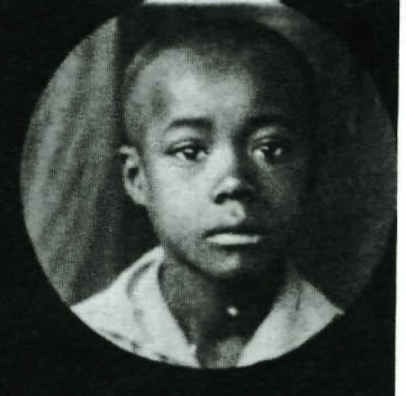


23. Collinsville School, Cleveland Avenue and Walnut Street, Morris Township. The building was razed in 1973.

Overleaf: 24. A typically integrated first grade class at Collinsville School, 1930.



Grade 1
Collinsville School
Morris Township, N.J.
1935





25. A few black children are included in this Maple Avenue School class picture, c. 1886.

those pieces of paper with the wide lines and you had to stay within the lines. Kids went to recess twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon. I remember loving it when it rained, because we all walked to school and if it was a very heavy rain, then we got a half-day session—we went home to lunch and we didn't have to go back."

A 1924 survey commissioned by the Committee of the Community Workers' Council of Morristown, an interracial group of residents, and conducted by a staff member from the National Urban League of New York City, found only fourteen black students enrolled in the new high school that had opened in 1918. One young woman quoted in the survey believed attending high school was a futile endeavor because job opportunities for black women were limited to domestic work. The report also noted that in the past

forty years fewer than thirty blacks had graduated from Morristown High School, a dismal figure considering the rise in Morristown's black population over the same time.

Achieving real integration in Morristown's elementary schools remained an elusive goal for many years. People in the community, with organizations such as the Morris County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League of Morris County, began to work for changes in the school system. Perhaps they were spurred on by the 1954 United States Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which prohibited segregation in public schools on the basis of race. The Court ruled that separate but equal facilities had no place in American education. Many residents of Morristown believed the Court ruling directly impacted their community.

By 1961, there were four grammar schools in town. Three had less than ten percent black enrollment. In the fourth, Lafayette School located on Hazel Street, blacks constituted over ninety per cent of the student population.

Many black parents believed Lafayette to be inferior to Morristown's other elementary schools. Constance Montgomery, a local school board member at the time, recalls the less impressive quality of teachers, the inadequate supplies and frequently out-of-date instructional materials. On occasion books just received at Lafayette had already been removed from the curriculum of the other town schools.

Parents were outraged that their children,

regardless of their address, had to attend a segregated, substandard school. They believed this was due in part to gerrymandering, that process by which voting districts are divided in a manner that gives unfair advantage to a particular political party or viewpoint.

As events unfolded, Mrs. Montgomery remembered the community became imbued with a spirit of cooperation. "I saw how the community melded together and worked together during the school integration program. It was almost one hundred percent of a Morristown community effort into insuring that that integration program was going to work in the school system."

26. *Maple Avenue School classroom, 1931.*



In February 1962, after great debate among townspeople, the Board of Education acted to desegregate Morristown's schools by approving a plan to convert Lafayette School to a junior high school for all students in the district. The community would then be redistricted so as to achieve racial balance in the schools. Because of the resulting geographical changes, many children had to be bused to their new school. The plan was implemented at the start of the following school year.

A similar series of events occurred at the high school level during the late 1960s. In 1968 Morris Township announced plans to withdraw its students from the Morristown High School and build a separate facility in the township. Had the township withdrawn its predominantly white student enrollment, the proportion of black students in the high school would have increased substantially. A group of Morristown parents concerned about the resulting quality of education filed a complaint with state Education Commissioner Carl Marburger, who after almost four years of legal battles, ordered the merger of the school districts. The present, consolidated Morris School District became effective beginning with the 1972 school year.

The Job Market

During the first half of the twentieth century, job opportunities for blacks in Morristown remained limited. The 1910 federal census that includes Morristown is disappointingly similar to the 1880 census in recording the limited occupations available to blacks. This was particularly true for women



27. George and Nannie Smith, 1926. The Smiths lived on Anderson Street, near L.L. Taylor's funeral home.

who worked. In New Jersey, the overwhelming majority of employed black women—numbering over 10,000—worked as domestics. The remainder worked as laundresses, and only a very few earned their living as dressmakers or seamstresses. In 1903 Morristown had more than sixty women advertising their services as dressmakers. Only two, Harriet Eaton and Anna Cooper, were black. Fifteen years later, the statistics remained the same. Only two black women, Etta Hill, whose shop was located on Speedwell Avenue, and Susie Crockett were listed as seamstresses in Richmond's Morristown Directory.

In Morristown most black women who sought an income worked as they had in the nineteenth century, doing other people's laundry. Mary West, a typical example, worked at home on Blatchley Street as a laundress

while caring for her four children—a formidable task! Nannie Smith, whose husband George was a plumber's helper, worked as a servant in a private home. More unusual was Bessie Hill, who found employment as a bookkeeper before her marriage to John Tanner.

For black males in the community, marginally-increased employment opportunities began to appear by 1910. African-American men confronted a transient workplace, regularly changing jobs or taking work wherever they found it. In Morristown men continued to work as unskilled laborers, but in a greater variety of work places. Many males labored as drivers or draymen, hauling goods in heavy wagons. They transported ice, coal, rubbish,

groceries and many other commodities all over town. William Harris, who came to Morristown from Virginia, toiled as a teamster driving a lumber wagon. Anderson Gibbs and L. Lexington Taylor owned ash wagons, removing the ash residue that collected from heating homes and businesses with coal stoves. The ash and rubbish business would grow to become a profitable enterprise for some black families in town. This was one area where blacks were freely allowed to compete. Men like Thomas Walker and his son Clarence, and William Watson quickly took advantage of this rare opportunity and built successful businesses.

Many local men, like Wilson Peterson, Thomas Jackson, Edward Irving and Jacob

28. *James Williams driving a team of horses in Morris Plains, 1915. Williams lived on Early Street in Morristown.*





29. L. to r.: Alphas Watson, Joe Lyles, William Watson, c. 1915. William Watson came to Morristown from Virginia. He became a successful businessman and, until his death in 1933, worked to advance the status of Morris County's black citizens.

Dallams found jobs as expressmen employed to receive or deliver parcels handled by postal express companies. Other men, like James Downey, George Ray and Samuel Jenkins, were self-employed expressmen. Sam Jenkins's business, "Swift and Sure," was well known by many in town. Until the advent of motorized vehicles these businesses used horse and wagon as their mode of transportation.

A few individuals found work elsewhere in town. Albert Huland worked as a watchman. Beginning around 1917, Joe Francis operated the elevator at the Babbitt Building on Park

Place. Mr. Francis lived on Clinton Place and worked at the Babbitt Building for over thirty years, ending his career there as superintendent of the building. Native Morristonian Clara Pinkman remembered him as a learned man, kind and capable.

Many residents continued to work in the restaurant/hotel business. In 1907 John Taylor met his wife, Mary Bryant, while both worked for Wilbur F. Day's restaurant and catering establishment on the south side of Park Place. Mary Bryant had worked for Mr. Day in Asbury Park, and he encouraged her to come to Morristown, where he was in need of workers. Lexington Taylor's brother, Isaac, also worked as a waiter at Day's. Fred Gramby had a fine reputation as a cook at Day's. John Thurmond found employment there and later worked at Davis Brothers Drug Store on Park Place, where he waited on patrons at the ice cream counter. In 1926, a black man serving a white public was a rare sight. Aaron Brown, a former



30. Employees in front of W. F. Day's establishment, c. 1890. Black workers identified in this photograph are (l. to r.): Edward Stansbury, William Ray and Samuel James. Wilbur Day is pictured with his hand on the bicycle.



31. Atlas of part of Morris County, New Jersey, A. H. Mueller, 1910. As a continuation of Evergreen Avenue, Water Street began at the DL&W Railroad overpass just north of Coal Avenue, intersected Spring Street and continued up the hill to the Green. Most of Water Street was lost to urban renewal and plans for Headquarters Plaza. The part of Water Street still in existence—from Coal Avenue to Spring Street—is now a part of Martin Luther King Avenue.

slave, also worked at Davis Brothers behind the scenes as a handyman and caretaker.

Very few black men found work in town as skilled tradesmen. James Parham, who earlier had an express business, made his living as a blacksmith. Julia Kersey's father, Ferdinand Gregory, was a self-employed mason. Walter Anthony worked as a hod carrier, supplying builders with mortar and bricks carried in a v-shaped, open receptacle.

The increasing number of black-owned businesses and enterprises was evidence of a burgeoning black community. Morristown reflected a growing national trend that emphasized black economic development. John

Tanner started his taxi service as a coachman in 1906. For sixty-two years, he attended to the transportation needs of Morristown's residents. In 1911 David Nesbitt worked as an insurance agent. Harry Ray, a barber who lived on Blatchley Street, operated an establishment on Bank Street. Three other black barbers exercised their profession at home. William Perry was a self-employed contractor who lived on Abbett Avenue.

One of the earliest African-American professionals to practice in Morristown was Dr. Augustus Stanfield. By 1914 he was attending to the medical needs of the black community at his office and residence on Water Street.



32. William Jones, at his grocery store on Spring Street, near Morris Street, 1913. The Mercantile Hall had its quarters on the second floor.

Dr. John T. Williams took over his office in 1916.

Many businesses were located in the vicinity of Speedwell Avenue or Spring and Morris Streets. By 1920, the area of Spring and Water Streets, Morris Street and a few adjacent streets represented the primary black neighborhood in town.

Carlos Veichtermon, a cigar manufacturer, pursued his venture at the corner of Morris and King Streets until he moved his business to Summit, New Jersey. Seth Marrow had a grocery on Morris Street. His competitor, William Jones, was located nearby on Spring Street in the Mercantile Hall. Later Mr. Jones operated a hand laundry on the corner of George and Lincoln Streets. He employed many local women, including Julia Kersey's mother and Georgia Norris's grandmother.

Mr. Jones, a respected member of the black community, served as choirmaster at Calvary Baptist Church. For over fifty years Henry Booker operated a shoe shop on Water Street, perched precariously on the bank of the Whippany River. Born in Virginia in 1873, he came to Morristown as a young man and worked in a local brick yard. However, generations of residents remember him for his excellent workmanship as a shoemaker. Edward Miller ran a confectionery shop on Spring Street. Charlotte Finney, a black woman who lived on Thompson Street, worked as a furniture dealer in

a storefront on Speedwell Avenue. Other men worked independently as contractors, coal dealers, or hacks.

Throughout the state blacks found employment primarily as farm workers, unskilled laborers, or domestics. Entering the manufacturing and trade sectors proved more difficult. A statewide study done in 1903 by the New Jersey Bureau of Statistics found only eighty-three manufacturing and industrial establishments employing black workers. Of the almost 1,000 blacks employed, fewer than 250 were skilled or semi-skilled workers. The remainder required only the strength to perform their tasks. By 1920, while more than 17,000 black males in New Jersey were employed in manufacturing pursuits most, shut out from higher paying jobs, continued to work as unskilled laborers or in other low level positions.

The 1903 survey provides evidence that an early obstacle to meaningful black employment was the rampant discrimination practiced by trade and labor unions, particularly at the local level. In New Jersey only fifty-four black men held membership in local trade organizations. Without these associations, blacks had little access to apprenticeship training, which would improve their vocational skills. Most national organizations had no laws barring minorities from their ranks, but few associations had black members. Many respondents to the survey admitted that blacks would be denied admission to the union if they applied.

Typical is the response of the United Textile Workers, who had no black workers on their rolls because, "they are employed exclusively at work which requires no skill and is of a very dirty and disagreeable character." Members of other associations believed black men incapable of acquiring the skill necessary to work in their trade. "Negroes do not as a rule become highly skilled in any calling and are not partial to hard work." More egregious is the appraisal offered by a local carpenters and joiners union: "Their color and low instincts make them undesirable associates for white men."

In those instances where organized labor recognized a black man's right to join a union, many men chose to remain independent. Holding union membership was often disadvantageous, because employers, when paying set wages, overwhelmingly preferred white workers to minorities. The only competitive edge blacks held in some job markets was their willingness to accept lower wages. Joining a union with a fixed wage scale would prohibit

this practice. Therefore employers would lose the incentive to hire black workers.

In the Morristown area, one of the few manufacturing interests employing black laborers was the brick yards. As early as 1891, the Watnong Brick Company recruited blacks from Virginia to provide the labor necessary to make pressed and hard brick. At its peak, Watnong, with offices based in Morristown, manufactured over 3,000,000 bricks a year. John Lyons worked as a brickmaker there.

Watnong Brick Co.

(ORGANIZED JANUARY 17th, 1891.)

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33. *The Jerseyman*, 1891 March 20.

A number of local men worked at the Hanover Brick Manufacturing company, originally organized as the Moore Brick & Clay Company. The Hanover-based company flour-



34. Matt Washington's residence at 97 Ridgedale Avenue, 1927. Washington operated his taxi service out of his house, a typical frame dwelling on this residential street. 35. Lewis Parham, Ridgedale Avenue, 1922.

ished during the early twentieth century, carting away as many as 90,000 bricks in one day. In 1903 brick yards paid between eight and eleven dollars a week. Because of the arduous conditions, their wages were a bit higher than those of the neighboring paper mills. Men like James Parham and Bert Tucker, who lived on Ridgedale Avenue—a thriving middle-class black neighborhood—walked or bicycled the four miles to work. The men labored ten hours a day, loading and unloading clay and bricks in 200-degree heat. In 1926, workers complained about the sweltering heat and went on strike. The company's board of directors offered them a three cent raise and the strikers accepted. That increase meant the men made eighteen cents for every 1,000 bricks loaded. Local men continued to work at the brick yard until it closed in 1929.

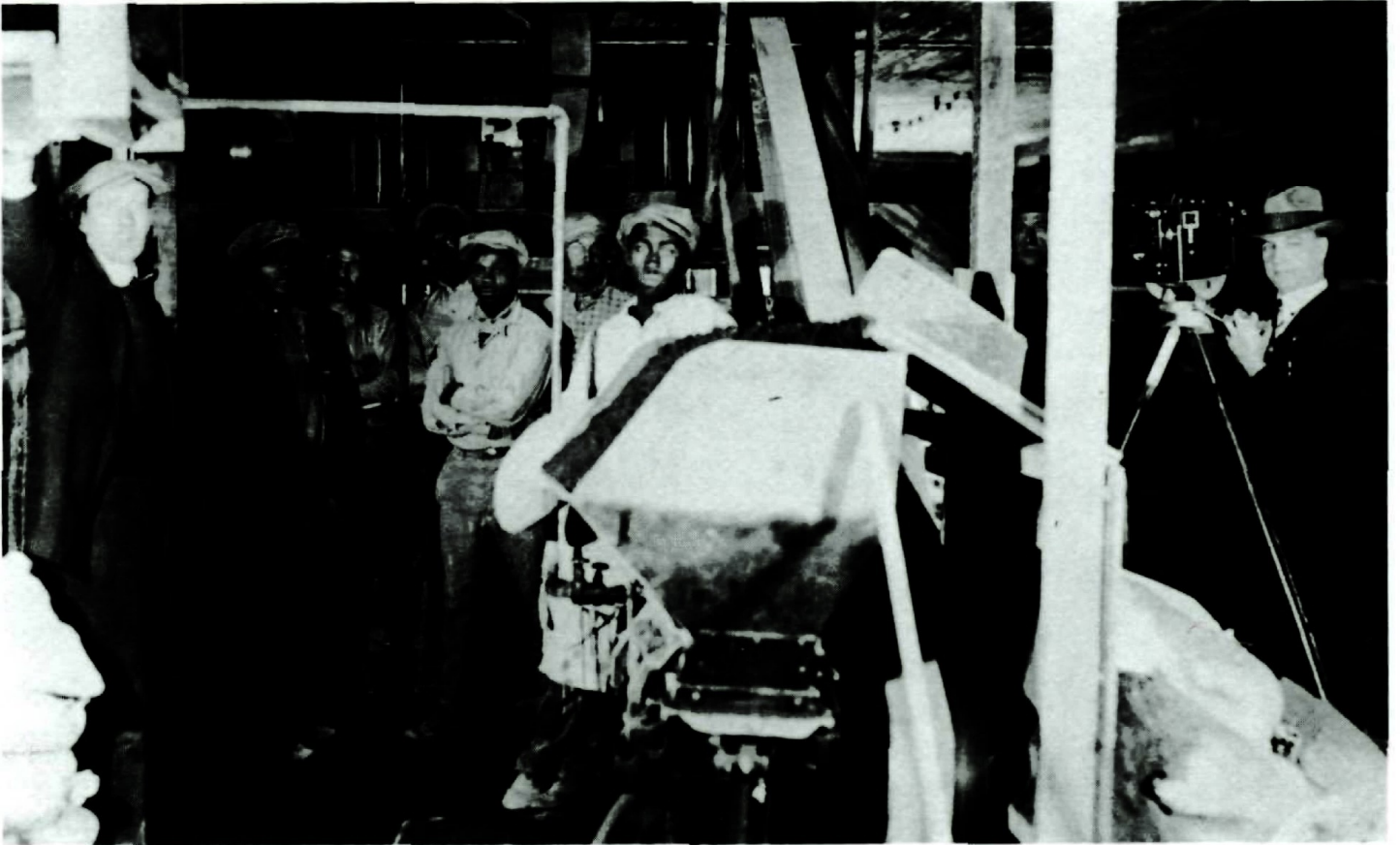
During the early twentieth century, area black men found work at the Hoboken docks, a major industrial port about twenty-five miles

east of Morristown. The Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, with a lucrative freight business, hired men like William Davie, Lewis Parham and Roy Baker to work as long-shoremen. To transport the men to work, the company provided free railroad passes. Family members could also use these passes for leisure purposes. Working long hours at the docks, the men loaded and unloaded all types of products on the trains and boats that passed through the Hoboken terminal. Wages were probably less than one dollar a day. The job required great strength because no machinery existed to lift 200-pound bags of grain, chemical



36. Workmen at Spring Brook Country Club, 1937. 37. Snow removal truck dumping its load of snow on to Water Street where workers disposed of it by shoveling the snow into the Whippany River below, 1925.
 36 & 37. Black men often took what ever job they could find. Much of the work required little skill, and was physically demanding and seasonal.





38. Workers inside Elmer Snook's Morristown Cement Block Company, located on Center Street at the corner of Coal Avenue, 1925. 39. Workers at the Western Avenue Reservoir, near the tunnel, 1931. Mayor Clyde Potts is on the left standing between the two women.



drums or other cumbersome freight items. Otis Lyon, a longtime Morristown resident, came to Morristown in 1912 and lived with his brother who worked on the docks. He recalls Christmas season as a particularly busy time in the shipping industry, but the men were always willing to work for the extra pay they would receive.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, limited employment opportunities and low wages continued to plague blacks in Morristown and New Jersey. Morristown remained primarily a residential area with few industrial concerns to provide work to unskilled laborers. Despite the bleak economic outlook, the town's black population increased dramatically during the decade of the 1920s—from 891 in 1920 to almost 1,400 by 1930. Oral history participant John Thurmond remembered those times.

"We would wake up on Monday morning and there was a hundred more blacks than there was Saturday night when we went to bed. Those who were here and had cars would go back to South Carolina and North Carolina over the weekend and bring back carloads. You would find fifteen people sleeping in three or four rooms. They were being brought up from the South by their uncles, aunts and cousins."

The years of the Great Depression meant hard times for many families in town. However for one local woman the Depression Era had little impact. Cassie Arnold Jarvis's interview is laced with caustic insights on growing up black and poor in Morristown.

"We lived on Center Street then. I know it was hard getting sugar, and it was hard getting butter...[But] I'm still wondering what they're

talking about—this Depression. What Depression? We've always been depressed! I don't know anything different. For colored folks, it's always been lean."

Helen Middleton remembered more distinctly those years of hardship.

"We didn't do too bad considering my mother had a job. I don't know how she done it, but she took care of us. We didn't have to go on welfare. So we were blessed there. How she done it, I don't know, just with the help of the good Lord."

Other families were not so fortunate. The newly appointed Mayor's Unemployment Relief Committee was inundated with applications from unemployed people. During 1931, as many as seventy-five workers a day applied to the committee for temporary jobs. In 1935 eleven percent of Morris County's population received assistance from the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA), a federal program designed to aid the unemployed. In her interview, Clara Watson Pinkman recalled working for the ERA as a caseworker.

"We worked up at our headquarters, which was up on Park Place over the old Five and Ten Cent Store. Each of us had a caseload of about ninety people, and we didn't have cars then. We had to walk. We had to make our rounds at least once a week and see about the conditions of the people and see what they had. That was when the ERA was giving fuel and clothing and food and taking care of the rents. And we had to check and see what the situation was and report back to the office so that they could determine what could be done for these various families."

The black population in Morristown increased substantially between 1920 and 1930, rising from fewer than 900 to almost 1,400 residents in a town of 15,000 people. The fact that in 1931 the New Jersey Conference of Social Work found the median weekly earnings of a Negro family in Morristown to be \$28.00, one of the highest figures in the state, is evidence that black families in town fared better economically than blacks in other cities.

Steady jobs were available in the area. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a federal work relief agency, had a camp at the corner of Ford Hill and Whippany Road that employed local men. The expansion of Morristown's water supply during the 1920s and 30s created work for many unskilled laborers. Between 1929 and 1932, many other Morristown

residents worked on the construction of the Clyde Potts Reservoir. Black and white immigrants shared the backbreaking work of digging a dam. Building the Jockey Hollow Reservoir on Western Avenue also provided many jobs.

The paper mills in Hanover continued to employ area men. Many oral history participants or their relatives worked there. Frances Aycox's father, Frank Simmons, worked for Whippany Paper Board. Lt. Willie Caldwell, Jr., remembers that his father worked at Whippany Paper Board for many years until an accident on the job ended his career there.

Black-owned businesses continued to develop to meet the needs of this small but growing community. As John Thurmond noted in his interview, self-employment had no entrenched establishment that worked to impede the progress of African Americans.

40. Witte-Richards Coal Company employees and trucks at the company's yard on the corner of Evergreen



Instead it provided a means for blacks to achieve economic parity. "There was no blacks controlling no jobs, or giving out jobs. Every black who was doing anything worthwhile to make a living—a good living—and accomplish something was working for himself."

Many establishments offered services that white businesses refused to provide. Edward Gramby had a barber shop on Spring Street, and also operated a pool parlor located in the back of his shop. His sisters, Mamie and Pattie Gramby, ran a beauty salon down the street at the Mercantile Building where William Jones had earlier operated his grocery store. Lula Howard operated the East India Beauty Salon on Water Street from 1933 until her retirement in 1974. After spending a few years as a huckster, peddling small goods to local residents, James Moss started his ice business

around 1930 on Center Street. Because many families and businesses did not yet own refrigerators, men like Mr. Moss and John Gregory, who had an ice business in the 1920s before he began his taxi service, would deliver blocks of ice and set them in the "ice boxes" used to keep foods from spoiling. James Moss's son, Freddy, continued the business when his father retired.

By 1929, L. Lexington Taylor had established his undertaking business at his home on Anderson Street. During the 1920s, other black professionals began practicing in town. Lester W. Graddick, a local physician, opened an office on Speedwell Avenue. Ernest B. Wetmore had a dental practice and shared office space with Dr. Graddick. Later Dr. Graddick moved to Cole Avenue. When Dr. Graddick moved to Sussex Avenue in the early

Avenue and George Street, 1930. In the background is Calvary Baptist Church on Willow Street.



1930s, Dr. Harold R. Scott took over Dr. Graddick's former quarters. Both Dr. Wetmore and Dr. Graddick were active in civic and community affairs. Dr. Wetmore served as a Morristown Housing Authority commissioner for many years.

Black citizens made small inroads elsewhere in town. A few black businessmen involved in transportation or rubbish removal expanded to serve the needs of the entire town. Men like John Tolar, Sam Jenkins, Joe Grant, Charles Banks and John Gregory were granted livery licenses extended during Mayor Clyde Potts's political administration. Many of these families would expand and profit from these enterprises for generations. William and Letsie Clemons operated a successful cleaning and pressing business, OK Cleaners, originally run by Peyton Tutweiler. A few municipal jobs opened up. A previously impenetrable barrier came down when the Board of Aldermen appointed James Gregory as a patrolman to the police force in 1934. Before the appointment, Gregory had served as a chanceman for five years. Chancemen acted as substitute police officers in a municipality, filling in as needed in the department. When an opening for a patrolman occurred, a chanceman usually was appointed to the position.

Meaningful changes in employment practices occurred with the advent of World War II and the subsequent end of the Depression. The manpower needs of a wartime economy forced employers to rely on nontraditional sources for their labor. Thus blacks and women had opportunities to work in areas previously closed to them. The federal government moved quickly to include minorities in its work force. Many residents commuted about

sixty-five miles a day to work at the Jersey City Quartermaster Sub Depot at Belle Mead, in Somerset County.

Closer to home Picatinny Arsenal, in its mission to supply munitions for the American war effort, provided many with jobs. Beginning in 1940, the United States War Department allocated \$775,000 to a special project to enlarge the Arsenal's work force. Wage rates, depending on the job, ranged from sixty-five cents to two dollars an hour. The military, desperately short of the civilian workers needed to increase production, imported labor. The availability of blacks and females made them a particular target. In 1944 Picatinny Arsenal organized a successful recruitment campaign

41. John H. Gregory arrived in Morristown from Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Assisted by his family, the cab company he founded around 1930 operated for over thirty years.



at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem. Employees from Newark, the Oranges and New York City were transported to the plant in government-contracted buses.

The government also recruited more than five hundred Jamaicans to work at the Arsenal. They were housed separately at CCC camps in Hackettstown and Whippany. Oral history participant Julia Kersey remembers the community's reaction to the foreign workers.

"The Jamaicans came to Morristown, and I remember how peculiar they looked to us because they were in white pants



42. *Matt Washington and his taxi, 1925.*

43. *James Gregory, 1920.*



and shirts. They weren't used to this cold climate. And the black community opened up their doors and extended invitations to the fellows and made them welcome in Morristown. They would appear at different functions that we had in the area."

At its peak during World War II, Picatinny employed more than 18,000 workers, working three shifts a day. As many as 10,000 of those employed were women. Due to the large numbers of female employees, officials at the installation considered instituting an on-site child care center. Many local women who worked there enjoyed the resultant camaraderie and financial independence that came with working outside the home. Estelle Taylor Howe began work at Picatinny in 1940 before

she moved to the Office of Dependency Benefits in Newark. Marion Tanner also worked there during the early years of the the war, as did Clara Watson Pinkman, who recalled doing work previously handled by men.

"I worked at Picatinny with the ammunition. I seen much excitement there because we were working in powder ammunition. Of course, not being too well acquainted with all these things, we would have explosions from time to time, small ones, especially when we got the powders mixed, they'd blow."

In Morristown, taxi drivers procured special licenses, permitting them to enter the base to drop off and pick up workers. Georgia Norris, who worked at the Arsenal from 1941 to 1944, recalls working ten or twelve hours a day for good wages. In the 1941 director's annual report to the Neighborhood House, Margaret McDonald found that because of their "newly acquired wealth" gained from working at Picatinny, area youth were no longer interested in the organization's activities.

During the 1940s, black-owned businesses continued to thrive in Morristown. William "Jack" Harris founded his successful trucking company in 1946. Mr. Harris was known to many in the community for his participation in civic and fraternal activities. Another venture, Isaac Martin's Post War Club, became a well-known and much-loved establishment in the black community. In 1945, Martin obtained the first liquor license issued to a black man in town. Located on Evergreen Avenue (now Martin Luther King Avenue) in the Collinsville section of Morris Township, the Post War Club became a central meeting place and social spot for many people in the

community. His son, Richard, who operates the establishment today, remembers the early days.

"Years ago, this was a great business because black people were still migrating from the South—they didn't have places to stay so they would come by and ask my father how to get jobs, a place to stay—and they became very attached to this place. On Thursdays and Sundays the women came out. All the domestics came out. They worked for white people, and that's where they lived. When they had the day off they would come to town to the bar. They had no place else to go because very few black people had homes back in those days. So they would stay in the bar all day—not necessarily drinking—just being there, having some place to be. And we never saw people come into the bar on Thursdays and Sundays dressed the way I am. They were dressed to kill—shoes shined, ties—they had on their Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes."

In New Jersey the 1945 Fair Employment Act prohibited racial discrimination in employment and encouraged those employers willing to hire minorities. It also provided legal recourse for those who could prove they were denied a job because of their color. However a survey conducted by the Morris County Urban League in 1956 proved that discrimination was not a wrong that might be legislated out of existence, concluding that the majority of blacks living in the area continued to work in service jobs or unskilled occupations.

The survey found that while a few major employers hired blacks without restriction, it was not the general rule. Picatinny Arsenal continued to encourage minority hiring. In

1956, ten per cent of their work force was black. Area hospitals also provided job opportunities for residents. Both the New Jersey State Hospital, now Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital, and All Souls and Memorial Hospitals, now Morristown Memorial Hospital, employed blacks. The survey noted that at the State Hospital, Negroes worked in a wide range of professional, technical, and clerical jobs. In Morristown, municipal jobs for blacks were largely confined to the police, water and roads departments. Black workers were more successful at the local post office, where thirteen men of the sixty workers were black.

Breaking the barrier to better job opportunities in the private sector proved more difficult. In 1942 Ethel Judson succeeded in becoming the first black to work behind a cash register at Food Fair, a local supermarket. Her achievement opened up a new avenue of employment for local black women. However, in 1956 the Morris County Urban League found fewer than six establishments employing black clerical help or sales clerks. Local banking institutions followed a similar pattern by rarely hiring blacks for anything but janitorial positions.

Despite the post-World War II growth of area industries, most companies largely shut out blacks from all but service jobs. Bell Laboratories hired its first black professional in 1942. During the war, the company began hiring black residents to work in unskilled jobs at its facility on Whippany Road. Before leaving the area to attend nursing school, Marion Young Rowe worked there from 1943 to 1945 in the mail room and later in the drafting department. She remembers only one or two other blacks working at the facility at that time. Jane Tucker, one of a handful

of African Americans hired in 1953 when the Mennen Company moved from Newark to Morris Township, worked in the Quality Control Department as a lab technician.

Black-owned businesses and enterprises continued to give some measure of economic security to residents who provided for the needs of the community. In the 1950s small businesses on Speedwell Avenue and Spring and Water Streets continued to thrive. Booker T. Freeman opened a confectionery at 89 Water Street. Today he operates a liquor store at the same location, now Martin Luther King Avenue. In his interview, John Harris remembered the candy store from his childhood.

"I remember Mr. Freeman. At first he had a confectionery store where he sold newspapers, soda, different foodstuffs. The liquor store was something that came about later. Years later. Freeman, he ran that business. He ran that business 'cause he would account for everything coming in and out of that store. That was one thing about Mr. Freeman. Nobody got anything past him."

Contractors, tradesmen and other self-employed operators made enough money to support their families and sometimes hired workers to help in their businesses. An encouraging sign for the black community was the small but growing number of black professionals who began to settle in the Morris area. Included in this select group were doctors, dentists, veterinarians, teachers, nurses and a lawyer.

While census statistics document greater job opportunities available to black males, females witnessed more modest gains. In 1960,



44. Thomas Walker, the son of slaves and one of Morristown's earliest black Democrats, appears on left with a team of horses at his place of employ, Adams & Fairchild Grocery, c.1890. After working for many years as a waiter and driver, he established a successful ash business. His lengthy obituary, published in *The Jerseyman* on December 18, 1914, suggests he was a man well respected in the community.

Morristown census figures show that more black females entered professional and technical fields than ever before, but the majority of women still worked in private households or in service positions.

Over the years the Morris County Urban League emphasized the importance of job training programs and vocational guidance. The League has implemented—with varying degrees of success—programs to eliminate the pervasive underemployment that still affects non-white residents. The civil rights legisla-

tion and reforms of the late 1950s and 1960s did much to advance the cause of equitable employment. In 1963, twelve area business and industrial firms joined the Morris County Urban League to form a committee to promote equal job opportunity actively. Among this group were Warner-Lambert Company, Mennen Company, Morris County Savings Bank, Silver Burdett Company and Bell Telephone Company. Today the Urban League, with other community organizations, persists in its efforts to afford all citizens equal opportunity in the workplace.

The Political Scene

Black citizens of Morristown worked to break down another barrier—participation in politics. The Colored Republican Club, a local chapter of the national organization, continued its political activities well into the twentieth century. For many years the club conducted its business from the Mercantile Hall located on Spring Street. William Watson led the organization until his death in 1933. George Tucker then took over as head of the chapter until 1955. The club continued to organize campaign rallies and meetings and provide transportation to voters on election day.

Local Republican groups reached out to other segments of the population to further their cause. In 1922, following passage of the 19th Amendment granting suffrage to women, the Harriet Tubman unit of the Women's Republican Club instituted classes in political instruction for neophyte female voters. In 1934 black women and men were invited to join a separate unit of the Young Republican Club.

Black Democratic organizations did not appear in Morristown until the twentieth century. Traditionally, black voters did not support the party, nor did Democrats campaign for their support. In Morristown this trend evidenced a change beginning in 1898 when, to the consternation of stalwart Republicans, another black political point of view surfaced. A group calling themselves the Committee of the Colored Voters, headed by Thomas Walker and D.S. Brown, published a circular, signed by local Democratic candidates, encouraging black voters to support the Democratic

ticket in the upcoming election. Four black men including James Seldon, a community activist, responded in the newspaper by accusing the committee of false representation. A public statement signed by black citizens was a rare sight in the local newspaper. In their letter published in the November 25, 1898 issue of *The Jerseyman*, they rejected the committee's right to speak on behalf of black residents, asserting these men spoke for no one but themselves. In an eloquent plea, they exhorted blacks to work harder in the fight for equality and described a philosophy that is reiterated today.

"As we are American citizens, we do not believe in petitioning the candidates of either party for office; if our own manhood and qualifications do not demand recognition, then let us qualify ourselves from an educational stand point, and then let us unite ourselves and our money—and by accumulating property make ourselves felt in the business world as a race, and then, and not until then, will we get the recognition that is due us, notwithstanding the colored race has outstripped every other race in this country, taking every thing in consideration. Since we have made such a rapid progress, don't let ignorance lower our standard, but let our watchword be, "Forward, march!" Concentration, cooperation and combination are a power when they are properly linked together. When we become a people to think, read and accumulate property, and make ourselves known in the financial world, then we will be respected by others."

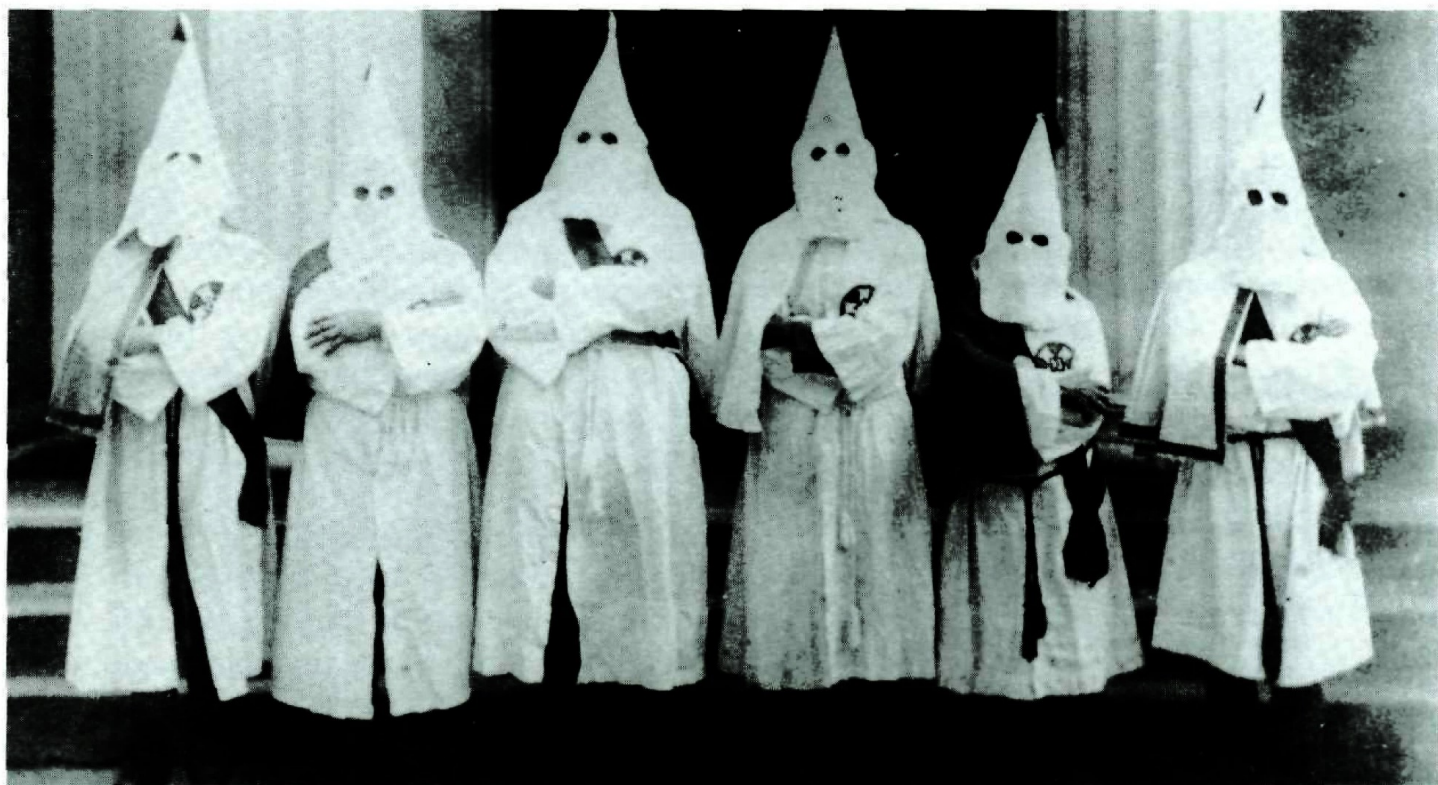
Increased black political activity may have precipitated the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan in Morris County during the 1920s. *The Daily Record* newspaper reported that on

Christmas Eve 1923, the KKK burned crosses in a number of Morris County communities, including one at Fort Nonsense, near Hillside School. Throughout the county the Klan focused on inciting incidents of religious persecution. However during the 1923 local elections, flyers appeared in Morristown charging that all Republican candidates belonged to the Ku Klux Klan. The local Republican Party screamed libel and quickly called a meeting of black citizens to dispel the rumor.

With the advent of the Depression, black support for Democrats increased in Morristown. At a rally held in 1932 at Eureka Hall, on Spring Street near Speedwell Avenue, blacks turned out in large numbers to endorse the Democratic candidates. Black and white

speakers from across the state addressed the crowd. *The Daily Record* newspaper reported that a paradeliike atmosphere pervaded the festivities. The featured speaker introduced by two local black men, Ferdinand Gregory and Robert Thurmond, was the Democratic candidate for Congress, Frederic Pearse.

Earlier, Robert Thurmond had organized the Twentieth Century Democratic Club, one of the first Democratic groups in Morristown. His nightclub, the Maple Leaf Restaurant, served as its headquarters. Originally located on Spring Street, the club moved to larger quarters on Morris Street. During his lifetime, Thurmond worked as a custodian at the Morristown Post Office and, in an effort to extend job opportunities to blacks in the



45. The Ku Klux Klan gathered on the steps of the Chester Federated Church, 1926.

community, encouraged other blacks to take the postal exam. John Clark Thurmond believed his father Robert's greatest achievement was building a viable base of black, Democratic voters in Morristown.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, black men worked behind the scene getting out the Negro vote for both parties. Over the years, various nightclubs, or roadhouses as they were called, housed political clubs that met in town. Besides engaging in a little drinking and gambling, men gathered there to work out campaign strategies and election day plans.

Men like Robert Thurmond and John Bullock, a black Republican political boss, did all they could to deliver votes to their respective parties. In return they were rewarded with small tokens of political patronage. At election time, if candidates were brought to black churches during services to lobby support for their campaign, the church would then receive a suitable "contribution."

Allegations of buying votes were not uncommon. Party organizations hired men to drive black voters to the polls then persuade them to vote for their candidates. They might promise to a voter one day's work. John Clark Thurmond remembers that black voters never received promises of steady work, or decent housing, or anything substantial for their votes. Instead, black middlemen accepted \$5.00 for each promised vote, \$2.00 of it slated for the person casting the ballot. Meaningful improvements in living conditions or in economic opportunities as a result of the legitimate, political process never materialized. The

majority of blacks garnered few benefits from the political machines they supported.

The entrenched political order underwent changes in the 1960s. The civil rights movement in America certainly contributed to altering the face of Morristown politics. Blacks realized that with political power came the ability to effect positive change in their community. In 1966, a grassroots organization of local residents campaigned successfully to win E. Constance Montgomery a seat on the Morristown Board of Education, and she became the first black elected to public office in Morristown. In 1967, following the redistricting of wards in Morristown and in the ensuing creation of a new Fifth Ward two black residents, Dr. James Lassiter and Christopher L. Martin, won election to the Board of Aldermen. Both men ran on the Democratic ticket. These early victories gave black voters a voice in community affairs that directly impacted on their lives. For many in the black community who felt newfound hope in confronting age-old issues, it was a time of excitement.

Since Mrs. Montgomery's election, the black community has expanded its political influence in Morristown. Over the years black residents have run for various offices, and won some victories. Their successes have brought African Americans closer to the political mainstream and given them opportunities to work on issues directly affecting the black community and Morristown.

Social Activities, Clubs and Recreation

The depth and breadth of Morristown's black community is evident in the many clubs, associations and entertainments established over the years. Membership in these organizations has expanded and enhanced blacks' participation and their standing in society. These groups strengthen community ties and encompass all aspects of society and culture. They include fraternal and patriotic orders, social and civic groups. Many other organizations formed to promote special interests such as education, youth services, business matters, neighborhoods and other benevolent concerns. In Morristown, the black community created a rich cultural environment that has benefited both black and white society.

The sheer number of these voluntary associations proves that African-Americans found the established political, religious and social organizations insufficient in meeting their communal needs. In the earlier part of this century, community organizations often excluded minorities. When black citizens were discouraged from joining existing groups, they formed new clubs that benefited their people and their town. Here are a few examples of having "to build their own city" in Morristown.

One of the earliest groups to come together was the Young Men's 20th Century Literary Club. Formed in 1898, fifty members held meetings at Bethel A.M.E. Church, where they offered musical and literary programs. The club had its own orchestra. Members worked to maintain a reading room and a

library. At one meeting members donated over 225 books. By 1904 the club included over one hundred men and promoted minority businesses through advertisements in the community.

The community's early fraternal organizations did not admit minorities, but that did not inhibit black residents from creating their own entities. In 1879, a small group of Morristonians, with a recommendation from Bethany Lodge in Newark, petitioned the Grand Lodge of the Masons to start a local chapter. The parent organization approved the petition and Tyrian Lodge was formally launched in 1880. Robert J. M. Long served as Master of the Lodge.

As early as 1885, Tyrian-Widow's Son Lodge No. 34 met at the old Banner building on Washington Street. Sometime during the 1920s, a coterie of black businessmen including William Watson, John Tolar, Lexington Taylor, John Gregory and John Tanner, purchased Eureka Hall, located up Sanders Hill at 118 Spring Street, across the street from the West End Hotel. It became the permanent site of the masonic lodge until it was torn down during the local urban renewal projects in the mid-1960s. The group then met for a while at the Collinsville School, and then at the Fellowship Hall of Calvary Baptist Church. Today Tyrian Lodge #34, Free and Accepted Masons, Prince Hall Affiliation meets at Bethel A.M.E. Church on Spring Street. The lodge's activities include providing services to members' families and funding scholarships to area high-school students.

Another fraternal organization, the Knights of Pythias, traces its beginning to the early part of this century. By 1916 the Rose of



46. John W. Tolar and wife Sallie, 1934. *Tolar came to Morristown from Roxboro, North Carolina around 1902. He purchased his home on Ridgedale Avenue in 1907, and operated his taxi business from there, beginning in 1918 until his retirement in 1959. Throughout his life he participated in many civic and service organizations.*

Sharon Chapter met twice a month at 20 Washington Street. Members later met at Eureka Hall and in 1928 hosted the order's annual state convention at Union Baptist Church. After a long period of inactivity, the local chapter is enjoying a renaissance in the black community. The current Rose of Sharon chapter of the Knights of Pythias persists in its tradition of good works in the community.

During the 1920s and 30s, the Tyrian Lodge shared their quarters with another fraternal group, Acme Lodge No. 296 of the I.B.P.O.E. of W., a black order of the Elks. This chapter disappeared in the 1940s, perhaps absorbed by the larger Madison lodge.

The Colored Men's League, a lesser-known, short-lived group, got its start in 1926, its stated purpose to encourage black men in the community to become involved in civic, moral and religious activities. The League met at members' homes and conducted its programs at Calvary Baptist Church.

Other black residents established patriotic organizations to commemorate their participation in America's military service. One of the earliest of these was an informal group organized by Sgt. William N. Lewis, a Spanish-American War veteran, who lived on Evergreen Avenue, at the home of Edward Gramby. Sgt. Lewis was a local chapter member of the integrated

Veterans of the Spanish American War Association. During World War I, he gathered black males in the community and formed a guard. They drilled on Spring Street regularly and served as a protective unit during the war. Sgt. Lewis remained a well known figure in the community until his death in 1958.

Immediately following World War I, the local newspaper reported that a black chapter of the American Legion was attempting to organize in town. The newspaper also noted about seventy black men from Morristown had served in the military during the war. By 1919 twenty men had enrolled in the new chapter, chaired by Paul Catto and Jerome Jackson. What became of this endeavor remains a mystery.

The American Legion chapter, Creighton Mayes Post No. 312, received its permanent charter in 1947. William Harris served as first post commander. Application to the state organization was made in 1944 with George Gregory's World War II discharge papers. Nineteen veterans including Otis Lyon, George Teabout and Arthur Cline, signed the petition. Originally the group met at George Gregory's residence on Water Street. By 1949, it had moved to a building at 23 Flagler Street. Outgrowing its quarters by 1954, the Post relocated to Eureka Hall on Spring Street, but urban renewal forced the chapter to move again. By 1968, despite some opposition by area residents, the Post moved into its new and present quarters at 78 Abbett Avenue. At the time it included about seventy members. By 1992 membership had increased to 156.

Before World War II, there was a black Veterans of Foreign Wars post. Otis Lyon remembers that World War I veterans, William Mabin and James Irving Stryker, organized the group. They rented a small storefront on the corner of Flagler and Race Streets.

Many of these all-male organizations had corresponding groups for women. For example, Morristown supports many chapters of the Order of Eastern Star, including Bethsaida Chapter 7, chartered in 1914, Coretta King Chapter 62 and Harriet Tubman Chapter 102. Bethsaida Chapter 7 retains an affiliation with the Tyrian Lodge. The Coretta King chapter, affiliated with Mt. Tabor Lodge No. 71, had sixteen members when it was chartered in 1971. These service organizations provide an outlet to women who sometimes have few opportunities to use their talents outside the home. And their fundraising activities and charitable works have benefited the black community.

Neighborhood associations that sprang up as black enclaves became more well-defined in town. They provided a forum for residents who wished to express their concerns or to promote neighborhood projects and activities. One of the earliest groups to organize was the Collinsville Civic and Improvement League, founded in 1947. Beatrice Tucker served as its first president. Collinsville, a part of Morris Township, runs down both sides of Martin Luther King Avenue from Monroe Street to Hanover Avenue. When Bea Samuels was growing up there in the 1930s, the area was racially mixed. In her interview, she remembered favorite childhood activities in

a neighborhood much less developed than today.

"I remember the winters seemed very, very cold. And because I was so small the snow was very, very high. In first grade I had a pair of hip boots that I wore going to school. In back of the school there was a little sloping hill, and it was just great for sledding. We used to do that after school. And where Mennen is now there were two ponds, and we used to go ice skating every night, build a big bonfire. During the summer there wasn't very much to do, but we made things to do. There were lots of fields and woods, so we'd go looking for flowers and find pollywogs and bullfrogs and things like that."

Collinsville's roots as a black neighborhood date to about 1912, when Jordan Morgan, a black businessman and owner of the Morris Sand company, began buying plots of land in the area and selling them to blacks. Some of Collinsville's earliest black residents included John Gregory, Junius Mason, Jacob Dallam, Morey Grant, James VanDunk, Mary Springsted and Ulysses Higginbotham. Today, Collinsville is predominantly a black neighborhood.

Many community organizations getting their start in the same manner as the Creighton Mayes Post—in the parlors of local residents—sometimes moved to neighborhood storefronts to accomodate growing interest and membership. The number of these clubs and organizations founded by local black residents is overwhelming. Some organizations have come and gone, fulfilling their goals or the needs of members. Others have grown in scope or membership and continue to serve the

community in various capacities. A few of these clubs are Loyalty Social Club, Twilight Workers Club, Happy Workers Garden Club, Crispus Attucks Drum and Bugle Corp, Men's Progressive Club, Modern Socialites Social Club.

Women hoping to broaden their sphere of influence in the community organized a great number of these associations. The Happy Hour Art Circle dates to World War I, when members converged to engage in charitable work to benefit the war effort. The sixty-five year old Girls Friendly Club, an ecumenical group, comprised women from local churches interested in widening their circle of friends and acquaintances. The Ladies Independent Circle, founded around 1913, was a service organization whose activities helped many in the community. Les Femmes Social Club, organized in 1948, engaged in activities that benefited local hospitals, churches and charities.

For thirty-two years, Junior Matrons of Morristown has turned dreams into reality by offering local students educational scholarships and support. This prominent organization continues to help meet the ever-increasing educational needs of area youth.

Two other organizations with close ties to Morristown have had a profound impact on race relations and conditions affecting the African-American community. The sustained commitment and hard work of the Morris County Urban League and the Morris County Branch of the NAACP are well known throughout the area. Despite occasional setbacks, the two organizations have been instrumental in furthering the cause of equal

rights and opportunities for all citizens.

Faced with increasing health and welfare problems as Morristown's black population expanded, in 1944 a group of black and white citizens formed the Morristown Service Council of the National Urban League. The organization came about when two local groups—the Neighborhood House's Negro Advisory Council and the Morristown League for Social Service Among Negroes joined forces. William T. Ruffin, a member of the Neighborhood House staff, served as executive secretary. The Morristown League formally affiliated with the national Urban League in 1948 and had a one-room office on South Street above Ace's Drug Store.

The group initially worked to aid recent migrants from the south to adjust to social and economic conditions of Morris County. The League also worked to educate the general public about race relations. Percy Steele, who is remembered as a dynamic and effective leader, served as the first executive director.

Over the years, the League has provided community services and individual help to residents while focusing attention on the larger issues of housing, employment, human services and race relations. Richard Martin was executive director of the Morris County League from 1967 to 1983—a period of progress and



47. Percy Steele, Morris County Urban League's first executive director, pictured with project participant J. Thomas Spruiell on right, c. 1940s.

one of tremendous awareness of civil rights issues. In his interview, Martin reflected on the altered atmosphere of diminished expectations that challenges the Urban League today.

"I think that [the Morris County Urban League] has the same direction today but, I think that it fluctuates with the total interest of the community and probably the country. Nothing goes on forever; you can't always operate at that high pitch—doing ninety all the time. You've got to slow down. I think it's a more difficult job now than it was before [during the 1960s] because I think you have to resell the interest where before it was there. Civil rights has been put on the back burner

now, where before it was up front with everybody.”

The Morris County Branch of the National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed in 1931 at an open meeting held at Eureka Hall. Two local businessmen, William Watson and Peyton Tutwiler, explained the need for a local chapter to the assembled crowd. Charter membership was offered, and more than fifty local citizens paid one dollar each to subscribe. Each subscriber paid dues and effected the official recognition of the Morris County Branch of the NAACP. William Pickens, a representative of the organization's national headquarters, served as mentor to the fledgling group. The Reverend Louis R. Jones, Union Baptist's activist pastor, served as president. Clara Watson Pinkman, William Watson's daughter, was elected secretary. The membership included professionals, businessmen, clergy and working people from Morristown and surrounding towns. The organization had its first formal office at 28 Park Place.

Today (1992) the Morris County Branch has a membership of almost six hundred that includes people of many ethnic groups. Reno Smith has served as president of the branch since 1983. Everyone associated with this influential chapter volunteers time and energy to further the organization's goals of equal rights and justice for all. There are no paid employees. The primary objective of the NAACP remains unchanged—to eliminate racial discrimination wherever it may surface.

Other groups in the community reached out to black residents in more limited ways. The Morristown Playground Society organized recreational activities and clubs for area youth

when the Thomas W. Cauldwell Memorial Playground, between Race and River Streets, opened in 1910. Active in civic and youth affairs, Thomas Cauldwell was Morristown's mayor when he died in 1909.

At the playground many children learned about basketball and played it for the first time. The Society announced it would organize sports clubs according to age, sex, and nationality. In reality, boys and girls were divided into three groups. In 1910 *The Jerseyman* reported their names and designations: Clover Leaf Club for black girls, Grapevine Club for Italian girls, and the American Club for “American” girls. Boys' clubs followed a similar arrangement. The playground society's 1911 annual report listed a roster of baseball teams that included names such as Colored Giants, Whop[sic] Giants and White Stars. With such divisive names to guide them, every child who came to play could determine to which team he or she belonged.

Over the years generations of Morristown's children have played at the Flagler Street playground, due in part to its proximity to the Neighborhood House. Oral history participant Cassie Jarvis remembered her rare excursions there as a special treat in an otherwise restricted environment.

“We only went down to the playground when we'd go down with the school. We would have an afternoon down at the playground. It was a lot of fun, but otherwise we were not allowed. When we came home we stayed home on Spring Street in the yard. We weren't allowed to run around. And that ain't no lie. 'Cause Mama and Papa worked and they didn't get home 'till 8 o'clock at night and we had to have everything—all our work done.”

A black chapter of the YMCA, formed in 1918 and located in the Mercantile Hall building on Spring Street, was short-lived. Not until the local YMCA amended its constitution years later was a separate black branch organized. In 1930 the Morristown YMCA officially recognized the Booker T. Washington Branch for Colored Youth and provided a budget of \$275. Six years earlier, a group of black residents, headed by William Watson, began working informally with the YMCA to send black boys to camp. Its efforts paid off. In 1925, a segregated week at the YMCA's Camp Washington on Schooley's Mountain was instituted for boys. By 1928, black girls had an opportunity to join them. Black children were allowed to attend only during the last weeks of August after all other children had vacated the camp. By the time the branch was formally recognized in 1930, seventy-five black boys paid ten dollars each to attend camp for ten days. In her interview, Georgia Vivian Norris remembers attending the camp at the end of August.

"We all went to the summer camp for a week, sometimes two weeks. We had white counselors, and we would have black counselors, too. We would go to swim and do crafts, play baseball and all those things, and then in the evenings we would sit by the fireplace and tell tales—scary tales—but it was really nice. We had cabins where we would sleep—about twelve cabins and about eight sleeping in a cabin. It was really nice."

The Committee of Management, comprised of local black men, supervised the branch, with Watson serving as chairman. Under his guidance, the committee expanded programs

and organized a basketball league. One night a week, the branch used the high school gym for activities. In 1933 more than 1,200 people from the county participated in branch offerings. The overwhelming success of this organization can be attributed directly to the many black men and women who volunteered time. The names of Burton, Tanner, Early, Mason, Tutweiler, Grant, Withington and many others accompanied any mention of the branch in the YMCA newsletter. Without the input of these and other county residents, the branch's accomplishments surely would have been fewer.

Any black resident from Morris County could apply for membership to the Booker T. Washington branch. In 1931 the annual fee was \$2.00 for adults. The membership was limited to only branch activities. Black members could not use the swimming pool, showers, lockers, or other amenities at the Washington Street facility. For many years, the only occasion on which blacks gained entrance to the building was for the annual father-son dinner. Eureka Hall, on Spring Street, served as the site of many branch activities. The local YMCA remained segregated until sometime during the mid-1940s.

Many oral history participants remember the Phyllis [sic] Wheatley Club located at 85 Spring Street. The club, named for Phillis Wheatley, the eighteenth-century, African-born poet, was a self-governing, interracial endeavor that provided educational opportunities and recreational programs to local black families. The organization, formed under the auspices of the Women's Community Club, received special assistance from Mary



48. Cauldwell Memorial Playground, 1924. The park attracted children of both natives and immigrants.
49. Playmates at Cauldwell Memorial Playground, 1925.



Keasbey, wife of Frederick Keasbey, a local philanthropist. In 1921 members of the Women's Community Club moved to 51 South Street and turned over their former Spring Street headquarters to the new group.

This endeavor represented one local foray into the reform movement sweeping the country during the Progressive Era. Galvanized by the evils they saw erupting in American society, women built organizations—like the Phyllis Wheatley Club—dedicated to community service. Throughout urban America these establishments worked to eradicate the ills confronting immigrants and the poor—substandard housing and living conditions; unsafe work environments, low wages and child labor; lack of public health programs; and inadequate educational opportunities.

Certainly Morristown did not share all of these problems, nor were they as dramatic as those found in the country's largest cities and industrialized areas. But the Phyllis Wheatley House worked to combat abuses existing in its community and to raise the consciousness of its residents.

The club afforded outlets to residents restricted by their color. An informal kindergarten and reading programs provided stimuli for children. For a playground, the Public Service Gas Company allowed the club the use of a grassy area the company owned on Water Street. Classes and activities for adults attracted large numbers, and all age groups participated in the social and recreational events offered. One of its most respected teachers was Margaret Earley, who lived on Columba Street. Mrs. Earley, with Addie Burwell, also had a restaurant downstairs at

the Eureka Hall on Spring Street. Many Morristown residents fondly remember her classes and activities. Estelle Hinkins shared teaching duties with Mrs. Earley. Oral history participant Ethel Judson was a leader of a black Girl Scout troop formed under Mrs. Earley.

"Everybody in Morristown remembers Mrs. Earley. We had some beautiful days with the Girl Scouts. We went from the Neighborhood House. Nobody drove then, so we had a wagon. We put our goodies on there, and we'd go down the avenue singing. Then we would pause and go up to Speedwell Lake and go all up in them hills and have our little picnic, and then we'd come on back home. Those were the days."

The club occasionally offered programs in cooperation with the Neighborhood House, and it invited professionals from the community to lecture on various subjects, such as parenting skills or medical advances. The Morristown Library operated a part-time branch there beginning in 1925.

The Central Bureau of Social Services (now known as Family Service of Morris County), a Morris County Community Chest agency, funded many of the group's programs. In 1925 the agency hired a trained black social worker, Katie Kelley, to supervise many of the club's activities. She organized a Girl Scout troop and initiated various programs, including the formation of the Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society (named for black composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor) that brought together a group of black residents to sing at local functions. In the late 1930s, the work of the Phyllis Wheatley Unit was transferred to the



50. Under the auspices of the Phyllis Wheatley Club, Katie Kelly conducted a health program for area children. The club's informal playground, on Spring and Water Streets, served as a backdrop for this class picture, 1925.

Neighborhood House to accommodate the growing interest in its offerings.

The Neighborhood House gained particular interest in the black community when in 1928 it was appointed to take over the work of the Colored Fund, previously administered by the Central Bureau of Social Service. The Neighborhood House began its work in 1898 as the Morristown Association for Work Among the Italians. Started by a group of white women, the association was designed to aid newly arrived Italian immigrants in the assimilation process. The mission emphasized religious matters, employed a minister, and received financial support from the Presbyterian Synod of New Jersey.

Responding to community needs, the organization dropped its religious orientation and focused on its settlement work—helping immigrants improve the quality of their lives. To describe its expanding role better, by 1910 the

association changed its name to the Neighborhood House. Today the Neighborhood House remains a shining example of town residents' longtime commitment to civic reform, begun during the Progressive Era.

Beginning in 1912, the headworker's annual reports document other nationalities and races participating in classes and programs held at the organization's headquarters on Flagler Street. A 1929 financial report calls the Neighborhood House "a community center for all nationalities." In 1937, the headworker recalled that "the night school was often called the League of Nations." Everyone was welcome at the Nabe, as it was known to local youth.

Until the mid-1920s, Neighborhood House's clubs and activities were integrated. In 1924, a suggestion was made to create an all-black sports team. The headworker's report noted that as a result, "the Dunbars organized, as the first distinctive colored group." The

Neighborhood House's 1925 annual report notes that when separate groups were instituted, attendance by black children increased significantly. Over the years, segregation spread to other endeavors—scout troops, dances and social activities (Italians also had separate dances), sports and recreational programs. Only classes and programs with limited attendance were racially mixed. When Carmetta Meade joined the staff of the Neighborhood House in 1948, segregation remained the rule. Three years later, Mrs. Meade became the organization's first black director, and segregated activities slowly became a remnant of the past.

Beginning in December 1928, the Neighborhood House received \$2,500 annually from the Community Chest to continue the work of the Colored Fund. The Inter-Racial Committee of the Central Bureau of Social Service started the fund four years earlier, and the local Community Chest supported it. On

a temporary basis, the committee rented rooms at the Phyllis Wheatley House to conduct educational and cultural enrichment programs. The Colored Fund aligned its goals more with the Neighborhood House's settlement philosophy rather than that of a social service agency. Thus when it was decided to continue the work on a more permanent footing, the Central Bureau asked to be relieved of its duties and the Nabe stepped in. With this increased responsibility, black attendance at the Neighborhood House increased greatly. By 1934, the programs offered through the Colored Fund had an enrollment of 264.

The Inter-Racial Committee, composed of five white people headed by Mary Keasbey, continued to oversee the Colored Fund, but the Negro Advisory Board replaced it during the mid-1930s. The board had twenty-five members, the majority of whom were black Morristown residents. The Colored Fund continued as a separate financial entity until

51. The Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society, outside the Phyllis Wheatley house, 1926. Katie Kelly is pictured standing in the top row, fourth from left.





52. *Class conducted at Neighborhood House, 1924.*

1935, when the monies were added to the Neighborhood House's general budget. However, as reported in the 1936 annual report, separate "colored projects" would be continued.

The Neighborhood House often absorbed programs other groups or agencies initiated within the community and expanded on them. When the work of the Phyllis Wheatley Unit was transferred to the Neighborhood House, staff members broadened its activities with funds received from the Works Progress Administration, a federal agency. Expanding and providing health services to disadvantaged residents became an important concern. In 1937 the organization took over the Negro Education Project, started at Morristown High School. It offered classes in English, drama, woodcarving, and Negro history to area youth.

The Neighborhood House also worked in conjunction with other organizations to provide services to disadvantaged or newly arrived

residents. In 1924, Neighborhood House's board of managers cooperated with the Morristown Library to provide an on-site library at the Flagler Street building.

During the 1920s and '30s, the Neighborhood House also conducted summer school for black children in area black churches, and over the years enrollment grew steadily. In the early 1930s, a branch of the association was begun at the Collinsville School, on the corner of Walnut Street and Cleveland Avenue. The 1938 annual report states that although the branch targeted Negro children specifically, it was quickly used by all ethnic groups in the area.

In his interview, Willie Caldwell, Jr., spoke for many when he recalled time spent at the Neighborhood House.

"I played basketball at the Neighborhood House, at the old Nabe. The old Nabe with Mrs. Meade, Ralph Miatta—those were the

people that I can relate to. And we had a good time. The Neighborhood House was a place, when you were bored, that you could go to. I used to build model airplanes. In a cooking class everybody had to make cookies. We watched movies. We played games. And they had dances and parties. The Neighborhood House was a great place when I was growing up."

During the 1940s and 50s the Neighborhood House expanded its advocacy role in the community. The organization's staff spoke out in favor of low-cost housing, improved educational opportunities, and greater sensitivity regarding race relations. Today Neighborhood House continues to respond to the everchanging needs of the Morris County community it serves by providing cultural, recreational, health, educational and social services to families in the community.

Conclusion

Today Morristown confronts a shifting social and economic environment. This manuscript barely touches on the circumstances and events that have wrought changes in the black community since the late 1950s. The civil rights movement, the battle for racial balance in the schools, the fight for equal opportunity in the workplace and for inclusion in local politics—these concerns have had far-reaching consequences that have affected the entire community over the years. Morristown's expansive urban renewal projects, which wiped out entire neighborhoods and created new ones, profoundly changed the nature of longtime black settlements. The building of Headquarters Plaza—known in some quarters as "The Wall"—stands as a symbol to many who believe it effectively isolates a neighborhood that the community would just as soon forget exists. The successes and failures of urban renewal are still being debated.

Morristown's black population has more than doubled since 1950. The changing nature of society—working mothers, single-parent households, increased substance abuse—combined with longstanding, systemic problems of inadequate housing, underemployment and racism can create an atmosphere of paralysis in the face of seemingly insurmountable troubles. But positive change in society is forged through individual and group activity one step at a time. Historically, black residents in Morristown have improved the quality of their lives by implementing such actions. The community, through concerned citizens, organizations, and institutions, reaches out to examine its people's



needs and respond with appropriate solutions.

There are pitfalls in trying to mold individuals who share a trait or characteristic into one specifically defined category. Americans tend to more amorphous groupings. Sweeping generalizations about Morristown's black population are not relevant to its history. History, like people, is rarely one-dimensional, and it is comprised of individuals who did not always act in a generalized way. Like any other segment of society, Morristown's black community is made up of a diverse group of people with differing outlooks and goals linked by a tangential commonality of cultural understanding. Evidence of this affiliation abounds in the interviews conducted for this project. Many interviewees recall shared circumstances

or similar experiences, and in telling their stories—colored with subtleties, ambiguities and personal insight—each story becomes unique and helps shape our understanding of the past.

In their narratives, oral history participants recall hard times and economic deprivation. They testify to personal incidents of bigotry and racism: segregation in local movie theaters; restaurants that refused to serve or insulted them; businesses that tolerated a clerk's rudeness to minorities; schoolteachers who lowered their expectations because of the color of a student's skin. A few interviewees remember neighborhoods or areas in town where they were distinctly unwelcome. But almost every interview documents individual acts of kindness

53 & 54. Children on the grounds of Neighborhood House.

and compassion, personal fulfillment or success, and connections to a community that span generations.

History is a collective memory that binds us together as a people. It is that memory that is our touchstone to the values and ideals that have traditionally shaped our culture. History illuminates who we are—as a people, as a nation, as a community. As our memory becomes more inclusive, drawing in more participants and their

experiences, historians have expanded opportunities to reinterpret the past and reassess the present. History therefore is never static, but a combustible, everchanging view of what we are and what we may become. This project represents an addition to that collective memory. It is a chronicle of a community's pride and accomplishments, of its failures and frustration, of its understanding of the past and its commitment to the future. The interviews capture the essence of human existence—the vitality of life.



Introduction to the Interviews

The oral history interviews were conducted over a nine year period beginning in 1982. Helen Conover's extensive contacts *within the local black community* led her initially to members of the Bethel A.M.E. Church. As the project gained recognition, referrals were made and the scope of interviews widened.

Subjects discussed in the interviews cover a broad spectrum of topics: community, family, and school; social, cultural, and religious activities; political happenings; economic conditions and employment. Relationships between families, between friends, and between old and new are clarified. Many participants remember the Depression and World War II. Others reminisce about the physical changes they witnessed in Morristown while growing up: streets and neighborhoods, parks and playgrounds, businesses and the Morristown Green. Some people recall, in voices tinged with bitterness, incidents of racism and segregation in town.

Despite the diversity evident in participants' lives, there is a common sense of accomplishment and pride in their community that runs as an undercurrent throughout many of the interviews. Almost all of the participants speak fondly of their town and their neighbors, despite the hardship, prejudice, and personal tragedy that abound in human life. Through a variety of means—as documented in the tapes—these individuals forged a lasting connection to their town and found contentment and enjoyment in their lives here. Through their testimony we hear their own story.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The audiocassettes and transcriptions of these interviews are in the permanent collection of the Joint Free Public Library of Morristown and Morris Township. Brief biographies of each participant and quotations from each interview are presented here. The complete transcripts are available to the public in the Local History and Genealogy Department. Anyone interested in Morristown's history, the black communities in New Jersey, or oral history in general is urged to come to the Library and consult them.

Frances Aycox

Willie Caldwell, Jr.

Helen Conover

Lillian Green

John Harris

Cassie Jarvis

Ethel Judson

Julia Kersey

Emma Lewis

Gladys Lewis

Richard Martin

Ruth Melton

Helen Middleton

Constance Montgomery

Georgia Vivian Norris

Clara Pinkman

Beatrice Samuels

Emily Satchelle

Thomas Spruiell

Howard and Genevieve Steele

John Thurmond

Leslie and Mary Turner

Clara Wright & Marilyn Holt



Frances Aycox

Frances Simmons Aycox was born in 1924 and raised in Morristown. Her parents, Frank and Arnet Simmons, moved to Morristown from South Carolina in search of employment. Frank Simmons worked for many years at Whippany Paper Board. Mrs. Aycox attended local schools, graduating from Morristown High School in 1942.

During World War II Mrs. Aycox worked for the Office of Dependency Benefits in Newark and the Quartermaster Depot in Somerville. Since the early 1960s she has worked as a sales clerk for Macy's (formerly Bamberger's) in Morristown. She is also active in the Order of Eastern Star, Chapter 7, and she participates in many Bethel A.M.E. Church groups and activities. Mrs. Aycox was married to Willie Aycox, and they raised three children.

"My parents always worked, so we always had. I remember we were the first family that got a radio. You know, on my street, in my area. And the kids would always come to my house at night and listen to the radio—you know, the stories on the radio. We always had a car in our family. My father worked in Whippany, so he had to have a car to get to work. [During World War II] I remember standing in line in Newark for a pair of stockings. And at that time stockings were fifty cents. And I remember sugar rationing. We were never hungry. It was just that these things were not plentiful."



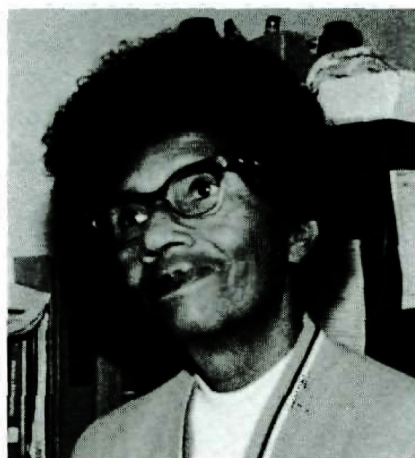
Lt. Willie Caldwell, Jr.

Willie Caldwell, Jr., was born in Chester, South Carolina, in 1941.

The Caldwell family moved to Morristown the same year,
following an uncle who had found work in the area.

Willie Caldwell, Sr., quickly found employment at Picatinny Arsenal
and later worked for Whippany Paper Board. After graduating from
Morristown High School in 1960, Lt. Caldwell served in the United States Navy.
On returning to Morristown, he worked at various jobs until he joined the
Morristown Police Department in 1967. He currently supervises
the Neighborhood Patrol Unit on Flagler Street.

*"I like being a police officer, probably for the primary reason
that it gives me a chance and the ability to help other people. Ninety
percent of what we do as police officers are based on helping people—
family disputes, taking people to the hospital, trying to console them.
We wear all kinds of hats. Ten percent of police work is probably
about the things you see on television. You know, the shooting
officer, running around with a gun. About ten percent, maybe
even less. Basically we're social workers."*



Helen Conover

Helen Baker Conover was born at home in 1915, on Speedwell Avenue in Morristown. Her parents, Roy and Mary Beagles Baker, moved to Morristown around the turn of the century. Roy Baker was born in Sussex County, New Jersey, and Mary Baker was a native of New York. Because her family frequently moved, Helen attended Maple Avenue School, Liberty Street School and Speedwell School.

In 1932, Helen married Patrick Conover. They raised two children. During World War II, she worked at Stirling Piston Rings Company, the Belle Mead Quartermaster Depot and Picatinny Arsenal. After the war, she worked for some years at Morristown Memorial Hospital, when it was located on Morris Street. Although no longer a resident of Morristown, she remains an active member of Bethel A.M.E. Church. For the past ten years, Mrs. Conover has been instrumental in furthering the progress of the Black Oral History Project. Because of her avid interest in history and genealogy she has contributed significantly to a project of benefit to the entire community.

"I would commute from Morristown to Stirling—Stirling Piston Rings Company. We made airplane rings for Curtiss-Wright at that time. Then I went to Belle Mead, which was an Army Service Depot. Our bosses were Lieutenants, Captains and Majors. By so many of the men having to go away to the service, us women did a lot of the men's work. I worked in the salvage yard, bailing metal to be sent overseas. Some of the girls did processing work, so if a ship was torpedoed in the ocean, whatever was being sent over there could be in the water for ages and then would never corrode. I worked on an ice truck. We girls delivered ice to the Officers' Headquarters. Two of us would carry blocks of ice into Headquarters. I also worked on a lumber truck. But this didn't bother me at all. I always sort of liked men's work."

Lillian Green

Lillian Green was born in Oxford, North Carolina and moved to Morristown from East Orange in 1951. Mrs. Green did day work and, during World War II, worked the evening shift at Picatinny Arsenal. She belonged to the Twilight Workers Club, and she was a member of Union Baptist Church. When she died on December 28, 1987, she was ninety years old.

"My husband Tom came here when he was a real young man. He must have been here around 1920 or '21, something like that. I think he lived in Dover, and then he came down here [to Morristown] to work, and he worked for the Roths on Washington Avenue. He worked there—must have been around fifty years. When Tom came here, the trolley cars were still running."



John W. Harris

John W. Harris, born in Morristown in 1945, lived there until 1971. He is a history teacher at the Morristown High School, where he has worked for twenty-four years.

As a child, he lived on Race Street, Coal Avenue and Spring Street. His father, John Harris Sr., was a taxi driver, and his mother, Ruth Teamer Harris, worked as a nurse at Memorial Hospital for over twenty years. Mr. Harris attended Lafayette School and Morristown High School, and he earned a degree in history from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. Mr. Harris's interview reflects on growing up in Morristown during the 1950s and '60s.

"When I was growing up here, they had two movie theaters. Well, actually there were more. But there was only two I really remember. One was the Park Theater, the old Park Theater, which is gone. That's where the AT&T Building—the '76 Building—is. The other was the old Community—the building is still there, but that's about it. And that's where on Sundays—Saturdays and Sundays—all the kids would go to the Park because Saturdays they would have a double feature and then Sunday they would change it to something else. And that's where the movies for the kids were at. The Community was the highbrow theater. That's where they had the movies that were the top ten as far as the critics were concerned."

Cassie Jarvis

Cassie Arnold Jarvis was a lifelong resident of Morristown. Throughout her childhood, Mrs. Jarvis lived on Spring Street and attended local schools, beginning her education at Maple Avenue School. Mrs. Jarvis's father and sister worked for many years at Day's Restaurant when it was located on Park Place. Her mother worked as a cook at Ella Keeler's South Street boarding house. Mrs. Jarvis trained as a psychiatric technician at Veterans Administration Medical Center at Lyons in Bernards Township. She worked there for twenty-eight years before retiring in 1975. Following that, she worked until 1985 with the Morris County Urban League. She was a charter member of Les Femmes Social Club. Cassie Jarvis died on April 20, 1990. She is survived by eight children.

"What were my favorite foods? I think that's a simple thing for poor people. You ate what you got. What did you eat? What you got, what your mother put down. Favorite? All of them were favorites. But you didn't get 'em. You couldn't afford it. Chocolate cake, and ice cream, custards. Sure, a lot of things were favorites. But we never got inclined to be longing for anything because we only got a little of it. For colored folks, it's always been lean. It's gotten fatter now because we demand it."



Ethel Judson

Ethel Lewis Judson, a lifelong resident of Morristown, was born in 1916. Her mother, Lucy Elizabeth Marrow, came from North Carolina, and her father, Weldon Lewis, moved from Virginia to Morristown to find work. Ethel was graduated from Morristown High School, and in 1935 she married James Judson. They had one child.

During World War II, while James worked in the defense industry, Ethel became the first black cashier at Food Fair, a local supermarket on Spring Street. Beginning her career in 1942, she worked in area grocery stores. In 1978 she retired from Morris Savings Bank. Shortly thereafter she began volunteering at the Market Street Mission in Morristown, where she is now employed. Over the years, she has given her time to many local organizations, including the Morris County Urban League. She is an active member of Bethel A.M.E. Church.

"On Saturday afternoon, my father used to come home, and for lunch we would have oyster soup or some kind of soup, and my mother would get us dressed, and my father would take us on the trolley, and we would ride to Chester and back or wherever. And come home at night and have pork chops and white potatoes and corn—and peaches—that was our Saturday. Sunday, we used to go to church at 11 o'clock in the morning. You came home, went back to Sunday School at 3 o'clock, came home, went back to Christian Endeavor at 6 o'clock, and you could go home or just hang around. And at 8 o'clock at night, service. Thank the Lord, we only go to church two times a day now."



Julia Kersey

In 1925, Julia Gregory Kersey, attended by Dr. John T. Williams, was born at home in Collinsville. Her parents, Ferdinand Gregory and Ella Ann Richardson, who had moved north from North Carolina, met and married in New Jersey. Ferdinand was a self-employed mason active in local politics, having run in 1935 as a dark horse Democratic candidate for the New Jersey Senate. Ella Ann found day work and also worked for a time at Will Jones's Laundry on George Street.

Julia Kersey was graduated from Morristown High School in 1944, when many of her classmates were unable to attend the ceremonies because they had left to join the military. Her oral history interview is filled with memories of the Great Depression and World War II. Since 1967, when she was hired as a community outreach worker, she has been associated with the Morris County Urban League. During her tenure with the League, she has worked in various capacities, including director of the Social Services Department. Mrs. Kersey is a member of St. Margaret's Church. She was married to James Kersey for twenty-six years until his death in 1979. The Gregory clan, having been involved over the years in many church, business, social and political activities, remains prominent in the black community.

"My fourth grade teacher was a nice little old lady. But I remember very vividly one day when we were doing history, Abe Lincoln's birthday. I can remember raising my hand and asking her to tell me wasn't there things that blacks did besides being slaves. And she became extremely angry with me and made me leave the room because I was impertinent. And I had to go down to the office and the principal, and I had to go home. I had to come back with my

father. My father explained to them that it was not my fault that the teacher did not know anything about our history. He took exception to them dismissing me because I wasn't being impertinent. I had a right to know. I had a right to ask the question. I was allowed to go back to my class, but after that I would hardly say anything."



Emma Lewis

Emma Mae Williams Lewis was born in York, South Carolina, in 1919, but grew up in New York State. Her father, Burdett Williams, was a mill worker, and her mother, Hester Smith Williams, worked as a nurse and a cook. Emma Lewis met her husband, Harold, while visiting family in Morristown. Following their marriage in 1950 in Kingston, New York, the Lewises moved to Whippany. Mrs. Lewis has been a resident of Morristown since 1957, and some of her children and grandchildren still live in this area. For ten years she worked at Picatinny Arsenal, then for the Morris School District as Assistant Manager in the cafeteria at Alfred Vail School. She retired in 1983. Mrs. Lewis is an active member of the Bethel A.M.E. Church, where she has served as a member of the Missionary Society, Stewardess Number One, and a class leader.

"I became a member of the Morris School District, assistant manager in one of the Morris School District schools, Alfred Vail. And I worked there for eight years. I enjoyed it; it was a lot of fun. We did a lot of things together, and we always dressed up on holidays for the children. I think our school was the only one out of the whole district that did this."



Gladys J. Lewis

Gladys Lewis was born in Morristown in 1903. Her parents, Joseph Lewis and Helen Covington, came to town from North Carolina. Growing up, Ms. Lewis remembers her mother worked as a domestic and her father was employed at Hipson's Dairy and later at the Jaqui Company, a feed and grain store on Coal Avenue.

Ms. Lewis followed her sister, Evelyn, to Washington D.C., where she completed high school while her sister received her medical training as a doctor at Howard University. Gladys then went to New York City, where she was graduated in 1932 from the School of Nursing at Harlem Hospital. In 1944, she enlisted in the United States Army and was stationed at Camp McCoy in Wisconsin and Fort Huachuca in Arizona. In the 1950s, Ms. Lewis was the first African-American nurse hired by Morristown Memorial Hospital. She worked on the contagion ward, following an outbreak of polio in the area. Before retiring, she worked for ten years as head nurse at Morris View Nursing Home. Over the years, she has been active in several community and church organizations.

"The Depression? I was in Morristown and they used to give you sugar—brown sugar, if I'm not mistaken. And there was a meat store up on Speedwell Avenue and you'd run in there and get some hamburger, and by the time you cooked it, you'd have nothing left. When I was in New York, I felt so sorry because of those bread lines. Instead of giving the people a balanced diet, you'd get bacon and maybe the next week something else, instead of giving them food that was more substantial."



Richard Martin

Born in 1928 in Morristown, Richard Martin grew up on Evergreen Avenue in a house owned by his parents, Isaac and Celest Martin. The Martins had moved to the area from South Carolina some time around 1920. Before they came to Morristown, Isaac and Celest Martin supervised a New Jersey Power & Light (now JCP&L) levy camp in Whippany, composed of black migrant laborers who came from the South in search of work.

After a stint in the United States Air Force, Richard went to college in North Carolina. While there, he met his future wife, Emma Lash. After graduation, he returned to Morristown and worked for the New Jersey State Employment Service, which led to a job at the Morris County Urban League. During the height of the civil rights movement in 1967, he became executive director of the League and held that office until 1983.

Now, on Martin Luther King Avenue in the same house where he was born, he is the proprietor of the Postwar Club, begun by his father in 1945.

"I had a great life here. I have no complaints about my life here. I didn't know anything about segregation. Right in our neighborhood we had our own basketball team, baseball team, football team—and we'd go into other neighborhoods to play. Everything was here—ice skating, horses, sleighing. We had a great life. We were about the first group that came out—where the parents were beginning to be a little lenient with the kids. We didn't have to go to church all day and they would allow you to have a party and what not. Things were a little freer."



Ruth Melton

Ruth Melton now lives in Dover, but for many years she lived at various addresses in Morristown. She remembers living on Flagler Street, Speedwell Avenue, Bank Street, Early Street and Tin Can Alley (behind the present Post Office).

From her home on Early Street she used to take lunch to her father, who helped to build the High School there. He also helped to build the Park Theater. Her mother used to work at the Washington Hotel (where Macy's is now), and as a child she remembers playing on the Green until her mother finished work. She attended Maple Avenue School and Speedwell Avenue School.

"[The merchants] used to come in every Saturday morning around nine or ten o'clock and park their horses and wagons and their produce all around the park [the Green] in Morristown and sell it—all kinds of vegetables and chickens and everything like that. They stayed there for about three hours, and then they went back to where they was coming from...Mendham and different places like what. They had the horses and wagons then. And they used to drink the horses right over there at the little drinkin' fountain there. It was a big, big fountain—they had a place for the dogs to drink on the bottom; they had a place for the horses to drink on the other side."



Helen Middleton

Helen Ferguson Middleton was born in Morristown on January 21, 1917. Her grandparents lived in Branchville before moving to Madison where Helen's mother, Minnie Pitney Ferguson, was born in 1881. The family moved to Morristown shortly thereafter and lived on Madison Street. Her father, William, and her paternal grandparents were also New Jersey natives. While growing up she lived on Willow Street and attended local schools.

After she married John Middleton, the couple lived on Race Street. For a number of years, Mrs. Middleton worked as a domestic for Howard and Adeline Saxe who lived on Early Street. Howard Saxe was an agricultural inspection agent. During World War II, she worked at Picatinny Arsenal as an ammunitions worker, and then again from 1966-1972. She retired from Sandoz Pharmaceutical Corporation in 1982. When she was eight years old, she joined Bethel A.M.E. Church, where she is an active member.

"Years ago you would know mostly all the people. You would know all the blacks, anyway, even quite a bit of the white people on Evergreen Avenue. There was an Italian store, Terreri's Grocer. I always think of Mr. Terreri, because when we were getting ready to build this house, his son was supposed to pave our driveway. At first he wouldn't do it. He came by to see us at our home and told my husband and I that he was sorry that he didn't want to hurt us, but the builder owed him money. So then I said to him, 'Aren't you Mr. Terreri's son?' He said, 'Yes, what was your maiden name?' And I said, 'Ferguson.' he said, 'Your mother was Mrs. Ferguson?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'I'm going to do your driveway because your mother was the only one on that street that paid my father. Your mother would get groceries and she always paid.' We thought that was very nice of him."



Constance Montgomery

One of five daughters born to Aletha and Arnold Mounter, who immigrated to this country from Barbados, in the West Indies, Constance Mounter Montgomery for many years has been one of Morristown's most socially and politically active residents. Though she was born in Morristown in 1931, she lived in Madison and Morris Township while she was growing up. In 1951, after her marriage, she moved to Morristown.

AT&T employed Mrs. Montgomery in its information systems office for more than twenty years prior to her retirement. She was a manager responsible for running support services, and in 1979 she received the Black Achievers in Industry Award sponsored by the Harlem YMCA. Besides holding a full-time job, she was involved in educational matters, spending nine years on the Morristown Board of Education when the Town and Township school systems were being merged. Following this she spent five years in Trenton on the New Jersey Board of Education. She also became active in the political arena and served two terms as a Morristown councilwoman, leaving politics at the end of the 1980s. At the same time she was involved with Carettes, Inc.—a group that raises scholarship money for deserving black youngsters; she formed GOAL (the Group of Active Leadership), whose aim was to develop leaders in Morristown; she worked with the NAACP and the Urban League; and she was on the Wilkes Fund Committee at St. Peter's Church. Since her retirement she has remained active in Morristown affairs; she is still involved in some neighborhood groups, and she has served for two years on the Board of Neighborhood House.

"I think the biggest change [in Morristown] was to see the type of housing that replaced the tenement building type house. That's number one. I think the next biggest change since the fifties was

to see how the black community did go out and migrated out of the area into purchasing homes. The other things we had seen—first on the positive side we had begun to see minorities in key positions throughout the community. We had the first black principals....But we began to see blacks in town positions: policemen, town services, the housing inspectors. They are all changes that I've seen."



Georgia Norris

Georgia Vivian Tucker Norris was born and brought up in a house on Ridgedale Avenue, Morristown, owned by her grandmother and later by her parents. Her mother, Agnes Thompson, came to New Jersey from Columbia, South Carolina, as a young girl, when her stepfather was offered a job on a farm in Peapack. George N. Tucker, her father, was brought here by his grandmother as a nine or ten year old from New Bern, North Carolina. His father, Bert Livingston Tucker, came to Morristown from Bermuda to work in the brickyard. George Tucker, her father, was a mechanic who owned a garage on Water Street in the 1920s; her mother did domestic work and later took in laundry.

Mrs. Norris attended George Washington School in Morristown. She planned to attend college at the Hampton Institute in Virginia, but the advent of war delayed her college entrance.

She then met and married her husband, James G. Norris, in 1944. The Norrises lived for a while in San Francisco. On returning to Morristown, Georgia found employment at Picatinny Arsenal, where she worked until her mother's death in 1955. She then started a taxi service, operating it for many years out of her home. The Norrises have two children.

"My mother's mother came here [to Morristown] because some gentleman was in South Carolina and met my grandfather and offered him a job on a farm. The gentleman offered him a job and then another reason that they really made the step to come here because there was a gentleman down there who had taken to my mother and—you know how it was in those days—a man saw a woman and he wanted her. My mother was black and he was white—so that is why they really left."



Clara Pinkman

Clara Etta Watson Pinkman was born at home on Center Street in Morristown in 1906. Her parents, William Watson and Addie Daly, came from Virginia and met and married in Morristown. William was a well-respected businessman who owned William Watson & Sons Rubbish Removal. He spent much of his life working to advance the cause of Morristown's black population, and he died in 1933. His legacy of community service lives on in his daughter.

During the Great Depression, Mrs. Pinkman worked first at Cauldwell Playground and then as a caseworker for the Emergency Relief Administration. In 1942, she entered a nurses' training program at Provident Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. After being graduated as an R.N., she worked at Community Hospital in Newark, and then at Lyons V.A. Hospital from 1946 to 1960. For a short time, she was married to Carter Pinkman.

Several Morris County agencies and organizations have honored Mrs. Pinkman for her extensive community service. Over the years, she has been associated with the Morris County NAACP, Morris County Urban League, Neighborhood House, Collinsville Civic and Improvement League and Creighton Mayes Post 312. In 1975, she was the first black to head the Morris County American Legion Auxiliary. She is a charter member of the Union Baptist Church. Her knowledge of her community is extensive and her many contributions to the town stand as evidence that one person can make a difference.

"Water Street was always a busy street. There were rows of what we called flats, starting from the corner all the way down to Flagler Street, where Mom DeBritto had her place on the corner

of Flagler and Water Streets. She was an old Italian woman who owned a little store. They were neighboring flats, and several families lived in them. Then across the street, there used to be a little business there. I can remember when Clarence Gregory had his grocery store there on Water Street, and when Evelyn Brown had her beauty parlor and Mrs. Howell had her beauty parlor, and Lillian Odom had a restaurant on the corner of Flagler and Water. It has always been businesses....James Smith's restaurant was on Water Street. Mrs. Measie Johnson's place was on Morris Street—down below where the post office is now. Business was fair, considering, because most everyone had their own little home. Didn't have to go to restaurants."



Beatrice Samuels

Beatrice Banks Samuels, born in 1929, lived in Morris Township in Collinsville.

She attended the neighborhood's four-room schoolhouse.

Her parents, Herbert Everett Banks and Ella DePew, were Morristown natives.

Her mother found domestic work, while her father worked several jobs.

During the Great Depression, Mr. Banks worked for the Cappel Commission Company, a fruit stand and grocery on Speedwell Avenue.

Beatrice Banks went to work following her graduation from Morristown High School in 1947. She married Edward Samuels in 1953. They have four children and five grandchildren. One daughter, Linda Samuels Ellerbe, is pastor of Mt. Moriah A.M.E. Church in Irving. Mrs. Samuels has worked at Morristown Memorial Hospital, where she is employed as registrar, for fourteen years.

She is a member of Bethel A.M.E. Church, where she has taught Sunday School for many years.

"Morristown used to be a very small community and so most people knew each other or knew of each other or knew about somebody's family. Now you walk down the street and you get these strange faces. There was a time in Morris Township that you didn't have to worry about locking your door. Now all that has changed. When you have a great deal of change in population, things like this are bound to occur. I notice, too, differences in attitudes. Even though there were some places where I might not have been welcome, a business establishment or something, they still waited on you and treated you courteously. But there are places now you go in and though they

wait on you it's done in a surly manner. And I don't think that this is always due to your color. In years gone by a store was owned by a family—such as Epstein's and Crane's. And a family would know who their employees were. And these employees would know that they had to work up to certain standards or they would not be there."



Emily Satchelle

Emily Satchelle, born in New York, moved to Morristown in 1946 when she married her husband, George, a native Morristonian.

George Satchelle's family is well-known in the community, arriving in town around the turn of the century.

Mrs. Satchelle has been on staff at the Morris County Urban League since its inception in 1948, and her knowledge of the history and workings of the Morris County Urban League is extensive. She is the League's administrative assistant.

"When I came to Morristown in 1946 and was told that black people had to sit upstairs at the Community Theatre or couldn't go to the Chinese restaurant and a few other places, I just couldn't understand that at all, being a native New Yorker. I thought, this is the North, this area is just across the river from New York, how come? However changes did take place here by degrees, particularly in hiring practices. The type of jobs held and the extent of employment available to blacks became a principal concern of the Morris County Urban League."



J. Thomas Spruiell

John Thomas Spruiell was born in Morristown in 1933. His parents, Thomas Bollie Spruiell, Jr., and Georgia Banks Bridges, were both Morristown natives, and his grandparents arrived in Morristown before the turn of the century in search of work.

During his high school and college years, John worked at Max's Army and Navy Store on Speedwell Avenue. While at Morristown High School, he was the first black elected president of the student government. In the fall of 1952, he entered Seton Hall University. On graduating in 1956, he was inducted into the United States Army. In 1958, he married Victoria Spencer. The couple have five daughters. For twenty-seven years he was employed by the New Jersey Department of Defense, Army National Guard. In 1990 he joined the staff of the Morris County Prosecutor's Office as Director of Administration.

"It could be anywhere, but it just happened to be Morristown. We were big on radio programs because we didn't have any TV. And so programs like "Gang Busters" and "The Shadow" and "The Lone Ranger," "Jack Armstrong," "Fibber McGee and Molly," and "Jack Benny," this was our entertainment. One of the greatest entertainments growing up was being allowed to stay up on a Friday night to listen to a Joe Louis fight. And when Joe Louis won—which he always did in those days—the streets would be a mob scene. On Phoenix Avenue, we had about maybe five black families. Everybody poured on the street and danced in the street after Joe Louis knocked a guy out."



Howard and Genevieve Steele

Howard Steele, Sr., one of six children, was born in Morristown. His father came from Oxford, where he worked in an iron foundry, and his mother was born in Hampton, Virginia. He attended Maple Avenue School and served a plumbing apprenticeship after leaving school, but then he worked at the Davis Brothers drugstore in Morristown for twenty-seven years. However, in the 1940s he returned to the plumbing trade, opening a business he owned for forty years until his retirement.

Howard's wife, Genevieve, was born in East Bangor, Pennsylvania, but she lost her parents early in life and came to Morristown to live with her sister. Apart from a three- or four- year period after the birth of their first child, Howard, Jr., when they moved back to Pennsylvania, the Steeles have always lived in Morristown. Both have been active in community affairs.

Since the 1930s, Genevieve was on the Steward Board of the Bethel A.M.E. Church, where she participated in many other activities. Howard was a trustee on the board of the Bethel A.M.E. Church and a former member of the Tyrian Masonic Lodge, as well as being a special police officer in Morristown. He died in August 1990 after a long illness. Genevieve Steele died in May 1992.

Howard Steele:

"They were good days. People didn't have much, but everybody seemed to be friends. If you were sick, next door, whether they were white or colored, that neighbor would come over and cook and wash, go uptown. I remember when they had the curfew walk laws. When that curfew bell rang at 9:00, you better be home."

Genevieve Steele:

"Well, I think the old days were the best. The good old days. We always had food on the table. And any of the food that you got, it all came from the garden, from the ground. And up there, the people had in their cellar—of course, there was no cement cellars in those days, it was all dirt—and there's where you put your potatoes, you'd put your beets, you'd put your cabbage, and stuff like that for the winter. And my father and another man would go together and they'd buy a cow—they'd have the butcher who would fix it for them, and get the meat in. We wouldn't have to buy anything hardly. That's the way we lived, and we lived good."

John Clark Thurmond

John Clark was born to Robert G. and Henrietta Ramsey Thurmond on August 1, 1902, in Augusta, Georgia. He left school in the sixth grade. In 1922 he followed his father to Morristown. He had previously lived in Newark and worked at the Martha Washington Candy Company. In Morristown, following stints at Day's Restaurant and Davis Brothers Drug Store, he opened the Maple Leaf Restaurant, a roadhouse on Morris Street. When business declined during the Great Depression, his father, Robert, operated the restaurant as a Democratic club. Formally known as the Twentieth Century Democratic Liberty Club, this was the first such club in Morristown organized and managed by a black man.

John Thurmond had many jobs in Morristown, including employment with the Dr. Martin Smith family, who moved to Madison Avenue during Thurmond's tenure. For the last ten years of his life, he was proprietor of Clark's Food Center, on Martin Luther King Avenue. Because of his varied occupational experiences and political activities, Thurmond developed extensive contacts within the community, both black and white, which are well-documented in his interview. He was married twice—first to Elsie Ward Arnold then to Dorothy Evans. He had seven children.

John Clark Thurmond died on November 15, 1983.

Sheila Sweeny of the Morristown Library and Barbara Thurmond, his daughter, conducted John Thurmond's interview.

In 1949 John Thurmond played a significant role in electing Edward K. Mills to the office of mayor in Morristown.

"The Republicans had kept the county closed. Mills changed that. No longer would blacks have to be thankful for low-paying, cast-off jobs. He opened doors for blacks, by giving us jobs and greater input into the political system. Mills's opposition wanted to get him out in the worse way. I sat on the council to make plans for Morristown and for running a clean town. The opposition to me was strong, and believe it or not, I had more blacks try to hang me than whites. I [tried to] cut out what they'd been getting away with for years. Selling blacks! Going back to the period in Africa when slavery was at its zenith. I would make war on your tribe. Then I would sell the captured warriors to a boat going to America to be used as slaves. In the changing political atmosphere of Morristown, blacks were still showing those same qualities of selling out one another to the whites and all for only a nominal gain— if any gain."

Leslie and Mary Turner

Both Leslie William and Mary Ginyard Turner spent most of their lives in Morris County. Mrs. Turner, born in 1917 in Jenkinsville, South Carolina, moved with her parents in 1927 to Ridgedale Avenue, Morristown. There she attended George Washington School before moving to Pittsburgh, where she attended high school.

The family moved back to Morristown, to a house on Spring Street , where Mrs. Turner's brother and sister attended Morristown High School. Mrs. Turner worked at Picatinny Arsenal, Warner Lambert and Epstein's, as well as doing domestic work.

Leslie Turner was born in Madison, in 1910, and he was graduated from Madison High School in 1929. He attended Wilberforce University and, in 1939, moved to Morristown. For more than twenty-seven years, until his retirement in 1975, he worked at the Agway Farm Home and Garden Center. He died on November 7, 1991, at the age of 81.

Both Leslie and Mary Turner were active in the Bethel A.M.E.Church. Mary has been a member of the Usher Board and the Missionary Society since 1952, and she has taught Sunday School. Leslie was a member of the Usher Board and for fifty years was secretary of the Board of Trustees. The couple has also been active in other organizations. Leslie Turner was a member of the Masonic Lodge in Morristown and a former Patron of Bethsaida Chapter 7 Order of the Eastern Star of Morristown. Mary was president of the Happy Workers Garden Club, the only black president on the executive board of Church Women's United and a former matron of Bethsaida Chapter 7 Order of the Eastern Star.

Mary Turner:

"My mother was sick, and the missionaries used to visit my mother. They was real missionaries at that time because they would come, and they would clean your house, and they would cook for you. They didn't come and say can I do something for you. They changed the beds, washed the sheets. And Mother Leslie Clemens was asking me, why don't you come and join the missionary society? And I said, "Gee, Momma, I'm too young to join." One lady said, "Well, I guess there's as many short braids as there are long braids." And from the work and their attitude, and the way they carried themselves so beautifully—I joined."

Leslie Turner:

"Water Street at that time had houses—three or four cold-water houses, families of houses, and most of the people there were Christian people, church-going people, but a lot of outsiders come in, too. You had saloons there, and places of joy, people enjoyed themselves - it has always been the Hollow, has always been the mainstay of Morristown. It's been the city of Morristown. George Washington lived out at his headquarters. The soldiers stayed out at Jockey Hollow. It's still called the Hollow."



Clara Wright and Marilyn Holt

Clara Baker Wright and her sister, Marilyn Baker Holt, Morristown natives, attended local schools. The sisters' maternal grandparents, Clara VanDunk and William Springstead, were of Native American descent. Their mother, Eveline Springstead, was born in Madison. She went to Morristown High School where she met and later married Charles Baker, who played on the famous "Marvel Five" basketball team. With the help of the "Colored Flash," the team went undefeated in 1925.

Both Clara and Marilyn were active in the taxi business started by their stepfather, George Tucker. Marilyn and her husband took over the business when her mother died. Clara drove cabs for more than eighteen years. Marilyn, who has lived on Ridgedale Avenue for almost thirty-three years, has three children. Clara, known as Wawe, a registered member of the Ramapo Mountain Indians, continues to pursue her interest in Native American culture.

Marilyn Holt:

"We were a product of Tin Can Alley [Tin Can Alley was a name for an area in Morristown behind the Post Office on Dumont Street]. There were three tenement houses—cold water flats—toilet was on the back porch. We had the best landlords. If we didn't have the rent we could skate. I remember when we had snowy days and they would close the street off for the children to sleigh-ride. I remember when they would close off Flagler Street and we children would go all the way in from Tin Can Alley to ride down Flagler Street hill. They don't do that anymore."

Clara Wright:

"I enjoyed living here in this town. This is a beautiful town to have lived in. I can't think of any place else to be. And I been through the hard of it and the good of it. [In Morristown] blacks couldn't eat at Lieberman's Luncheonette. Couldn't eat at Thode's up on the Green either. One time I went into Thode's with a Jewish guy—even though I knew I wasn't suppose to. They served us, but after we finished, he took my glass and threw it in the trash and it broke. I've never forgotten that."

Morristown Census Figures 1810-1990

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Blacks</u>			<u>Black Percentage of Total</u>
		<u>Total</u>	<u>Free</u>	<u>Slaves</u>	
1810	3,753	260	46	214	6.9
1820	3,524	264	184	80	7.4
1830	3,536	238	206	32	6.7
1840	4,013	229	223	6	5.7
1850	4,992	278	—	—	5.5
1860	5,985	182	—	—	3.0
1870	5,674	—	not available		—
1880	5,418	293	—	—	5.4
1890	8,156	428	—	—	5.2
1900	11,267	815	—	—	7.2
1910	12,507	991	—	—	7.9
1920	12,548	891	—	—	7.1
1930	15,197	1,377	—	—	9.0
1940	15,270	1,437	—	—	9.4
1950	17,124	1,729	—	—	10.0
1960	17,712	2,488	—	—	14.0
1970	17,662	3,994	—	—	23.0
1980	16,614	4,145	—	—	25.0
1990	16,189	3,733	—	—	23.0

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Key

--- unknown name

() maiden name

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