

# **MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY RESOURCE GUIDE**

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**Montclair Public Library  
Montclair, New Jersey**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The African American presence in Montclair has a rich history. The Montclair Free Public Library expresses special gratitude to all of the participants who opened their hearts to share their lives in the oral history interviews and those who shared their organization's histories for this project.

The Library thanks the following people for their hard work and dedication to this project:

The following volunteers -- Laura Krause and Kathryn Hammond, graduate students at Montclair State University; Josephine Bonomo, retired journalist and Montclair native; and Rose Ferguson -- assisted with conducting oral history interviews and preliminary research on the organizations.

Clement Price, a history professor at Rutgers University served as consultant, advisor, and assisted with training the volunteers for the oral history project.

James Boylan and his students in the Montclair State University Visual Anthropology program photographed the churches and the organizations' buildings.

Research assistants Kenneth French and Asantewaa Gail Harris assisted with conducting oral histories and researching the organizations and churches.

The Library would also like to thank the New Jersey Historical Commission and New Jersey Council for the Humanities for funding the Montclair African American History Resource Guide and Montclair African-American Oral History Projects.

Thanks are also owed to Nancy Hutchinson, Mary Lou Skillin, Cheryl M. McCoy, Carol Robinson, Michael Connell, Ronald Murphy, and the rest of the staff at the Montclair Free Public Library.

Elizabeth Shepard

Local History Archivist

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# **MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY RESOURCE GUIDE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this guide is twofold:

1. To introduce researchers, including the general public, students and scholars, to the history of the Montclair African-American community. It is not intended as an exhaustive history, but rather as an introduction to the historical background of the African-American organizations and churches in Montclair.
2. To serve as a guide to historical resources available for researchers at either the Montclair Public Library or at the organizations' facilities.

The guide is divided into four sections: African-American Churches, African-American Organizations, Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, and Additional Resources.

"African-American Churches" and "Organizations" have histories on nine churches and fourteen organizations in Montclair. Each history includes an historical summary and a list of historical resources. Some histories include oral history excerpts from the Montclair African-American Oral History Project.

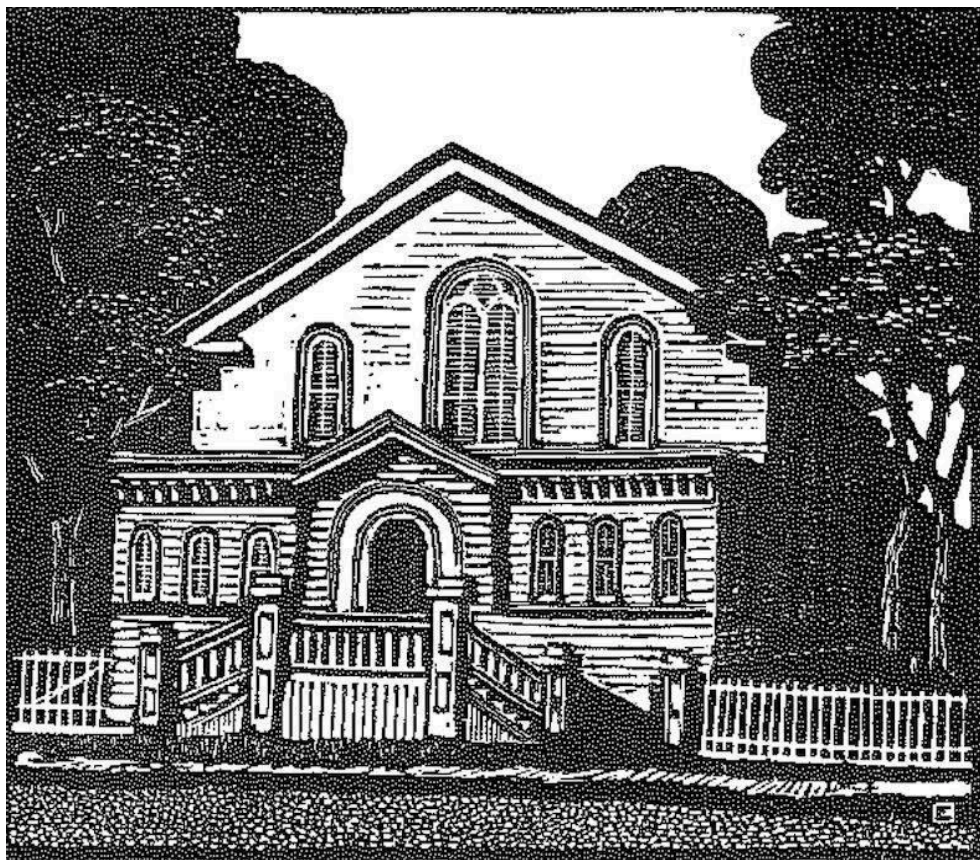
"Montclair African-American Oral History Collection" contains summaries and excerpts from thirty interviews of Montclair African-American residents conducted during the Oral History Project.

"Additional Resources" provides lists of other historical material on African-Americans in Montclair and New Jersey at the Montclair Public Library.

This project was funded by two grants. The New Jersey Historical Commission sponsored the overall Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Project, and the New Jersey Council for the Humanities funded the Montclair African-American Oral History Project.

# MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES

1880-2001



ROWLAND C. ELLIS

The first church built in Montclair

St. Mark's United Methodist Church

History by Elizabeth Shepard

## **MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION**

The African-American population in Montclair began to grow in the 1870s as African Americans migrated from the South to the North looking for a better life. By 1880, the first African-American church, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, was established in Montclair and was followed by the Union Baptist Church in 1887. The third church, St. Paul Baptist Church, arrived on the scene around 1897. These three churches grew steadily, addressing the spiritual needs of the African-American population in the early years of the Montclair African-American community.

As the African-American population continued to grow during the first half of the twentieth century, more African-American churches of different denominations were established. Trinity United Presbyterian Church, founded in nearby Bloomfield in 1913, and Trinity Episcopal Church, founded in 1916, both had large populations of people from the West Indies as well as African-American members.

Another Methodist church, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, was founded at 22 Hartley Street around 1914. According to the city directories, the Emanuel A. M. E. Church moved several times, to 11 Mission Street around 1920, to 6 Mission Street around 1928, and to 44 Maple Street in 1933. The church disappeared from the city directories in 1937 and reappears again in 1965. Today the church conducts worship at 15 Hartley Street.

In the late 1920s and 1930s, more Baptist churches were established, including Bright Hope Baptist Church in 1921 and Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church in 1938. James A. Jackson founded Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church. The church congregation worshiped at several locations in Montclair. From 1950-1969, a church was located at 27 Monroe Place. Rev. Myrtle C. Jackson served the church from 1964-1995.

Rev. James Johnson and sixty members founded the New Calvary Baptist Church in November 1921. The first building was on Belmont Avenue in the Silver Lake section of Belleville, N.J. The church's first location in Montclair was at Glenfield School. The church first appears in the Montclair city directories at its present location, 72 Maple Avenue, in 1929. The ministers included Rev. James Johnson (1921-1924), Rev. E. E. Elliot (1924-1932), Rev. Dandridge L. Flounoy (1932-1935, 1943-1970), Rev. Pratt (1937), Rev. Earl Paul Jones (1937-1941), Rev. Shellie Sampson Jr. (1970-1982), Rev. George Fair (1984-1989), and Rev. Clenard Childress, Jr. (1989- ). ("History of New Calvary Church," 2001, !)

Several Pentecostal and evangelical churches were established in the 1930s. First Church Of God In Christ was established at 22 Hartley Street in 1922, and moved to 10 Hartley Street around 1933. Trinity Temple Church Of God In Christ started in Caldwell in 1930. Jerusalem Church at 61 New Street was established in 1931. The church changed its name to New Jerusalem Apostolic Church around 1961; today the church is called New Jerusalem Holiness Church. Apostolic Holiness Church started at 11 Mission Street

in 1931. Sister W.M. Gaymon was the long-time leader of this congregation, serving until around 1941. The church was called Apostolic Faith Church at 129 Maple Street in 1945; it disappears from the Montclair telephone books in the 1980s. The First Seventh Day Adventist started at 84 Maple Avenue around 1935 and moved to 90 Mission Street around 1949. Alpha and Omega Tabernacle at 22 Woodland Avenue was established by Jeremiah Goodwin around 1937 and disappears from the telephone books in the 1980s.

Other Protestant churches were established in the second half of the twentieth century: Randolph Chapel American Methodist Zion at 89 Maple Avenue around 1947-1951, St. Paul's Seventh Day Christian Church at 205 Glenridge Avenue around 1963 and Bethel Gospel Hall at 18 Washington Street in 1961. In 1964, pioneer evangelist Howard Johnson founded the Church of Christ in Montclair. In 1967, The Scripture Church was founded at 110 Bloomfield Avenue. Emanuel Hope Baptist was founded around 1983.

Other churches established in recent years include Praise, Power and Prayer at 7 Oak Street, Sword of the Spirit Christian Church at 100 Alexander Avenue, Temple of United Christians at 29 Woodland Avenue and Universal House of Prayer at 33 Woodland Avenue.

African-American Catholics began worshipping at St. Peter Claver Church on Elm Street in 1931 and moved to Elmwood Avenue in 1939. African-American Catholics were not welcomed at the other Montclair Catholic churches. For instance, at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, the African-Americans had to sit downstairs and listen to the Mass via a loudspeaker system. Although St. Peter Claver has always been a mixed church, both African-Americans and people from the West Indies have been the dominant members.

African-American Muslims attend the Masjid Ul Wadud of Montclair at 698 Bloomfield in Montclair.

The African-American churches have been a focal point of the Montclair African American community. All of the churches have strong community outreach programs to assist both the Montclair and Newark African-American communities. Members of St. Mark's United Methodist Church were active in founding the Washington Street Branch YMCA, the YWCA and NAACP. Many churches provide special programs for youth and senior citizens and also serve as social outlets for their members, featuring clubs, trips and other activities.

The ministers of these churches have also been active in the Montclair community. All of the churches can boast pastors who were leaders in the Montclair community. Some of these pastors include: James Jackson (Bright Hope and Rising Mt. Zion Baptist); Elder Frederick Washington (Trinity Temple of God In Christ); Dr. C. Lincoln McGee and Rev. Archie Hargrave (Trinity United Presbyterian); Dr. Ansel Bell and Dr. Billups (St. Paul Baptist); Rev. Frederick Handy (St. Mark's minister and one of the founders of the Montclair NAACP); Dr. John Love (Union Baptist); Dr. Deual Rice (Union and St.



Paul's Baptist); and Rev. Matthew G. Carter (Union Baptist and the first African American mayor of Montclair) -- to name only a few.

Some who were known on a state or national level include: William H. Gray (Union Baptist), who was a U.S. Congressman and Black Caucus Leader; Rev. George Marshall Plaskett (Trinity Episcopal), a civil rights activist; and Howard Johnson (Church of Christ), a pioneer and founder of two Church of Christ churches in New Jersey: Newark and Montclair.

Today there are 23 African-American Christian churches in Montclair. Nine of these churches are featured in this section.

### **Works Cited**

"History of New Calvary Baptist Church," 2001. Unpublished history submitted by the church. (New Calvary Baptist Church Collection, Local History Archives, Montclair Public Library)

Montclair City Directory Collection. 1871-1971. Local History Archives, Montclair Public Library

# **ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**51 Elm Street  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1880-2001**



**History compiled by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## HISTORY OF ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

St. Mark's United Methodist Church is the first African-American church in Montclair. In 1880, twenty-five members founded the St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church in 1880. The Franklin St. John Church (originally called St. John Methodist Church) in Newark assisted in establishing the church. In 1879, the congregation first rented and later purchased the First Methodist Episcopal Church building at 194 Bloomfield Avenue. On November 14, 1880, Rev. J. H. Cooly led the first regular service at 194 Bloomfield Avenue. The Sunday school was established in 1881. The church was incorporated on October 7, 1895. In the 1930s, Rev. William Helm's wife started the first African-American vacation bible school in Montclair. The church built in 1836 on Bloomfield Avenue was the oldest church building in Montclair when it was destroyed by a fire on Good Friday, April 1, 1947. ("Launching o Mortgage... " n.d., no page; "Historical Sketch", n.d., 3)

In 1926, the church bought property on Elm Street and Fulton Street with the plan to build on these properties. The congregation met at the YWCA on Glenridge Avenue until another church building could be erected on the Elm Street property. A parsonage was later built on the Fulton Street property. The laying of the cornerstone for the new church occurred on October 31, 1948. On November 6, 1949, the current building on Elm Street was completed. The congregation marched from the site of the old church on Bloomfield Avenue to the new building. Later an annex was given to the church and moved from its original location on Gates Avenue. ("Launching the Mortgage.. " n.d., no page; "Historical Sketch," n.d., 3-4)

The church changed its name to St. Mark's United Methodist Church in 1968 and belongs to the United Methodist Church denomination. Originally the church was part of the Conference of New Jersey. In 1892, it became part of the Delaware Conference in the segregated Central Jurisdiction. In 1964, it was integrated into the Newark Annual Conference. In 1968, the church joined the Northern New Jersey Conference and in 2000 the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. ("Historical Sketch," n.d., 4)

St. Mark's United Methodist Church has played an important role in the African-American community throughout its long history. Alice Foster and other women in the church founded the YWCA. Rev. J. H. Blake was one of the founders of the African-American Washington Street YMCA branch in 1903. Rev. Frederick Handy was instrumental in establishing the Montclair Branch of the NAACP in 1916. A contemporary organization supported by the church is Home Corp, an agency that provides low-income housing. ("History of St. Mark's," 2000, 3)

Some of the outreach activities have included a biannual clothing giveaway; Food Pantry/Assistance Program, which provides food as well as assistance with rent and funeral expenses; and the Evangelist Program, which provides ministry to people in nursing homes and hospitals. Some of the family ministries include the United Methodist Women Mission; Infant Formula Program, which provides diapers and formula; Angel Tree Ministries, which ministers to children whose parents are in prison; Senior Y2K Initiative Program, which provides computer classes to seniors; and several other children's ministries. (Harriott, personal interview, 2000)

## MINISTERS OF ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

There have been twenty-three ministers of the church:

Rev. Harris	
Rev. Allen	
Rev. J. H. Cooley	1880-?
Rev. W.R. Davis	?-1889
Rev. Amos Gaither	1890-1895
Rev. I. H. White	1895-1897
Rev. J. H. Blake	1898-1905
Rev. Frederick H. Butler	1908-1914
Rev. Frederick J. Handy	1915-1923
Rev. James W. Jewett	1923-1935
Rev. William J. Helm	1935-1939
Rev. O. H. Spence	1940-1942
Rev. William H. Mears	1942-1952
Rev. Oliver W. Jones	1952-1954
Rev. William A. Harwood	1954-1962
Rev. Willard Brown	1962-1968
Rev. B. Milton Hargrove	1968-1972
Rev. Randolph Fisher	1972-1974
Rev. Dennis Fletcher	1974-1979
Bishop Ernest S. Lyght	1979-1989
Rev. Fletcher Bryant	1989-1991
Rev. Joseph Ossei-Akoannor	1991-1992
Dr. Michael Harriott	1992-

(List was formed from "History of St. Mark's," 2000, 4, and the Montclair City Directories)

### Works Cited

Harriott, Dr. Michael, and Richard Owens, personal interviews, 12 October 2000.

*Historical Sketch of St. Mark's United Methodist Church.* n. d. Montclair: St. Mark's United Methodist Church. (St. Mark's United Methodist Church Collection)

"History of St. Mark's." *Annual Church Conference.* 18 October 2000. Montclair: St. Mark's United Methodist Church. (St. Mark's United Methodist Church Collection)

"Launching of Mortgage Liquidation Campaign Combined with Observations." *Montclair Times.* n. d. (St. Mark's United Methodist Church Collection).

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES  
50 South Fullerton Avenue  
Montclair, NJ 07042  
973-744-0500**

**Public can access archives by appointment**

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**St. Mark's United Methodist Church Collection, 1899-2000, 2 folders**

The collection includes programs (1899-1998), an annual conference report (2000), and histories of St. Mark's United Methodist Church. The church donated a videorecording on the history of the church and a copy of a scrapbook kept by Mr. & Mrs. Richard Owens (1946-1978).

**Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

**Churches-Methodist-St. Mark's, 1937-1974, 1 folder**

Newspaper clippings from the *Montclair Times* include articles about the fire that destroyed the original church building and about rebuilding of the church at the current location.

**Montclair Photograph Collection**

**St. Mark's United Methodist Church Photographs, circa 1860-2001, 4 items**

The collection includes photographs of the Bloomfield Avenue and Elm Street St. Mark's United Methodist Church buildings.

**Note: Patrons can consult the Montclair History Online Photo Collection.**

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001**

Oral histories of St. Mark's members include Hortense Tate, Maude Credle, Alice and John Price, James Howard Page, Lincoln Turner, and Sharon Burton.

# UNION BAPTIST CHURCH

Portland Place and Midland Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey

1887- 2001



**History was edited from a church history supplied  
by Union Baptist Church**

**Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF UNION BAPTIST CHURCH**

In February 1887, the second African-American church in Montclair was born when a group of thirty African-American citizens of the Baptist faith formed a Baptist Mission later named Union Baptist Church. Rev. Jack Harris, who also served as the pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Orange, New Jersey, was the first pastor of this small church. He was instrumental in guiding the new church and starting a Sunday school in 1887. The church met at various locations in town, including Watchung and Morris Halls.

Rev. William Perry came to the church in 1889. He worked to increase the membership of the church to 356 members. On September 20, 1889, the church was incorporated. A lot was purchased on Portland Place in 1889 and the original church building erected around 1899. The original church had a sanctuary with a seat capacity of 500, an audience room, lecture room and three small reading rooms. It boasted a fine organ.

Rev. John C. Love began his forty-seven-year ministry at Union Baptist in May 1899. During his long tenure, the original church building was completed. Membership and church activities continued to increase. The first club was the Missionary Society. Although two wings were added to the original building, more space was needed for the growing church. Property was purchased at the corner of Portland Place and Midland Avenue and the present church building was erected in 1926.

In September 1946, Rev. Deual C. Rice began his twenty-year ministry with Union Baptist Church. In 1954, the sanctuary was remodeled to increase the seating capacity of the choir loft. The pulpit of the church was from the original First Congregational Church building. More organizations were formed such as the Student Aid Society, which assisted students in furthering their education. The church purchased the Activities Building called D. C. Rice Hall.

In 1966, the student minister at the First Baptist Church, Rev. William H. Gray III, was called to be the next minister. He increased the church's community ministry by establishing such organizations as the Day Nursery and the Union Development Corporation of Montclair, which built relocation housing during the Urban Renewal Project. He later became an U.S. Congressman and a leader of the Black Caucus.

In 1973, Elbert L. Maxwell came to Union Baptist Church. He increased the church's community involvement with the establishment of the Essex County Nutrition Project, which serves hot lunches for senior citizens in the greater Essex County Suburban Area. A parsonage was purchased and a new Gospel Choir and Youth Drill Team were added. The Gospel Choirs at Union Baptist Church are well known in the community.

In 1983, Rev. Matthew Carter served as the interim pastor.

In 1984, the current pastor, Rev. W. Temple Richie, Jr., started his ministry at the church. During his tenure, mission work and ministries have expanded, another church parsonage purchased and renovations to church buildings have been undertaken.

## LIST OF PASTORS AT UNION BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Jack Harris	1887-1889
Rev. William Perry	1889-1899
Rev. John C. Love	1899-1946
Rev. Deual C. Rice	1946-1966
Rev. William H. Gray III	1966-1973
Rev. Elbert L. Maxwell	1973-1983
Rev. Matthew Carter (Interim)	1983
Rev. W. Temple Richie, Jr.	1984-

## References

"History of Union Baptist Church." *100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Union Baptist Church*.  
Montclair: Union Baptist Church, September 27, 1987. (Union Baptist Church  
Collection)



## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON UNION BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY**

#### **LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ 07042**

**973-744-0500**

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#### **Baptist Church Collection, Box A18**

##### **Union Baptist Church, 1908-1987, 4 items**

The collection contains an "Oratorical Contest Literary Union Speech" by Thomas Jackson, 1908, Rev. John C. Love Day Program, 1977 and 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Union Baptist Church Booklet (1987) and a "History of Union Baptist Church".

#### **Montclair-Subject Vertical Files**

##### **Churches-Baptist-Union, 1890-1975, 1 folder**

The file contains articles from the Montclair Times about the church. Also included is a copy of Whittemore's History of Montclair Township description of the church.

#### **Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001** Oral

Histories of Union Baptist members included L. M. Connor, Carolyn Page and Frank Alston.

#### **Montclair Photograph Collection**

##### **Union Baptist Church Photographs, 1939-2001, 3 items**

The photographic collection includes exterior views of Union Baptist Church.

**Note: Patrons can consult the online Montclair History Online Photo Collection**

# **ST. PAUL BAPTIST CHURCH**

**119 ELM STREET  
MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY**

**1902-2001**



**History was edited from a church history by Elsie Hepburn Lambert  
supplied by the St. Paul Baptist Church**

**Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## HISTORY OF ST. PAUL BAPTIST CHURCH

St. Paul Baptist Church first appears in the 1897 *Madison's Directory of Montclair*. This church, led by Rev. W. I. Johnson, was located at 464 Bloomfield Avenue. In the 1898 *Madison's Directory of Montclair*, the church was located at 456 Bloomfield Avenue and led by H.P. Thomas. The church disappears from the city directories until 1902.

In 1902, according to the St. Paul Baptist Church's records, the church was officially organized when twenty-one people under the leadership of Rev. T. T. Tucker of Newark met at the home of Mrs. Anna McGuinn on Fulton Street. Deacon Wilson organized the Sunday school in 1903.

The original church congregation met at the Fire House in the Delaware Lackawanna & Western railroad yard on the corner of Grove Street and Bloomfield Avenue. Rev. Tucker left in 1905 and was replaced by Rev. William Pe1Ty.

The Sunshine Club raised money for the church to pay a deposit for property at 15-17 Hartley Street. Rev. Edward E. Jackson, the new minister, led the congregation in building the church on Hartley Street in 1908. Rev. H. H. Waring, who came to the church in 1913, led the congregation in paying off the church's mortgage by raising funds at an Industrial Fair held in October 1920. Rev. Randolph Peyton came in 1921 and was responsible for building the congregation from 200 to 1116. In 1926, the church interior was renovated including an enlarged auditorium, balcony, choir stand, baptistery, classrooms, new pews, and windows. The parsonage was built at 128 Maple Avenue around this same time. The next minister, Rev. Ansel O. Bell, and his wife Augusta Bell left their mark in establishing several outreach and in-house ministries at the church.

Some of the activities included the reorganization of the Baptist Young People Union (founded in 1906), Mother's Club, Church's Social Work Department, Lily of the Valley Club, Youth's Council, and the Vacation Bible School. In 1937, Rev. James H. Billups established additional outreach ministries, including the Council of Auxiliaries and Pastor's Aid. A new organ was installed in 1940.

The current building at 119 Elm Street was dedicated from October 13-29, 1963. It took six years to build the church. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on October 20, 1957, and the cornerstone laying ceremony took place on August 5, 1962. The first service was held on June 16, 1963. In 1965, Rev. Calvin Sampson was hired as the Assistant Pastor to assist the ailing Rev. James Billups. After Rev. James Billups' death on February 25, 1966, Rev. Calvin Sampson became the senior pastor of the church.

Under his leadership, the church's newsletter, "Voices of St. Paul," was organized, as were the Men's Club, Women's Day Committee, Helping Hand Committee, Youth Fellowship Organization and a full time Bible Class. Rev. Sampson also organized basketball teams. The Intermediates Team won three championship titles. Rev. Sampson left in 1972 and was replaced by Rev. Deual C. Rice, former pastor of Union

Baptist Church, who served until 1976. The next minister was Rev. Marvin A. McMickle. The property at 171 Lincoln Street was converted to the St. Paul Baptist Activities Building in 1979. Rev. McMickle was involved with the Caldwell Prison Ministries and the Learning Center.

Rev. Dr. V. DuWayne Battle has led the church since 1989. Under his leadership new ministries have been added, including Man to Man; Couples Ministry; Hope Ministry to AIDS victims; Lighthouse, a ministry to the bereaved; and OASIS, a ministry for families affected by substance abuse. Some of the youth ministries include ARKNET, an information technology resource center, STEP (Study To Excel Program), Summer Haven Camp, and SIMBA. St. Paul Baptist Church also supports other local missionary groups such as the South End Gardens, SHARE Food Ministry, Prison Ministry, Visitation Ministry and the Homeless Feeding Ministry. (Vision Past and Present, n.d., no page)

## MINISTERS OF ST. PAUL BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. T. T. Tucker	1902-1905
Rev. William Perry	1905-1907
Rev. Edward E. Jackson	1907-1912
Rev. H. H. Waring	1913-1921
Rev. Randolph V. Peyton	1922-1927
Rev. Ansel O. Bell	1929-1936
Rev. Dr. James H. Billups	1937-1966
Rev. Calvin G. Sampson	1966-1972
Rev. Deual C. Rice	1973-1976
Rev. Marvin A. McMickle	1977-?
Rev. Dr. V. DuWayne Battle	1989-present

Assistant Ministers included Rev. J. Fuller, Rev. Ayers, Rev. Harris, Rev. Isaac Lewis, Rev. William Bobbit, Rev. A. B. Edwards, Rev. George O. Sumner, Rev. Roland Morton, Rev. Wilbur Spivey, Rev. James Rutledge, Rev. Stanley Long and Rev. Daniella Morrissey.

### References

#### History was edited from a church history:

Lambert, Elsie Hepburn. "History of St. Paul Baptist Church." *St. Paul Baptist Church Blue Book* Montclair: St. Paul Baptist Church, n.d.

The last paragraph was from "Vision Past and Present," an unpublished history submitted by the church, n.d.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
ST. PAUL BAPTIST CHURCH**

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**Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

**(Churches-Baptist-St. Paul, 1909-1963, 1 folder)**

Newspaper articles from the *Montclair Times* include an exterior sketch and interior view of the original church on Hartley Street, picture of the groundbreaking ceremony for the Elm Street church, and description of the Elm Street church dedication.

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**St. Paul Baptist Church Collection, 1977**

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001**

Oral histories of St. Paul members include Orene Shelton, Dr. Theodore Bolden, Alice and John Price, Fannie Lewis and Aubrey Lewis.

# **TRINITY UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**5 High Street  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1913-2001**



**History compiled by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF TRINITY UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

In October 1913, a Presbyterian Mission was founded by a group of women interested in teaching children about the Bible. The group, led by Frances Valentine and Mrs. G. Shaw, met in Bloomfield, New Jersey, at the home of Mrs. Valentine, where they provided one-hour biblical instruction to children. In 1915, the Thirteenth Avenue Presbyterian Church, an African-American church in Newark, sponsored the mission.

The first minister was Rev. Charles Summer. In October 1916, the church adopted the name of Trinity Presbyterian Mission. From 1915-1917, the church met at several locations in Bloomfield, including 1 Race Street, Central Hall on Bloomfield Avenue, and 24 West Street. From 1917-1935, the church met at Knox Hall. The small mission and Sunday school grew under the leadership of several pastors. In 1935, the congregation moved to a small frame building at 27 Race Street in Bloomfield. Dr. C. Lincoln McGee began his long tenure at the church in 1935 and served until 1985. In 1940, the church moved to 73 Race Street in Bloomfield. The church formally became Trinity Presbyterian Church under the Newark Presbytery on May 9, 1948. The church purchased the South Presbyterian Church building on High Street in Montclair in 1949. The church continued to grow in membership and activities. In 1987, Rev. Archie Hargraves came to the church; he served until his death in 1999. The church currently has a membership of 133 African-Americans and Caribbeans from the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, and Barbados. (New Jersey Historical Records Survey Project, 1940, 175; Queen, 1973, 5-7)

As well as the Christian holidays, the church celebrates Martin Luther King Day, Black History Month, and Student Recognition Day. There are several Bible study groups. The Women's Mission Group is quite active in the community. Some of the programs they sponsored are listed below. (Ford, personal interview, 2001)

"Adopt a Family." Provides Christmas presents for needy families.

"Prison Ministry." Provides personal items, Bibles, etc., to the Women's Prison in Caldwell

"Sheet African Women." Provides clean sheets for African women.

"Entertainment Luncheons." Provides an annual luncheon for patients at Overbrook Hospital in Cedar Grove. "Crafter

Workshop." Annual bazaar for selling crafts.

"Blankets for Border Babies." Provides blankets and other supplies for Boarder Babies of drug addicted mothers at Beth Israel and University Hospitals in Newark.

"Trip Committee." Plans annual vacations and other day trips for church members.

The Presbyterian Men's Group puts on concerts, breakfasts with lectures and is active in politics. The church is a polling site.

The Manse is used as the educational building for the Sunday school for about 40 children.

Elder James Gaines is currently serving the church while a permanent minister is being sought to replace Rev. Archie Hargraves, who died in 1999. The church is a member of the Presbyterian Church of USA, which is headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky.

### LIST OF PASTORS

Rev. Charles Summer	1913-1915
Rev. Horrace Miller and others	1915-1917
Rev. Yancey Thompson	1917-1926
Rev. Harvey Onque	1926-1932
Rev. Joshua Lawrence	1932-1933
Rev. J. Price Robinson	1933-1934
Rev. C. Lincoln McGee	1935-1942
*Elder Alfred Fowlkes	1942-1945
*Rev. Elmer Schnick	1942-1945
*Rev. Frederick Long	1942-1945
Rev. C. Lincoln McGee	1946-1985
Rev. Archie Hargraves	1987-1999
Elder James Gaines	1999-

\* These ministers/elders served while Rev. C. Lincoln McGee was serving in World War II.  
(List from Queen, 1973, 7)

### Works Cited

- Ford, Louise (Elder). Personal interview. 8 December 2000.
- New Jersey Historical Records Survey Project. *Inventory of the Church Archives of New Jersey*. 1940. Newark: The Historical Records Survey.
- Queen, Bob. "History of Trinity United Presbyterian Church." *60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Our Church, 1913-1973*. 1973. Montclair: Trinity United Presbyterian Church.



**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
TRINITY UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access available by appointment**

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**Trinity United Presbyterian Church Collection, 1940-1997, 1 folder**

Anniversary booklets for the Trinity United Presbyterian Church donated by Louise Ford. The collection also includes an "Inventory of the Church Archives of New Jersey," 1940.

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2001**

The collection includes interviews with members Louise Ford and Fannie Lewis.

**PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**425 Lombard Street**

**Philadelphia, PA 19147**

**Public access available**

This organization is the repository for the church records for the Presbyterian Churches of the USA.

**Trinity Presbyterian Church Collection, 1942-1954, 2 vols**

The collection contains sessional minutes of Trinity Presbyterian Church for April 8, 1942-December 9, 1954.

# **TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**19 North Willow Street  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1916-2001**



**Photo by James Boylan**

**History by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

In 1916, forty-four former African-American and West Indian members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church founded Trinity Episcopal Mission. The first vicar was Rev. George Marshall Plaskett, who was a famous civil rights activist. He was also the vicar of the Church of Epiphany in East Orange. The mission started meeting in the Crane House prior to its purchase by the YWCA.

In 1918, the mission purchased the old Armory Building at 19 North Willow Street and renovated the interior into a beautiful church.

Rev. George Plaskett stayed for forty years until he retired in 1956. The next pastor was Rev. Sydney Parker, who helped the church achieve parish status in the late 1960s and 1970s. Rev. Charles Hoskins increased the membership and built the parish hall next door.

The congregation has always been a mixture of African-American, West Indian and African members. Today there are 100-125 members. The church is part of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark.

The church has many outreach activities for the needy and youth in Montclair and the Newark area. Some of the programs for the poor include the Food Pantry and collecting clothes for the Apostle House in Newark. The youth programs include a youth basketball team at the YMCA, Friday Game Night and Youth choirs.

### **TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH VICARS**

Rev. George Marshall Plaskett	1916-1956
Rev. Sydney Parker	1956-1970
Rev. Charles Hoskins	ca.1971-1976
Rev. Jarrett Cortz Atkins	ca.1977-1985
Rev. Jacob Willborn	ca.1986-1989
Rev. Michael DuPlessis	ca. 1990-1997 (from South Africa)
Rev. Kendrick Lewis	1997-2000 (from Belize/Jamaica)
Rev. George Kswarra	2001- (from Uganda)

### **References**

Smith, Frieda. personal interview. May 2001.

## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

### **MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access available to archives by appointment**

#### **Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

##### **Churches-Episcopal-St. John's and Trinity, 1954, 1 item**

An article from the *Montclair Times* showing a picture of the church's sanctuary.

##### **Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2001**

The collection includes an interview with Elizabeth Yarborough and Gwenda Williams, members of the church.

### **TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH ARCHIVES**

**19 North Willow Street**

**Montclair, NJ**

**Public access available, contact church office**

#### **Trinity Episcopal Church Archives, 1916-2001**

The church has marriage, birth, death and baptism records.

# **BRIGHT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH**

**6 Mission Street  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1921-2001**



**Photo by James Boylan**

**History was edited from a church history supplied by  
Bright Hope Baptist Church**

**Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## HISTORY OF BRIGHT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH

On January 4, 1921, a group of people met at Deacon Arthur Jones's home to establish the Bright Hope Baptist Church. On November 13, 1921, the congregation met for the first time at the Metropolitan Hall on Bloomfield Avenue. The first minister was Rev. Dr. W.W. Waring. The church received recognition as a Baptist Church by the Baptist Minister's Council of New Jersey on July 31, 1923. Church services were held at the Odd Fellows Hall on Walnut Street.

Rev. James A. Jackson served the church from 1926-1938. During his tenure, a building at 63 Mission Street was purchased for the church in about 1927. The congregation bought its current building on Bloomfield Avenue in 1935 and moved it to 6 Mission Street. Rev. Jackson later founded the Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Rev. Jackson was followed by Revs. E. H. Hamlin (1940-1941) and Peter N. Wilkins (1941-1946). During Rev. Wilkins's tenure, the mortgage was burned.

During the leaderships of Rev. Peter N. Wilkins (1941-1946), Rev. Richard Wood (1955-1960), and Rev. William Wheeler (1961-1977) the interiors of the church's sanctuary, auditorium, pastor study, church school and heating plant were renovated and the membership was greatly increased. In addition, the church parsonage at 15 Marston Place was purchased.

The current pastor, Rev. William Woods, came to serve the church in 1978. The church purchased two buildings at 140-144 Bloomfield Avenue and at 8 Mission Street. The building on Bloomfield Avenue is used as an activity center. Additional renovation has been completed.

### LIST OF PASTORS

Rev. W.W. Waring	Rev. James Jackson	September 21, 1921-February 1926
Rev. E. H. Hamlin	Rev. Peter N. Wilkins	April 4, 1926-1938
Rev. Richard Wood	Rev. William Wheeler	1940-1941
Rev. William Woods		April 6, 1941-1954
		April 8, 1955-1960 (assistant minister 1952-1954)
		April 2, 1961-1977
		January 8, 1977-present

**History was edited from:**

### References

"The History of Bright Hope Baptist Church." Unpublished history, n.d.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON BRIGHT  
HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES  
50 South Fullerton Avenue  
Montclair, NJ  
973-744-0500**

**Public access available by appointment**

**Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

**Churches-Baptist-Bright Hope, 1959-1981, 1 folder**

*Montclair Times* articles on Bright Hope Baptist Church include biographical information on Rev. Richard Wood and the unpublished history, "The History of Bright Hope Baptist Church."

# **TRINITY TEMPLE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST**

**115 Greenwood Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1930-2001**



Photo by James Boylan

**History by Elizabeth Shepard,**

**History edited by Bishop Norman Prescott**



## **HISTORY OF THE TRINITY TEMPLE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST**

Trinity Temple Church Of God In Christ grew out of a prayer meeting of a small group of people led by a missionary named Ms. Epps in Caldwell, New Jersey, in 1930. The Overseer of New Jersey, Elder A. L. Reid, appointed Elder John Dargan to be their pastor. The church is a member of The Church Of God In Christ founded in 1897 by Charles Harrison Mason. The Church Of God In Christ has its international headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee.

After Elder Dargan died in 1935, Elder Frederick D. Washington came to Caldwell at the age of 21 to become the new pastor of the church. In 1936, the church was incorporated as the Church Of God In Christ Holy Tabernacle of Caldwell. In 1943, Elder Washington felt that the church could not grow further in the small town of Caldwell. He purchased and converted an old garage at 195 Bloomfield Avenue in Montclair for a new church building. In March 1943, the church changed its name to Trinity Temple Church Of God In Christ. The church's heyday was from 1943 to 1951, when Elder Washington brought in many new members through his broadcast ministry. His outreach ministry included social services and a bookstore. In 1951, Elder Washington left Montclair to establish a new church in Brooklyn called the Washington Temple Church Of God In Christ. This same Elder Washington became a bishop and ultimately became the Second Assistant Presiding Bishop of the Church of God In Christ, Worldwide.

The next minister, Elder Kelmo Porter, Jr., served the church for ten years. During his tenure a new front was erected onto the church and he had many outreach ministries. He left Trinity Temple in 1961, to become the pastor of St. John Baptist Church, Scotch Plains, which he continues to pastor.

After Elder Porter left, Bishop (formerly Elder) Washington was once again asked to be the pastor of the church. In 1963, Bishop Washington sent his Youth Minister, Elder (later Bishop) No1man Prescott, to serve as an preacher at the Montclair church. In 1965, Bishop Washington made Bishop Prescott co-pastor of the church. Bishop Prescott was officially appointed the pastor of the Montclair church in 1967. Under Bishop Prescott's leadership, the church further embellished the church building and parking lot, increased membership and outreach activities. In the 1970s the outreach activities included a day care center at 61 Glenridge Avenue, a food distribution program jointly sponsored with the Montclair Redevelopment Center, and a Thanksgiving Basket Ministry.

Since the church building on Bloomfield Avenue was in the urban renewal area, the church began to look for a new home. In 1983, the church acquired the John Blonde! property on Greenwood Avenue. A garage on the property was sold. A Newark architect firm and O. A. Peterson Contractors renovated another building on the property. In June 1985, the new church at 115 Greenwood Avenue was dedicated. The congregation marched to their new building from the old church on Bloomfield Avenue.

The outreach services developed at the new church in the 1980s included SHARE (Self - Help and Resource Exchange), which provided food baskets in exchange for a specified number of

hours per month of volunteer service in a non-profit organization. Other programs are the VITA program (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) for low-income families, volunteer services for the Essex County Psychiatric Hospital in Cedar Grove, and programs for the home bound. The Christmas Border Babies ministries at Beth Israel and St. Joseph Hospitals help premature babies born to drug addicted or disabled mothers, who, for various reasons, are not able to care for their children; the ministry provides toys, clothing and volunteer services.

The current church has about 200 members with an average weekly attendance of 110-125 people. The congregation is mostly African-American. The church is also the Bishop's seat for the Third Jurisdiction Church Of God In Christ, New Jersey. Bishop Prescott oversees thirty other churches. The national church is the fastest growing African-American church in the world and has 10,000 congregations in 58 countries.

The next project for Trinity Temple Church Of God In Christ is to develop its property at 85 Walnut Street as an auxiliary outreach building. The church hopes to focus on troubled youth who are falling through the cracks by offering job, life, and computer skills that will help them be productive members of today's world.

### **LIST OF MINISTERS**

Elder John Dargan	1930-ca. 1935
Elder Frederick Washington	ca. 1936-1951
Elder Kelmo Porter Jr.	ca. 1951-1961
Elder Frederick Washington	ca. 1963-1967
Bishop Norman Prescott	1963-

### **References**

Prescott, Bishop Norman. Personal interview. November 2000.

# **ST PETER CLAVER CHURCH**

**56 Elmwood Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1931-2001**



**Photo by James Boylan**

**History compiled by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF ST. PETER CLAVER CHURCH**

In 1931, St. Peter Claver Church was founded as the first African-American mission from the African-American Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish in Newark. Other African American missions were established by Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish in Orange, Newark and Elizabeth. Many African-American Catholics did not feel welcome at the other Catholic churches in Montclair in the 1930s. For instance, at the Church of Immaculate Conception, African-Americans had to listen to the Mass via a microphone system in the basement and communion was brought downstairs to them. (William Cannady, oral history interview, 2). Most of the African-American Catholics went to St. Peter Claver Mission. Some of the early members of the church were converts from Protestant churches. Sister Peter Claver and other nuns of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Trinity were instrumental in building this mission. (Milliken, 1999, 13, 17)

Father Ahem was the first priest. The church first started meeting in the basement of the Church of Immaculate Conception in January 14, 1931. On October 1, 1931, the church found new quarters in a house at 51 Elm Street across the street from Martin Funeral Home. The property was owned by St. Mark's United Methodist Church. The mission was dedicated on November 5, 1935. Since the church was unable to purchase the property on Elm Street from St. Mark's United Methodist Church, the church, with outside assistance from the Montclair community, raised money to build the current church on Elmwood Avenue. The new church was dedicated on November 5, 1939, four years after the mission's dedication on Elm Street. The architecture of the church was considered modern at the time. The church became a parish in 1973. (Milliken, 1999, 11, 19)

Catholics of all races worship at the church. Some of the early White members came from as far as Dover and Parsippany to worship at the church. Other early members were from the British West Indies. The church has welcomed other immigrant groups into the parish. For a time a Korean congregation rented the church facilities for their church services. For many years, a large Haitian community has celebrated a Creole Mass on Sundays. Recently, a Spanish Mass has been introduced at the church. The church currently has 500 families. (William Cannady, oral history interview, 3)

The church has many outreach ministries. Many local community groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, meet at the church. The church has an active Youth Group and a Senior 50+ Club. A healing mass is held every Tuesday night. An after school program for children ages 4-6 is available during the school year. The church also has a technology summer camp program. A School/Community Tutorial Program for grades 1-5 also meets at the church. (Nickas, personal interview, 2001)

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

Louis Sturdivant, an original member of the church, has these memories:

We were the original members of St. Peter Claver. We go back right into early childhood. We didn't always have (a) church. We did all our worshiping on Fulton Street and Elm Street.

Right across the street from the Martin Funeral Parlor there was a big house there and before we got to the point of building St. Peter Claver Church we worshiped at that house. That was our church before we built St. Peter Claver. In 1939, we lay the cornerstone to build the church. St. Peter Claver Church is very close to me.

As a young child we used to go there and a lot of the original Catholics at St. Peter Claver Church were from the British Isles. They just talk differently. They were British subjects and their English was entirely different than the way we talked. Over sixty years ago at St. Peter Claver Church, we would have readers that would read different scriptures at different parts of the Mass. One gentleman would do this and another do that. I didn't know it at the time but a lot of people (who) came to church couldn't read. They just never had an education. We had educated people that were reading the scriptures. I suppose it was funny because sometimes we couldn't understand what they were saying because they were British subjects. It was a great idea to have readers. Now they're all doing it. Of course the Mass is in English now. They used to be in Latin. I think it worked out better for everybody. (Louis Sturdivant, oral history interview, 2001, 7-8)

### Works Cited

Cannady, William. Oral history interview. 6 July 2001.

Milliken, Elizabeth. "St. Peter Claver: Race and Catholicism in the Formation of an African-American Parish." *New Jersey History*. 117 (3-4) (Fall/Winter, 1999): 3-27.

Nickas, Father John P. Personal interview. 9 May 2001.

Sturdivant, Louis. Oral history interview. 9 July 2001.

## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON ST. PETER CLAVER CHURCH**

### **MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access to the archives available by appointment**

#### **Roman Catholic Church Collection, Box A19**

##### **St. Peter Claver Church, 1984-2001, 1 folder**

The collection has brochures and a church directory, 2001. Also a copy of the article "St. Peter Claver: Race and Catholicism in the Formation of an African-American Parish." in *New Jersey History*, Fall/Winter 1999, written by Elizabeth Milliken.

#### **Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

##### **Churches-Roman Catholic-St. Peter Claver, 1939-1976, 1 folder**

The file contains articles about the church activities and the dedication of the current building in 1939.

#### **Montclair Photograph Collection**

**St. Peter Claver Church Photographs, 1939-2001, 10 items** Photographs of both interior and exterior views of the current church are included. **Note: Patrons can consult the online Photo Digital Catalog for photographs.**

#### **Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2001**

The collection includes interviews with William Cannady, Leona Smith and Louis Sturdivant.

### **ST. PETER CLAVER CHURCH ARCHIVES**

**56 Elmwood Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**Public access to archives available, contact church office**

#### **St. Peter Claver Church Archives, 1933-1955**

The church has files on the history of the church. They also have Baptismal, Marriage, and First Communion Registries from 1931-1955.

# **CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**175 Glenridge Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1964-2001**



**Photo by James Boylan**

**History by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Howard Johnson, a pioneer minister, founded the Church of Christ, Montclair, in 1964. Howard Johnson attended the Church of Christ in Ercildoun, PA. The members of the Church of Christ in Ercildoun, PA, went on to establish several other congregations on the East Coast. Howard Johnson moved to New Jersey in 1935. There was no branch of the Church of Christ serving African-Americans. Howard Johnson and four other members founded the Newark Church of Christ in 1935. This church has now grown to 500 members. In 1951, Howard Johnson was called to the Harlem Church of Christ, where he served for 13 years.

In 1965, Evangelist Johnson and four other members founded the Church of Christ in Montclair. The members originally worshiped at the Neighborhood Center on Maple Avenue. Later they rented and eventually bought the old Salvation Army building at 175 Glenridge Avenue, which was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Kozma. The building has been renovated over the years with new carpets, pews, baptismal pool, and furnace added. Today the membership is 125 people, mostly from Montclair but a few from East Orange, Irvington, Union City, Belleville and Bloomfield.

The church is non-denominational. The members use the New Testament Bible primarily as their guide. The mission of the church is to share the life of Christ with others. Each church is autonomous and led by its own set of elders and ministers. Members must meet five prerequisites in order to be added to the church:

1. Hear the word of God
2. Believe it
3. Repentance of sins
4. Confess Jesus is the Son of God
5. Remission of Sins through Baptism

The Church of Christ is strongest in the South, especially in Tennessee and Texas. There are several churches on the East Coast from Florida to Massachusetts.

The church in Montclair is involved in the community. The members have Clothes Give Aways in the spring and fall, which includes a free luncheon. They offer free Bible classes for all ages and have evening fellowship events for youth, which are open to the community. The last week of June, the church hosts a vacation Bible school, for pre-k children up to adults, that is open to the community. The church sponsors a missionary in Italy.

### **References**

Johnson, Ernestine (wife of Evangelist Howard Johnson). Personal interview.  
5 March 2001.



# **MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS**

**1883-2001**



**History by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION**

Organizations founded by or for African-Americans have played an integral role in the Montclair African-American community throughout the twentieth century.

Two important early African-American organizations were the African-American Washington Street Branch YMCA, founded in 1903, and the African-American YWCA, founded in 1912. The YWCA was the first YWCA charter given to African-American women in the United States. The two Ys were the social hub of the African-American community, providing recreational and social programs for adults and youth. They were the "second homes" for the youth who could congregate with their peers at various activities. Both organizations were integrated in the late 1950s.

Other social organizations from the first half of the twentieth century included various sporting groups, namely tennis, hunting, fishing and gun clubs. The local churches, such as St. Paul Baptist Church, which had raccoon and hunting clubs, sponsored some of these clubs. Other clubs included the Tribune Tennis Club and the Pastime Rod and Gun Club. Another social group active in the second half of the twentieth century was the Washington Carver Hobby Club, started around 1955.

African-American secret societies also have early roots in Montclair. The African American Eureka and Jephtha Lodges both started about 1926 and still meet today at the Odd Fellows Hall at 121 Walnut Street. The African-American Odd Fellows-Mendelton Lodge was listed at the Walnut Street location as early as 1883 in the Montclair city directories. The Elks also had two African-American branches in Montclair: Phyllis Wheatley Lodge for women and Henry Garnet Lodge for men. Neither of these lodges was listed in the city directories so founding dates could not be determined.

Civil rights and activist organizations began in Montclair with the creation of the Montclair Branch of the NAACP, started in 1916 by Rev. Handy of St. Mark's United Methodist Church. This branch, founded seven years after the national organization, is the second oldest in New Jersey. The NAACP played an integral role in the movement to desegregate businesses, housing, schools and hospitals in Montclair and is still active in promoting civil rights of African-Americans in Montclair. In the 1940s, when the civil rights movement was beginning nationwide, the Montclair Civil Rights Commission was founded in Montclair. The original Commission initiated two Civil Rights audits in Montclair, the first in 1947 and the second in 1964. After disbanding for several years in the 1970s, the Commission was renewed in 1992 and now plays an active role in promoting civil rights and racial interrelations issues in Montclair. In 1997, the Montclair Civil Rights Coalition broke away from the Civil Rights Commission and also works to promote civil rights and racial interrelations issues in Montclair.

Two other organizations interested in social change are the Peoples' Organization for Progress/Montclair Chapter and the Million Man Montclair. Lawrence Hamm founded the Peoples' Organization for Progress in Newark in 1981 and the organization's

constitution was adopted in 1983. Montclair residents formed the first branch of the organization. The organization's website states that their main goal is the "elimination of all forms of racial, social and economic inequality and injustice." In recent years, they have demonstrated against police brutality and racial violence. In addition, they are working to end the practice of racial profiling by the New Jersey State Troopers. Other issues they have addressed include equal funding of urban public schools, anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, voting rights, quality education, affordable housing and civil rights.

The Million Man Montclair organization started as the Million Man March, a rally and prayer meeting organized by the Nation of Islam leader, Louis Farrakhan, on October 16, 1995. The March was organized to empower African-American men self-reliance and responsibility for their families and communities. The March also included a massive African-American voter registration drive and a call for establishing a national platform of action for the African-American community. (Farrakhan, 1995)

Many social agencies in Montclair have played a role in the African-American community. Not all of these groups were founded by African-Americans but still have had an important impact on the community. One early group was the Neighborhood Center on Maple Avenue. It was founded by the Montclair Junior League in 1926. The Neighborhood Center has served the African-American and Italian-American communities who lived in the South End neighborhood. Throughout the years, the center offered day care, social services and social activities for this community.

Another non-profit community-based social service organization, founded in 1969 and incorporated in 1970, was the Montclair Neighborhood Development Corporation at 228 Bloomfield Avenue. According to their website, the organization offers adult education, crisis prevention, supportive services and youth development programs. Project Oasis, sponsored by the Montclair Neighborhood Development Corporation, assists Montclair teenagers ages 13-18 in the areas of education, recreation and cultural awareness, and also serves as a bridge between teenagers, senior citizens, and the Montclair Police Department.

African-Americans also established neighborhood and business associations in the Fourth Ward. Active neighborhood associations have included the Madison Neighborhood Association and the South End Business Association.

Clubs for African-American men also formed in the first half of the twentieth century. One group was the Nor Jer Men (North Jersey Men's Club). Started in 1947, the group promotes male camaraderie and holds charitable fundraisers. American Legion Crawford Crews Post 251, chartered in 1934, was named in honor of four Montclair African-Americans who gallantly served and died in World II. The group has many veterans who fought in World War II, including those who served in the famed Tuskegee Airmen and those who survived the Port Chicago Explosion in California. Women veterans also can join, and there is an active auxiliary group for spouses. Another men's group is the 21 Club.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of several women's clubs. Some of these groups are the National Council of Negro Women-Montclair Chapter, founded in 1954; the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women; the Essex League of Volunteers, founded in 1964; the 12 Plus Club, founded in 1964; Jack n Jill, Girlfriends and Smart Set. The Women's Community Circle started in 1969 at 33 Woodlawn Avenue. Several sororities, including the Delta Sigma Theta (founded in 1962) and Alpha Kappa Alpha, also have chapters in Montclair. Another club, called the Townswomen, was a history group of Montclair natives that met in the 1950s.

There are also numerous day care facilities for African-American children. The Hollow Day Care Center/Kennedy Human Relations Project was started in 1960 as a youth mentor program by Mrs. L. M. Connor. It is now a low-income day care center. The Montclair Grassroots, Inc., founded in 1969, was established to provide a summer camp program for children in Montclair. Montclair Grassroots, which promotes cooperation between several agencies in Montclair, now has programs for seniors as well. The Montclair Day Nursery and Head Start (Montclair Child Development) also serve the African-American community.

Other, more contemporary, organizations include Montclair Concerned African American Parents; GIFT, an interracial couples group; and the Fourth Ward Action Task Force.

Fourteen organizations have participated in this project and are featured in this section. Also included in this section is a history of the desegregation of the Montclair public schools in the 1960s and 1970s.

### References

Connor, L.M. *A Lillie Blooms: 'Mud Between My Toes.'* Richmond, VA : NorthLight Publishing, c2000.

Farrakhan, Louis. "Second Opinion". Internet.  
[http://users.aol.com/camikem/eyeview/Million\\_man.html](http://users.aol.com/camikem/eyeview/Million_man.html)

Montclair City Directories Collection. 1871-1971. Montclair Public Library.

Montclair Neighborhood Development Corporation. Internet.  
<http://www.montclairteam.org>

People's Organization for Progress. Internet. <http://www.nipop.org>.

# **WASHINGTON STREET BRANCH, YMCA**

## **1903-1957**



**Photo by George French**

**History was prepared by Thomas Boyton, CEO, Montclair YMCA  
Reprinted from Montclair YMCA 1891-1991 Centennial Celebration,  
published by the Montclair YMCA, 1991**

**Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

# **HISTORY OF THE WASHINGTON STREET BRANCH OF YMCA**

## **FOUNDING OF THE COLORED BRANCH**

In 1853, two years following the YMCA movement taking place in North America, Anthony Bowen, a Black employed as a clerk in the U.S. Patent Office in Washington DC, and a group of his friends organized the YMCA for Colored Men and Boys. This was the first YMCA established for Blacks anywhere in the world. The Anthony Bowen Branch YMCA located at 1816 Twelfth Street, NW, is still active and provides relevant community service in the City of Washington. The founders and leaders of this historical monument provided a classic example of self-help. The founding occurred more than ten years before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln.

### **The Founders**

The founders and organizers of YMCA services to Black people in the Town of Montclair were stout-hearted men and women of vision who struggled during the early years to make possible a dream that one day the boys and girls, men and women would have the opportunity to develop to their highest potential. These Christian men and women not only had faith in the ultimate success of their purpose, but labored under very difficult conditions in the pursuit of their objective, the development of character spiritually, mentally and physically. They believed in God and their fellow man.

Preliminary plans for a Colored Branch in the Town of Montclair were discussed at a YMCA Board of Directors meeting on April 17, 1903. The following February, 27 Black men rented, for \$10 a month, a small room at 381 Bloomfield Avenue, in the Old Rink (Skating) Building near the corner of North Willow Street and began holding Sunday Bible classes, which soon expanded to Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings as well.

The "Rink" was destroyed by fire, and the classes moved to a new location over the old Harrison Market on Bloomfield Avenue opposite Park Street, where South Park Street is located today. On February 20, 1905, authority was granted by the YMCA Board of Directors for the organizing of a Colored Branch in the Town of Montclair. In April, W.

F. DeBardelaben was hired as the first full-time executive director of the new branch.

He was succeeded three years later by Walter Foster, under whose guidance the first boys' work program began, using the St. Luke's Church gymnasium for activities. By the time Charles H. Bullock became executive director in 1916, the Branch was located at the corner of Bloomfield Avenue and Maple Place. On January 18, 1924, a proposal was submitted to the YMCA Board to erect a Colored Branch building.

On October 8, 1925, a site on Washington Street, which was owned by the First Methodist Church in Montclair, was approved for the new building. The site, which had been used as a cemetery, was purchased for \$8,000. The relocation of bodies to Mt. Hebron Cemetery cost another \$3,000. In 1926, a contract was signed with the Architectural Bureau of the National Council YMCA. James McCutchen and Company



was hired as the builder. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new building were held in St. Mark's United Methodist Church on Sunday, December 5, 1926. Dyer Hardware Company donated the spade used for the groundbreaking. On Sunday, March 13, 1927, a big mass meeting to raise additional funds for the new building was held at St. Mark's United Methodist Church.

The Cornerstone-laying ceremony was held on April 10, 1927. The principal speaker was Channing H. Tobias, Senior Director for Colored Work, National Council YMCA, New York City. The Washington Street Branch, a \$164,000 building was made possible through the generosity of local citizens, and especially with the aid of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which contributed \$25,000. In 1948, the Washington Street building was rehabilitated at a cost of \$35,287. A total of \$11,287 was spent on the locker rooms, showers, pool and gymnasium and \$24,000 on modernizing clubrooms. The Kresge Foundation contribution was a primary factor in securing funds for the implementation of this modernization project.

The Washington Street Branch was one of the few complete buildings for "colored" youth in the state and served as a model and inspiration for other communities.

In 1903 the Branch met in a room then moved to a store. When they moved into 39 Washington Street it was reported, "This is a splendid edifice, dedicated to youth and to the building of a strong Christian society." It has grown from a chartered membership of 106 young men to the present day 16,000 young boys and girls.

### **Women's Auxiliary**

The Colored Women's Auxiliary was organized in 1905. Mrs. H. Spence Bell, wife of the Chairman of the Committee of Management, was president from 1935 to 1959. Mrs. Virginia Mitchell, a dynamic leader and "Friend of Youth" assumed the presidency in 1959 and served until her death on March 29, 1974. Mrs. Addie Morris, wife of Hugh Morris, who was chairman of the Branch Committee of Management from 1950 through 1957, was the current president.

### **A Forum for Outstanding Leaders**

Among the national and internationally known leaders who have appeared as guest speakers in behalf of YMCA worked with the Black men and boys in the Town of Montclair have been Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute; Dr. Channing H. Tobias, Senior Director for Colored Work, National Council YMCA; Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson, president Howard University; Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president, Morehouse College; Judge William H. Hastie; Jackie Robinson, first Black to play baseball in the major leagues, and Dave Howell, general secretary, YMCA to Liberia, Africa.

### **Chairmen, Committee of Management**

1905	Rev. John H. Blake	1950	Hugh Morris
1917	Edward Winslow	1958	Burnwell B. Banks
1920	Frank B. Wilson	1963	Samuel T. Allen Sr.
1940	H. Spence Bell	1965	Samuel H. Smith
1947	Dorland Henderson	1965	Delbert H. Banks

### **Reorganization and merger with Park Street**

In November 1959, the Committee of Management of the Washington Street Branch, voted to integrate the Washington Street Branch in all phases of activity and programming. It voted for the integration of staff on all levels, programs and camp activities as well as participation on the Board and committees of the Montclair YMCA. It also voted to have all women's and girl's swim classes held at the Park Street facility until adequate space was provided at Washington Street.

Assisting in the merger and reorganization were personnel from the National Council and the Central Atlantic Area Council. On January 28, 1964 the reorganization became official.

The transition went smoothly. Preliminary planning by the Boards and several committees facilitated the reorganization of the Washington Street building to fit the new concepts of the programs to be offered.

The swimming pool was filled in to provide one depth for beginners' swimming instruction. New lighting and acoustical ceiling completed the renovation. New lighting in the gym and painting upgraded this facility for all physical activities. The boys' and mens' locker rooms were doubled in size.

### **The history was prepared by:**

Boyton, Thomas. *Montclair YMCA 1891-1991 Centennial Celebration*. Montclair: Montclair YMCA, 1991.

It was reprinted in this publication with permission from Thomas Boyton, CEO of Montclair YMCA.



## **EXCERPTS OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW W/ JOHN PRICE**

John Price reminisces about basketball and other YMCA activities:

And that's when I moved to Elm Street. [From] our backyard you could see where we were building over the cemetery where the YMCA was being built. I used to go over there and we'd play around. We see them when they were digging up the graves and the babies and putting them in sacks and taking them away. [I] saw them when they built the foundation, saw them when they built the pool, and saw when they finished the YMCA. And that was years ago and when the Y was built my grandmother took us to the Y for the opening ceremony and we sat in the gymnasium with chairs and I asked to join the Y so she let us join the Y. (John Price, oral history interview, 2001, 2)

When I went to the Y, I started a basketball team when we were juniors. It was named the Sandy Boys. [Sandy Boy came from when he had Sandy hair] Then after that years later, we were growing, getting to be fifteen, sixteen years old I started another club, Athico 's and I made it a co-ed club and she [his wife] belonged to the Athico's basketball team. And we played basketball for the Y. On Friday night we had the basketball game. After the basketball game we're dancing and we charged admission to get in. A couple of times we played basketball and gave the door receipts to the Y to put coal in the Y. (John Price, oral history interview, 2001, 5)

...I was old enough to be on the Y Big Five, that was the big team and we used to play all over, and played Bordentown. And West Point used to come down and play basketball at the Y and we had good times. The girls used to admire the West Pointers with their uniforms. Yeah we played other YMCA teams. We played Bordentown, we played Hackensack, we played Paterson, we played Passaic, we played Orange and East Orange, and we went to Atlantic City [Y] one year and played basketball. And we went to Connecticut one year and played [a] basketball tournament up there. We won the games. We couldn't go to the YMCA on Park Street. We couldn't even get in the front door of the YMCA but the YMCA from Park Street used to come down to us and play us but we couldn't go play them. And then we played Immaculate Conception and they came down to us and we couldn't go up to them. Well it was a very segregated town in Montclair. (John Price, oral history interview, 2001, 6-7)

We had swimming teams. I was a lifeguard. We had boxing. I was a boxer and we learned the art of Fisticuffs. We had, Tiger Williams and Han-y Wallace used to coach, a trainer for us. Then we had wrestling team and we had a volleyball team. We'd go swimming every practice night we used to go swimming, except Thursday night. Thursday nights were open for the girls, the women came. (John Price, oral history interview, 2001, 8)

And then the Y, in the summertime used to have movies at Glenfield Park every Thursday evening through the summer. Well on the side of the building they used to hang a screen there. (John Price, oral history interview, 2001, 8)

Then they had baseball games on Glenfield Park and baseball games on Sunday at Nishuane Park. We used to play up at Upper Montclair on Mount Hebron Road where the tennis courts are. We used to play baseball behind the Baldwin Street School. (John Price, oral history interview, 2001, 8-9)

And at the Y we used to have father and son nights. We used to have wild game nights where the hunters used to go and bring their wild food in. (John Price, oral history interview, 2001, 10)

### **Works Cited**

Price, John. Oral history interview. April 2001.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
THE WASHINGTON STREET YMCA**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ 07042**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access to the archives available by appointment**

**YMCA Collection, 1903-2001, 1 folder**

The collection includes brochures and programs on the Washington Street YMCA.

**Archival Box A31**

**Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

**Clubs-YMCA-Washington Street Branch, 1930-1978, 1 folder**

The file includes articles from the *Montclair Times* on the branch activities.

**Montclair Photograph Collection**

**YMCA Photographs, ca. 1930-2001, 3 items**

The collection includes photographs of the Washington Street YMCA Branch.

**Note: Patrons should consult the online Photo Digital Catalog for photographs.**

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001**

The collection includes interviews with members of the YMCA: John Sterling, John and Alice Price, William Cannady, Aubrey Lewis and Orene Shelton

**Washington Street YMCA Homecoming, February 10, 2001,  
videorecording and audiotape.**

Tape of a program held at the Montclair Public Library on February 10, 2001 honoring Charles Bullock Sr. and the many alumni of this YMCA program. Tape includes reminiscences of alumni, and histories of the Washington Street YMCA and its founder, Charles Bullock Sr. Mock-ups for the program booklet are in the YMCA collection.

**Book:**

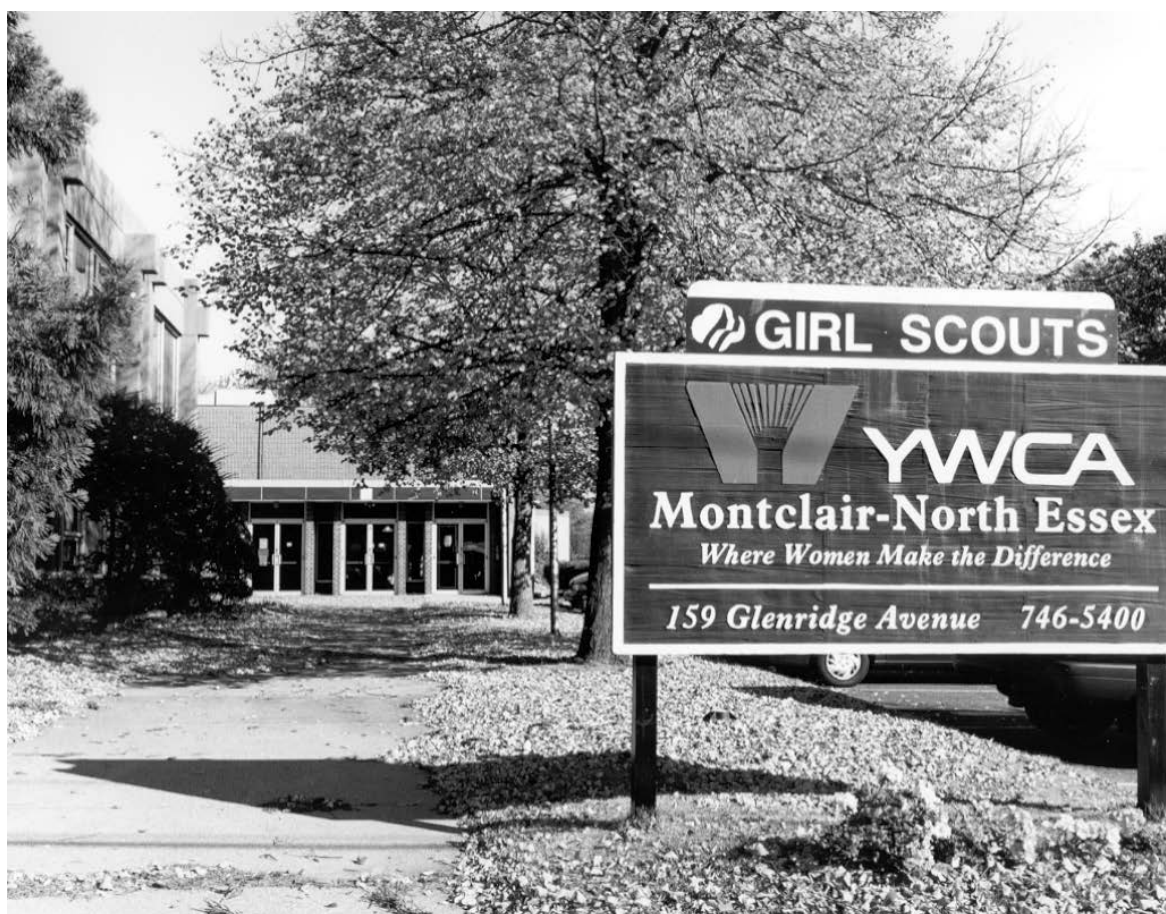
Henderson, Jean *Linking the Branches of the Bullock Family Tree to Our  
Charlottesville Roots*, 2000. (Genealogy of Charles Bullock Family)

**Call No.: Local History 929.1 Hen**

# **YWCA OF MONTCLAIR-NORTH ESSEX**

**159 Glenridge Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1912-2001**



**Photo by James Boylan**

**History by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## YWCA OF MONTCLAIR-NORTH ESSEX

In 1912, the YWCA of Montclair-North Essex became the first YWCA in the United States to be chartered by a group of African-American women. Interest in starting an African-American YWCA started after a group of women attended a talk on civic duty by Bishop Lloyd at St.

Luke's Episcopal Church. The first meeting to consider the project occurred on March 14, 1912, when interested prospective members met with national YWCA representatives in the home of Alice Foster. The organization was started by both White and African-American women and had two separate boards. The advisory board was made up of twenty-one White women and the Board of Management was made up of eighteen African-American women. For the first eight years, the YWCA was located at 89 Forest Street. In 1920, the YWCA moved into the old Crane Homestead on Glenridge Avenue. An addition was added onto the Crane House in 1926 which held a gym with a seating capacity of 600 people. The YWCA also had a playground and tennis courts.

In the early twentieth century the YWCA, along with the Washington Street YMCA, was a social gathering center for the African-American community. Through the first half of the 20th century, many African-American women lived at the YWCA. Others stored belongings there when they first came to Montclair or attended the NJ State Normal School. The Girl Reserve Program had social activities for girls ages 12-18. The YWCA was a popular hangout for teenagers and young adults who would attend dances, afternoon teas, receptions, parties and other social events.

The Crane House building served as the YWCA until the current building was erected in 1968. In 1965, the Crane Homestead was moved to its present location on Orange Road, where it is now the Montclair Historical Society. The YWCA's new building had an air conditioned gym, art studio, kitchen, dance studio, crafts room and nursery. A swimming pool was planned, but funding was not available to build it.

Steps toward integration began as early as 1931, when African-Americans could attend the advisory board meetings. In 1932, the organization constitution omitted the phrase "colored women and girls." In 1944, the two boards started having joint meetings, and expressed a desire to become an integrated YWCA. In 1957, the first non African-American staff member was hired.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the YWCA focused on providing child daycare and senior citizens programs. In 2001, the YWCA suffered some financial setbacks making it necessary to suspend their programs. In 2003, the facility on Glenridge Avenue was sold to a local developer; the proceeds will be used to provide modest grants to other nonprofit organizations; the focus will be "the economic empowerment of women and girls."

## EXCERPTS FROM ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Hortense Tate, 102 at the time of her interview in 2000, was the Girl Reserves Secretary at the YWCA and is still remembered fondly by the women who went to the Y. These are some of her memories:

I lived in the YW. At that time it was on Glenridge Avenue and I lived right in the building where I worked. And I would get up at seven o'clock. I'll tell you the changes. For instance, I can remember the little children from Glenfield School would go from there to a school up the corner. And anything that happened in Montclair, they would call the YW. Not the YM because the YM had the setup with Whites and Blacks. And they would call up and I can remember truthfully going out at seven in the morning to see who of my girls were making noise. And I went out back and was standing outside... [recites]"We are YWCA girls, the girl reserves are high-minded, bless my soul, they're double-jointed, they work hard and don't mind it, all day long." And all those things I'd do with them. And that whole area now, no one thinks a thing about it. And the changes that have come are better changes. I'm very well known in Montclair for the kind of things I tried to do in my young days.

I had never been in a YWCA before I came to Montclair. Because it had a sign on one side that said "For colored girls and women." Isn't that awful? And now I'd tear a sign like that down myself and raise a dickens. It shows a difference in times. (Hortense Tate, oral history interview, 2000, 2-3)

Louise Dunbar, an early resident, has these memories about the YWCA:

The YWCA, it was the Crane House that was the building; it was the actual YWCA. And they had a building in the back that was the gym. And that was another hub for African-American girls. A lot of girls came here from the south or from other places and they stayed there; they had a room there. And then they worked in the area. But those of us who were members or the kids that went there, we would go there and they would do little songs and you would learn how to do crafts and you played in the gym and it was a social world for young girls. It was a good thing. And Louise Wesley took me there when I was eight years old; that was my first experience there. That was when we moved back to Charles Street and she was a teenager at that time. And then even after I was grown and married we still had clubs in our age group. We had a group called the Matroni: May Dorsey, Matty Clemens, Edith Wesley, Alfie Brown, Frances Harvey, another girl named Frances Hampton. I think that's the only ones we had. And we used to meet on Tuesday nights and we'd play basketball; the mothers played basketball, the young marrieds. (Louise Dunbar, oral history interview, 2000, 13)

Orene Shelton, another early resident, also remembers the YWCA:

I don't remember a time when I didn't go to the YWCA. My mother was active in the YWCA; my father was active in the YMCA. The Y was a part of my life all of my life. I can't remember at what age I went to Camp Ironsides for the summer (that was a YWCA camp). I met girls there who years later, (they came there from all over) I bumped into and we remembered that we had known each other from Ironsides, Old Ironsides. During my junior high and high school years, most of our social life was at the YWCA. We didn't have many places to go except to church and to the Y. We had all kinds of activities at the YWCA. We'd leave school and go directly to the Y and stay there until dinnertime. It was like a second home. We had parties and dances, and Mrs. Tate was like a second mother to us. She taught us many things. She encouraged all of us to further our education. She used to call us young ladies, and she expected us to live up to all that title implied. We had great fun. We had dances, parties, picnics and conferences. There was something going on at either the YW or the YMCA. We had a good upbringing and a fun upbringing. (Orene Shelton, oral history interview, 2001, 2-3)

### **References**

Dunbar, Louise. Oral history interview. 24 November 2000

Shelton, Orene. Oral history interview. 17 January 2001.

Tate, Hortense. Oral history interview. 24 November 2000.

YWCA of Montclair-North Essex Collection. Local History Archives, Montclair Public Library.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
YWCA OF MONTCLAIR-NORTH ESSEX**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access available by appointment**

**YWCA of Montclair-North Essex Collection, Box A32**

The collection has annual reports (1944-1962), brochures (1958-1978), programs (1945-1967) and the newsletter, "YWCA Montclair-North Essex" (Fall 1995).

**Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

**Clubs-YWCA, 1930-1971, 1 folder**

The vertical files have clippings from the *Montclair Times* about the YWCA activities.

**Montclair Public Library Photograph Collection**

**YWCA Photographs, 1930s-2001, 14 items**

Photographs of the Crane House when it served as the YWCA and group portraits of board members are included.

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001.**

Oral histories of YMCA members included Louise Dunbar, Orene Shelton, Hortenese Tate, Mrs. L. M. Connor, Fannie Lewis, John and Alice Price, Louise Ford, and Sandra Lang. The collection includes two videotapes of two "African-American History Day" programs held on in October 1999 and May 2001 where the YWCA was discussed.

**YWCA of Montclair-North Essex Collection, 1871-2003 (bulk: 1968-1999)**

An extensive archive of the YWCA's long history. The collection includes newspaper clippings, programs, brochures, photographs and other miscellaneous material.



**MONTCLAIR BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT  
OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP)**

**1916-2001**

**History written by Kenneth French**

**Revised by Elizabeth Shepard**

**Historical Resources written by Kenneth French and Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF THE MONTCLAIR BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE**

The Montclair Branch of the NAACP can trace its beginnings to 1916, only seven years after the national organization was founded. As such it was among the earliest local groups to examine civil rights issues. The Montclair Branch is the second oldest Branch in New Jersey (after The Oranges/Maplewood Branch) and is currently one of 37 branches in New Jersey. There are more than 2,200 branches worldwide.

The national organization was founded in 1909, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth, by a group of African-American and White citizens committed to social justice. According to the NAACP's website, the principal objective of the NAACP is "to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of minority group citizens of the United States and to eliminate racial prejudice." The emphasis of the NAACP is to end discrimination through legal action. Initially, the organization fought legal battles to gain the full rights of citizenship for African-Americans and to end segregation.

In 1916, the first president of the Montclair Branch was Rev. Frederick Handy, minister of St. Mark's United Methodist Church. In the 1910s, the Branch hosted NAACP leaders such as James Weldon Johnson. In the late 1920s, the Branch focused on promoting the appointments of African-American policemen to the Montclair Police Department and fought against segregation practices in the Montclair public schools. (*Historical Highlights of Montclair Branch NAACP*, 1)

In the 1940s and 1950s, the NAACP Montclair Branch membership increased under the leadership of Octavia Catlett. During this time, the Branch led the fight against segregation and discrimination in the schools, local theaters, restaurants and the Montclair Skating Rink. They assisted Drs. Frederick Douglas and Arthur Thornhill in their efforts to integrate the Mountainside, St. Vincent's and Montclair Community Hospitals. (*Historical Highlights of Montclair Branch NAACP*, 2)

In Montclair, the local Branch has also supported the election of African-Americans to positions in local government, assisted in the revision of the town's government structure, and has been involved in efforts to improve senior housing, health services, and voter registration.

In the 1960s the local Branch focused on the desegregation of the Montclair public school system. The Montclair Branch led a three-day boycott of the school system to call attention to segregation. Later in the decade, the Montclair Branch brought a lawsuit against the Board of Education that began the process leading to the eventual desegregation of the system. Today, the Montclair Branch continues to monitor the educational system and involves itself with the Board of Education, PTA, and other organizations affecting local education. Also, members have helped develop African American history programs at Montclair High School. ("Montclair Branch History," 2000, 1)

In August 1963, the Montclair Branch rented a train car and, along with other NAACP members from Newark and the Oranges, traveled to Washington, D.C., to participate in the March on Washington. The March was an NAACP-sponsored event, despite the historical emphasis on Martin Luther King Jr.'s role.

The Montclair Branch later organized a march against Kresge's department store (then on Bloomfield Avenue at the current location of CVS), protesting Kresge's policy of segregated lunch counters in the South.

The Montclair Branch was also instrumental in keeping the peace in Montclair during the 1967 riots in Newark and was involved in efforts at desegregating housing in Montclair.

Today the Montclair Branch has about 300 members and sponsors many programs. There is a scholarship program recognizing achievements by students at different grade levels. There is an active Youth Council of between 25 and 150 young people. The Youth Council holds regular forums to encourage young people to speak out about concerns and problems facing them and to try to develop resolutions. The Youth Council also sponsors an S.A.T. preparation workshop for high school students.

The Montclair Branch also holds an annual program for seniors, where awards are given to outstanding seniors. Another annual fundraiser event includes the Thurgood Marshall Freedom Fund Dinner and Awards Ceremony. According to NAACP rules, half of moneys raised locally must go to the national organization. The Branch also helps to organize the African-American Heritage Parade and Festival.

The Montclair Branch holds monthly meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month (except November and December, when they are held on the third Thursday) at 7:30 P.M. at St. Mark's United Methodist Church. The Montclair Branch has committees on Education, Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. The current president is James Harris, a dean at Montclair State University, who has been a member since 1976 and also served as president in the 1980s. According to Mr. Harris, the NAACP deals with issues that have more of a sense of urgency than the Montclair Civil Rights Commission. One of the issues the Montclair Branch is currently addressing is the percentage of African Americans given positions or promotions in the Montclair police and fire departments. It is the NAACP's position that both departments be more reflective of the population, since one-third of New Jersey's African-American population lives in Essex County. (Harris, personal interview, 2001)

## Works Cited

Harris, James. personal interview. January 2001.

*Historical Highlights of the Montclair Branch NAACP.*

(history found in NAACP Collection with no source information).

"Montclair Branch History," 29 October 2000. *The Montclair Branch NAACP*

*Celebrates its 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Thurgood Marshall Freedom Fund Dinner and Awards Ceremony.* Montclair: Montclair Branch NAACP.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Internet. [www.naACP.org](http://www.naACP.org)

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
THE MONTCLAIR BRANCH OF THE NAACP**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES  
50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ  
973-744-0500**

**Public access to archives available by appointment**

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**NAACP Collection, 1924-2000, 1 folder**

The collection includes Branch histories, clippings of NAACP activities against the film "Birth of a Nation", KKK activities and school segregation in Montclair.

**Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

**Civil Rights, 1960s, 1 folder**

The Civil Rights folder has articles and papers relating to the Montclair Branch of the NAACP.

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001**

The collection includes interviews with members Daisy Douglas, Louise Dunbar, and Mrs. L. M. Connor.

**MONTCLAIR BRANCH OF THE NAACP**

**Private archives, contact NAACP's office regarding their collection**

**Montclair Branch of the NAACP**

Current branch president James Harris maintains a file of information on current and recent information relating to the Branch in his office at Montclair State University.

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
MANUSCRIPT DIVISION  
Room LM101 James Madison Building  
101 Independence Avenue  
Washington DC 20540**

**For public access to archives, contact the Library Congress**

**NAACP Papers, 1909-2001**

The Library of Congress has a collection of two million items from the NAACP's

national headquarters and Washington Bureau. The collection includes branch files that contain information about Montclair Branch and other local branches.

## **INTERNET SITES:**

The national website for the NAACP is <http://www.naacp.org>. This site has information on the organization on a national level. It also has information on the branches. The link "Our NAACP PAST and Your Future" gives a history of the national organization.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON NAACP AT THE MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY

### ARTICLES:

These are a few of the many articles about the Montclair Branch of the NAACP that have been in the *Montclair Times* through the years. See the Montclair Indexes for additional articles.

"Integration at All Levels Asked. NAACP Picket Line Starts Drive for Goal, More Action Planned." *Montclair Times*. Vol. LXXXIX No. 15  
(April, 14, 1966), pp. 1, 7.

"Twenty Four Parents Ask Full Integration. NAACP Reports Petition with State School Board to Reply by May 6<sup>th</sup>." *Montclair Times*. Vol. LXXXIX No. 16  
(April 21, 1966), pp. 1, 12.

"Segregation Hearing Set for May 26<sup>th</sup>." *Montclair Times*. Vol. LXXXIX No. 19 (May 12, 1966), pp. 1, 7.

"NAACP to Observe 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary." *Montclair Times*. Vol. XC No. 3.

### BOOKS

These general resources on the national organization are available at the Montclair Public Library.

Greeneberg, Jack. *Crusaders in the Courts*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.  
**342.73**

Han-is, Jacqueline. *History and Achievement of the NAACP*. New York:  
Franklin Watts, 1992. **973.049073**

Kellogg, Charles. *NAACP: A History of the National Association for the  
Advancement of Colored People Vol 1*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins  
University, 1967. **301.45**

Ross, Barbara. *J.E. Spingarn and the Rise of the NAACP 1911-1939*.  
New York: Athenaeum, 1972. **301.4519**

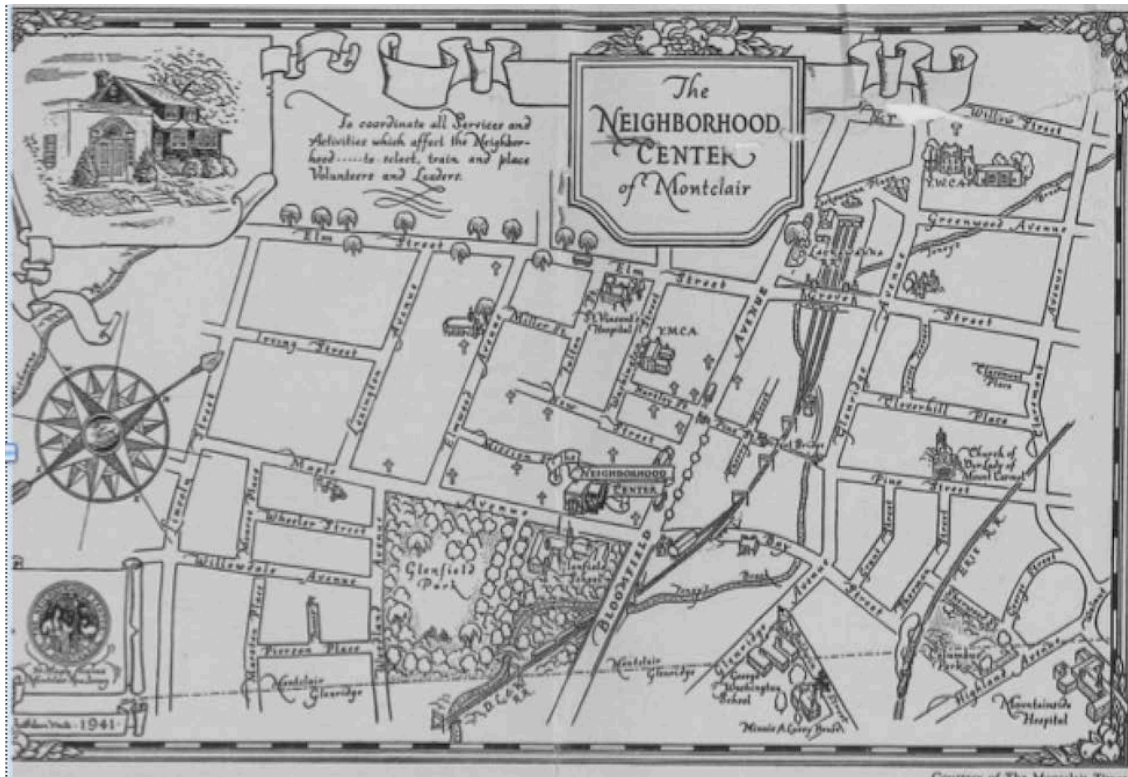
Zangrando, Robert. *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching 1909-1950*.  
Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980. **364.66**



# NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

30 Maple Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey

1926-2001



History compiled by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard

## HISTORY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

The Neighborhood Center was founded in 1926 by the Montclair Junior League and called the Montclair Junior League Community House. The first community house rented space containing a library, nursery school and clubrooms in a house across the street from Glenfield School. In 1929, the League purchased another house and lot across from Glenfield School. An addition, containing an auditorium for seating two hundred people, was added to the house. (*Neighborhood Center Annual Report*, 2000, 1)

The Montclair Council of Social Agencies, made up of nineteen agencies, took over the building in February 1940. The League still owned the property.

The Neighborhood Council was originally formed in 1940 as an advisory group for the center activities; however, five years later the Center and Council became one organization headed by an Executive Committee. The Neighborhood Council received funding from the WPA, Junior League and Community Chest from 1935-1948. In November 1953, the Neighborhood Council bought the property from the Junior League. (*Neighborhood Center Annual Report*, 2000, 1)

Later, another addition was added to the building by annexing 28 Maple Avenue. This house was similar to the one already owned by the Neighborhood Council. The two houses were connected and a stairway addition added. Other interior changes were made. In order to make more space for the day care programs, the auditorium was divided into a large room, two smaller rooms, and a kitchen. New heating and air conditioning systems were added. Fire doors and other changes were made to meet federal code regulations for day care facilities. (Anna Coleman, personal interview, 2001)

Although the Neighborhood Center was not founded by African-Americans, it has served the African-American community throughout its history. Originally both the Italian American and African-American communities who lived in the Maple Avenue area used the Neighborhood Center. In the 1940s, the Neighborhood Center was busy with activities for all members of the South Central area. Activities included lectures, plays, dances and other social events in the auditorium. There were classes on a variety of topics, including English lessons for the Italian immigrants, sewing and tap dancing.

There were four Girl Scout Troops, one Brownie Troop, five Boy Scout Troops, four Hi Y Groups and an African-American girls group called Sub-Debs that met at the center. The Neighborhood Center Athletic Council provided sporting activities for boys aged 16 and over. The Neighborhood Center worked with Glenfield Park, Glenfield School and George Washington School in funding summer activities and day camps for children.

Parent Discussion Groups met there to discuss issues related to the schools. The Neighborhood Center worked with the Montclair Public Library and Montclair Motion Pictures Council in presenting film documentaries.

The core of the Neighborhood Center programs has been childcare. The Junior League sponsored a childcare program, and later in the 1930s the Works Project Administration (WPA) ran the childcare center. The Child Care Committee of the Montclair Council of Social Services took over operating the childcare center in the 1940s.

Today the community center houses the Neighborhood Child Care Center, Inc., which is an independent and subsidized childcare program. The organization received state and federal funding through the Division of Family Services. The Neighborhood Child Care Inc. Program for children 18 months-8 years offers a variety of classes and activities that develops the children's cognitive, social and physical skills. The children are also served meals. The Day Care is open mostly to low-income children, although a few slots are open to private day care. The staff consists of 17 full-time and eight part-time people. In the basement of the Center is the Neighborhood Council Federal Credit Union. The Neighborhood Council still owns and operates the building. (Anna Coleman, personal interview, 2001)

### **References**

Coleman, Anna. (President of Neighborhood Council). Personal interview.  
13 February 2001.

*Neighborhood Center Annual Report*. 20 June 2000. Montclair: Neighborhood Council Inc.

Neighborhood Council Archives. Neighborhood Center.

## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER**

There are several archival collections that may provide historical background information on the Neighborhood Council/Neighborhood Center activities.

### **MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access to the archives is available by appointment**

#### **Neighborhood Council Collection, 1941-2000, 31 items, Box A41**

The Neighborhood Council Collection consists of minutes (1941-1946), board reports (1941-2000), and Interpretation Committee (1941) and Policy Board (1941-1942) items.

#### **Montclair Council of Social Agencies Collection, 1929-1959, .5 linear feet, Box A40**

The Montclair Council of Social Services occupied the Neighborhood Center in the 1940s. The collection includes annual reports (1934-1959), minutes (1933-1942), board reports (1929-1959), brochures and publications. The board reports discuss some of the Council studies involving the Neighborhood Center.

#### **Junior League of Montclair Collection, 1927-1993, .5 linear feet, Box A24-25**

The Junior League of Montclair founded and owned the Neighborhood Center until 1953. The Junior League collection contains annual reports from 1927-1982 and publications from 1937-1993 that contained information on the Neighborhood Center.

#### **Montclair Subject Vertical Files, 3 folders.**

The files have folders with newspaper clippings on the Neighborhood Center, Junior League of Montclair and Montclair Council of Social Services.

#### **Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001.**

Oral histories of Neighborhood Center/Council members include Sandra Lang, Lincoln Turner, Dr. Theodore Bolden and Kassandra Miller. Also a videotape/audiotape of the program "African-American History Day" held on May 14, 2001, features Anna Coleman, current President of the Neighborhood Center.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ARCHIVES**

**30 Maple Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**Private archives, contact Neighborhood Council office**

**Neighborhood Council Archives, 1940-1953, 8 cubic boxes.** Newspaper clippings related to the activities of the Neighborhood Center. Some Neighborhood Center activities described in the clippings include the annual dinners/dances, clean up drive, annual bazaar, day care facilities, scout troops, parents groups, motion pictures documentaries, summer Bible camp, and classes. Other topics included are the Montclair Roller Skating discrimination suit, Mountainside Hospital discrimination toward African-Americans, and Elm Street Tavern Petition. The clippings also cover the Junior League of Montclair and Montclair Council of Social Services involvement with the Center.

**CRAWFORD CREWS  
AMERICAN LEGION POST 251**

**210 Bloomfield Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1934-2001**

**History edited by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF CRAWFORD CREWS AMERICAN LEGION POST 251**

Crawford Crews American Legion Post 251 was chartered in 1934. The post was named in honor of four Montclair African-American World War I soldiers who were killed in action in the fall of 1918, a month before the end of the war. The soldiers, who served with the famed 369<sup>th</sup> 371st and 372nd Infantry Regiments were Crawford Crews, Austin Barnes, Alonzo Mills and Benjamin Smith. (Garrett, 1997, 3)

According to John Garrett's unpublished *Chronicles*, African-Americans

were not allowed to fight along side with white American troops. At the request of the French military, they were adopted by the French army, where they fought as an integral part of the French 4<sup>th</sup> Army, wearing French uniforms and under the French flag. They remained in the trenches a record of 191 days without relief, but refused to give up a foot of ground, taking heavy casualties during a fierce enemy offensive on the approach to Paris, playing a vital role in saving the city. (Garrett, 1997, 3)

The French government honored all four Montclair men. Crawford Crews received an individual gallantry Croix de Guerre and the Legion of Honor Awards and the other three men received a unit award of Croix De Guerre Avec Les Palms. The French erected a memorial to the African-American regiments who were nicknamed the Hellfighters of Harlem. (Garrett, 1997, 3)

According to the Montclair city directories, the group started meeting at the Montclair Theater building in 1929. In 1932, the group met at 39 Washington Street. The 1935 city directory listed the group as meeting at 210 Bloomfield Avenue. In 1944, the Crawford Crews Post purchased the old Washington Hose Company Fire Station at 210 Bloomfield Avenue.

According to John Garrett's *Chronicles*, the mission of the Crawford Crews Post includes building self esteem in African-American youth; disseminating information on the African-American role in past military conflicts; providing services to African-American veterans, children, youth and seniors; conducting oratorical contests; providing scholarships; speaking to school children about veterans; joining with other community groups in activities to minimize negative behaviors; and setting examples by participating in patriotic events and memorial services. (Garrett, 1997, 5).

Any veteran can join the group, which currently has 160 members. Many of the members are veterans of World War II. Although the members are mostly men, women veterans can also join. The group also has an auxiliary for spouses, founded in 1936.

The American Legion Post is active in the Montclair community. Many of the community service projects have focused on youth. One major American Legion sponsored youth program is Boys' State, which sends students who are juniors in high

school to a weeklong program to study government and civic affairs from the municipal to state level. After World War II, the Crawford Crews Post began sport programs for youth. Other youth programs today include oratorical contests, college scholarships (Stultz Grants and Letterman Grants), Halloween (mischievous day) programs, and school visits. Another focus is on veteran's affairs; the post sponsors visits to VA hospitals and other facilities. Charitable activities include providing turkeys and food for Christmas dinners for the poor. The Crawford Crews Post also marches in annual Memorial, Fourth of July, and African-American Heritage Day Parades. (Bryant, personal interview, 2001)

### **Works Cited**

Bryant, Leon. Personal interview. 26 January 2001

Garrett, John. *Chronicles*. April 1997. Unpublished history

Garrett, John, and Harvey Keys. Personal interview. 16 February 2001.



**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
THE CRAWFORD CREWS AMERICAN LEGION POST 251**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES  
50 South Fullerton Avenue  
Montclair, NJ  
973-744-0500**

**Public access to the archives available by appointment**

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**Crawford Crews American Legion Post 251 Collection, 1995-1997**

The collection contains *Chronicles* (1997), a history written by John Garrett and annual dance programs (1995-1996) donated by The Crawford Crews American Legion Post 251.

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001**

The collection includes an interview with Fannie Lewis, who mentions the Crawford Crews Post.

# **MONTCLAIR CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**205 Claremont Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1947-1970s (first commission)  
1992-2001 (current commission)**

**History written by Kenneth French  
Historical Resources by Kenneth French**

## HISTORY OF THE MONTCLAIR CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Montclair Civil Rights Commission can trace its beginnings to 1947, when citizens put together the Montclair Civil Rights Audit. President Harry Truman's Committee on Civil Rights inspired the audit. Montclair was one of the few communities in New Jersey (along with Plainfield) to examine civil rights as a local issue. At the time, the African American community made up approximately 17% of Montclair's population. Led by Leo Nejelski, chairman of the Montclair Forum, with assistance from the local chapter of the American Veterans Committee and their chairman, Curtis Champaigne, Jr., fact finding interviews were conducted. The final results of the audit were made official on December 11, 1947. The document produced by the audit addressed the issues of employment, education, housing, recreation, public health, and public facilities.

In 1964, the Civil Rights Commission decided to undertake another audit. Progress had been made since 1947, but commission chairman George Wibecan, Jr., felt that issues needed to be addressed again. "The civil rights battle in Montclair, on the whole, has been won," Wibecan told the *Montclair Times*, "but the human relations problem still exists. A Negro can now get served in any Montclair restaurant -that's civil rights. But there's nothing to make the employer smile at him, and that's human rights." ("64 Civil Rights Audit Group... March 9, 1964," n. p.)

The 1964 audit especially aimed at addressing health issues, as over 70% of cases of tuberculosis and infant mortality occurred in the African-American community in the town.

The Civil Rights Commission continued into the 1970s under the leadership of Charles Baskerville and was involved with the desegregation of Montclair's public schools. The Commission, however, petered out in the 1970s and was not revived until 1991. At that time, the Township Council officially reactivated the Commission and passed an ordinance making the Commission official in 1992.

The official mission is "to foster good will, cooperation, and conciliation among the groups and inhabitants of Montclair and to make recommendations to the Township Council for the development of policies and procedures that will aid in the elimination of all types of unlawful discrimination." ("Township of Montclair-Civil Rights Commission," flyer, May 1999)

Since 1998, the chairman has been John O'Connor, a lawyer who has been involved in the organization since 1994. There are 15 members currently on the Commission who are appointed by the Town Council for three-year terms. The Commission also has non-voting members, who act as liaisons between the Commission and the Board of Education, the Police Department, the Town Council, and the Town Manager's office.

There are also subcommittees that deal with Affirmative Action, Education, and Police/Community Relations. The Commission meets monthly from September through June on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Township office at 205 Claremont Ave.

The current incarnation of the Civil Rights Commission has no direct power to make decisions on issues or to subpoena individuals, but can refer citizens to other agencies or to seek legal help to resolve problems. While the Commission cannot introduce ordinances, it can recommend improvements to the Town Council. In general, the Commission sees its role in the town as conciliatory. According to the flyer, "Montclair Civil Rights Commission," the Commission's stated purpose is to:

1. Work cooperatively with other persons to eliminate discrimination and the result of past discrimination.
2. Recommend ways and means of initiating and improving Township government programs designed to eliminate discrimination or to remove the effects of past discrimination.
3. Develop programs for coordination of community efforts to address problems involving tension in the community.
4. Make recommendations to the Town Council for the development of policies, procedures, and programs that will aid in the prevention and elimination of all types of discrimination in Montclair.

According to the flyer, "Montclair Civil Rights Commission," the Civil Rights Commission carries out its objectives by:

1. Developing mutual understanding and respect among all racial, religious, cultural, and ethnic groups in town and working to prevent discriminatory practices against such groups.
2. Ensuring that no resident is deprived of equal services in the Township by reason of discrimination.
3. Encouraging, receiving, investigating, and evaluating complaints from any person of discrimination that allegedly violates the law, and such other complaints as it deems fall within the scope of its services, and making public procedures which a person may use to complain of discrimination.
4. Receiving and investigating complaints of inter-group tensions and practices of discrimination and acts of prejudices against any person or group.
5. Investigating upon request or initiating investigation of alleged incidents of prejudice and discrimination and making recommendations for corrective action, and coordinating community efforts toward their resolution.
6. Formulating, developing, and disseminating programs of community information, education materials, and reports that will assist in the elimination

of prejudice, intolerance, inter-group tensions and discrimination, or that promotes good will and results in better human relations.

7. Assisting community groups and various fraternal, service, and benevolent organizations in the promotion of education campaigns devoted to the elimination of group prejudices, racial or neighborhood tensions, intolerance, and discrimination.
8. Cooperating with and rendering assistance to the Township's Affirmative Action Officer and other branches of township government in the areas of human relations.
9. Conferring with Town Counsel on such complaints as appears to require legal process after initial investigation or failure to achieve conciliation.
10. Cooperating with and rendering assistance to County, State, Federal, and other governmental or private agencies in the areas of human relations.

In recent years, the Commission has sponsored a "Conversations on Race" series, which takes place twice a year for four sessions. This draws groups, which are broken into conversation circles of 8-12 people, reflective of the population. There is no set agenda to the conversations, but a facilitator helps keep the discussions focused. There are also no rules established except that participants are honest and respectful.

Mr. O'Connor provided an example of the type of complaints that the Commission has to deal with. An African-American resident was followed home by a police car and questioned. The complainant claimed that the incident was harassment; the police said the complainant ran a stop sign. The Commission provided the complainant with the proper procedure for filing a complaint against the police department. (O'Connor, personal interview, 2001)

The Civil Rights Commission also has ties to other town agencies. James Harris, president of the Montclair Branch of the NAACP, is a member of the Civil Rights Commission. Also, former members of the Civil Rights Commission, including former chair Nancy Winkler, split with the Commission to form the Montclair Civil Rights Coalition, a non-government group. Last, the Commission works closely with the town's Affirmative Action officer.

### **Works Cited**

"Montclair Civil Rights Commission." Flyer. n.d. O'Connor, John (Chairman). Personal interview. 2001.

"'64 Civil Rights Audit Group to Report Here April 15." *Montclair Times*. March 9, 1964.

"Township of Montclair Civil Rights Commission." Flyer. May 1999.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
THE MONTCLAIR CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES  
50 South Fullerton Avenue  
Montclair, NJ  
973-744-0500**

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**Montclair Civil Rights Commission Collection, 1947-1999, 1 folder** The collection includes the 1947 audit, fair housing information (1966), profiles of the commission activities (1973), and flyers (1999).

**Montclair Subject Vertical Files, Civil Rights, 1 folder**

The file has numerous articles from the *Montclair Times* relating to the Montclair Civil Rights Commission.

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001**

The collection includes an interview with current commission member Sandra Lang.

**MONTCLAIR CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION ARCHIVES  
205 Claremont Avenue  
Montclair, NJ  
Private archives, contact current chairman**

**Civil Rights Commission Archives, 1992-2001**

The archives of the Civil Rights Commission relate only to the current incarnation of the Commission (1992-present), not to the earlier organization. Mr. O'Connor has folders with town ordinances, fliers, newspaper clippings, etc., illustrating the Commission's work in recent years.

**NORTH JERSEY MEN'S CLUB  
(NOR JER MEN)**

**1947-2001**

**History written by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF NORTH JERSEY MEN'S CLUB (NOR JER MEN)**

Dr. Frederick Douglas and several prominent members of the Montclair African American community founded North Jersey Men's Club (Nor Jer Men) in 1947. Dr. Frederick Douglas and some of the other original members belonged to an all Black Boy Scout troop in the 1920s and later, as young adults, started the Triune Tennis Club at an old tennis court on Elmwood Avenue. After World War II, these old friends along with other men from the Montclair African-American community decided to start the North Jersey Men's Club (Nor Jer Men), which started out as a social hunting and fishing club. It evolved into a social club for professional African-American men. (Wells, 2001, 36)

Many of the men are prominent members of their communities. Dr. Frederick Douglas was the first attending African-American physician at Mountainside Hospital. Other original members included Auburn Peterson, one of the first African-American policemen in Montclair, Dr. John Kenney and Dr. Robert Darben. Other members include James Churchman; Luther Randolph; Herman Dotson, Sr. & Jr.; Samuel Allen, Sr., Jr. & III; Dr. Carl Ross; Dr. Joseph Taboume; Dr. Frank Lapeyrolerie; James H. Coleman; Albertus Jenkins; William and Stephen Ewing; Dr. Allenby Pearman; Dr. [??] Williams; Robert Nash; Frederick Brown; Dr. Alvin Bell and Charles Martin. (Wells, 2001, 36)

The group's main purpose is to express cultural pride and camaraderie among its members. In 1949, the charter and bylaws were formed requiring that the group be limited to thirty members. There are several sons of members who have been allowed to join without regard to the rule. The Allen family has had three generations of members in the group. In every second year since 1950, the group has raised funds for a selected charity. Some of the charities have been the Boys & Girls Club of Newark, St. James Charter School, the Crossroads Theater, Meharry College, Urban League and the United Negro Fund. Every year the group hosts a dance which about 600 people attend. A smaller event in the summertime is planned to include the members and their families. The group meets once a month at a member's house. The group recently celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their first fundraiser. (Allen, personal interview, 2001)

### **References**

Allen, Samuel, III. personal interview. Spring 2001.

Wells, Jean. "Norjernen Celebrate 50 Years of Giving." *The Positive Community*, 2 (2). (February 2001): 36.



**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON NORTH  
JERSEY MEN'S CLUB (NOR JER MEN)**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access to the archives available by appointment**

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**North Jersey Men's Club (Nor Jer Men) Collection, 2001, 1 folder** This file includes articles on the Nor Jer Men Club from the *Star Ledger* and *Positive Community Magazine*, 2001.

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2001**

Oral histories include an interview with Daisy Douglas who discusses the activities of her husband, Dr. Frederick Douglas, in the Triune Tennis Club and North Jersey Men's Club.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN  
MONTCLAIR CHAPTER**

**P.O. Box 1719**

**Montclair, New Jersey**

**1954-2001**

**History written by Kenneth French  
Historical Resources by Kenneth French**

## **HISTORY OF THE MONTCLAIR CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN**

Mary McLeod Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) nationally in 1935. The NCNW has from its start been a coalition of African-American women's organizations whose mission is to improve the quality of life for women, their families, and the community. The Montclair chapter was founded in 1954, when Mrs. Florence Jackson, the first unit president, conducted meetings informally until requirements were met for an official charter. Mrs. Louise Rainer was the first president under the new ruling. Early meetings under her leadership were held at the Montclair YWCA. Other past presidents include Vivian C. Mason, Thelma White, and Elsie Bookhart.

The current president is Gloria Matthews, who has been involved in the organization for 20 years. The Montclair chapter also includes members from Bloomfield and East Orange. Separate chapters are based in Newark and the Oranges. The Montclair chapter holds meetings monthly at the Montclair Women's Community Circle at 33 Woodland Avenue. A section for juniors aged 12-18 meets monthly at the YWCA.

According to a NCNW brochure, the National Council of Negro Women's mission is "to harness the power of Black and other minority women to ensure access to, and full participation in, the socio-economic and political systems which impact upon the quality of life for all persons." The brochure lists the NCNW's goals as:

1. To strengthen the economic and social position of Black women and Black families.
2. To advance enforcement of civil rights with special concerns for women's rights, voter registration, unfettered education, economic opportunity, and healthcare.
3. To focus on youth development, particularly teenage pregnancy, juvenile justice, and female parenting.
4. To increase the capability of Black women's organizations to work with the poorest majority in developing countries.

The Montclair chapter's main goal is to provide service to the community, what Ms. Matthews describes as "giving back" to the community. According to a NCNW flyer, some of the services that the NCNW has presented in recent years include, drug awareness programs, voter registration drives, Youth Prep Computer Training Program which prepares youth in math and technology, senior citizen programs, preparing a holiday meal for a senior citizen home, Career Day for adults, food and clothing drives for the homeless and needy families, participation in Red Cross drives, working with single mothers, NCNW International festival and Women in Community Service.

Another service is the Bi-Annual Symposiums on topics such as breast cancer awareness,

parenting, starting a small business, writing a resume, nutrition, managing stress, job interviewing, and buying real estate. The Junior Section is involved in projects which include Career Day for Youth, visiting children's hospitals and nursing homes, and volunteering for other community service projects.

The local chapter also holds an annual Awards Luncheon. This serves as a fundraiser to enable the organization to fund community service projects and programs throughout the community. The luncheon has been an annual event for decades and is currently held on the fourth Saturday in March. Awards are presented to outstanding citizens in the community in the following categories: business and industry, community service, education, youth, in-service, medicine, arts and culture. Further funding comes from private donations and grants.  
(NCNW, flyer)

The Montclair NCNW has also held Black History Programs, Brotherhood Festivals, card parties, and has participated in NAACP programs on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Recently, the local chapter helped with fundraising efforts to purchase the NCNW's new national headquarters at 633 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, in Washington, DC.

In addition to its own programs, the Montclair chapter has co-sponsored events with Women in Community Service, the Red Cross, the NAACP, the National Council of Negro Women's national offices, and the Township of Montclair.

During its peak in the 1960s and 1970s, the Montclair chapter had over 200 members. Today there are about 80 members. Ms. Matthews credits the decrease in enrollment to the changing demographics in the town and to the fact that many younger African American families no longer remain in Montclair for a long time. The organization holds an open house membership tea to attract new members and has an information table at the annual African-American Heritage Day Parade and the Celebrate Montclair Festival.

### **Works Cited**

Matthews, Gloria. Personal interview. 24 October 2000.

NCNW, brochures and flyers. National Council of Negro Women Collection, Local History Archives, Montclair Public Library.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access available by appointment**

**National Council of Negro Women Collection, n.d., 1 folder**

The collection contains copies of pamphlets, a history of the NCNW and information sheets given to the library by Gloria Matthews, the current president.

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000**

Oral history interviews included NCNW members Hortense Tate and Sandra Lang.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN ARCHIVES**

**Private archives, contact organization**

**National Council of Negro Women Archives, 1969-2001**

The current president maintains historical files including brochures, luncheon and event fliers, newspaper clippings, and a small number of photographs, mostly dating from 1969 to the present.

# **HOLLOW DAY CARE CENTER/ KENNEDY HUMAN RELATIONS PROJECT**

**17 Talbot Street  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1960-2001**



**History written by Josephine Bonomo Historical Resources  
by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF THE HOLLOW DAY CARE CENTER/ KENNEDY HUMAN RELATIONS PROJECT FOR YOUTH**

The Hollow Day Care Center, an after-school program for children aged 6 to 12 from low income families, was born of the vision of one woman, Mrs. L. M. Connor. A native of Virginia, Mrs. Connor worked in the fields there before coming to Montclair to live with relatives in 1931 at the age of 14. She attended school and eventually operated her own beauty salon here, served as a Sunday school teacher at Union Baptist Church and was active in community affairs.

In 1960, Mrs. Connor saw a group of children in Montclair roaming through the neighborhood yards picking flowers at random without permission. Mrs. Connor realized that the youngsters needed better things to do. She approached them and their parents and said she would organize a club for them.

Holding meetings informally in her home, Mrs. Connor counseled the youngsters, trying to show them how to become constructive citizens of their community. She taught them to be honest, stay in school, do their homework (she helped), and to plant their own flowers.

By 1964, the program had grown and was incorporated as the Kennedy Human Relations Project for Youth. The club soon outgrew its founder's home. In 1970, new quarters were found in an old grocery store at 147 Valley Road. With the help of Thad Rowland, a businessman who contributed part of the necessary funds and held the mortgage, the abandoned store was purchased. Later that year, Griffith Jones assisted the organization in getting IRS status as a charitable organization, allowing tax deductible contributions.

Mrs. Connor served as the center's first director and continued for eight years, giving up a beauty salon she operated at the Overbrook Hospital in Cedar Grove in order to devote herself full time to the project. Succeeding directors were Maude Alexander, Catherine Weiner, Louise Ford, and the current director, Patricia Caldwell.

Mr. Rowland continued to subsidize the organization until 1973, when it was found that the center was eligible for federal funds administered through the New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies. The state approved a budget of \$72,000 and provided three quarters of the amount. At present, the state makes up fifty five percent of the center's \$165,000 budget, with the balance made up from grants, individual contributions and fees.

As remodeling work continued in 1971, a Board of Trustees was established under the leadership of the Reverend Dr. C. Lincoln McGee of Trinity United Presbyterian Church. Increasing support for the project came from members of Montclair's African-American community at large. Joseph Devaney, a Montclair accountant, gave his services free of charge. *The Montclair Times* helped with publicity. A tutoring program, Upward Bound, was started under the direction of volunteer Al Bundy, a Montclair State University student.

In 1978, the board renamed the project the Frog Hollow Day Care Center-Frog in recognition of a large frog population in the neighborhood pond. Today the organization is commonly known simply as the Hollow Day Care Center. The Frog Hollow Neighborhood Association, formed around 1978, worked to keep the area attractive and well lighted, and a Neighborhood Block Watch also was established. These groups later were supplanted by a Parents' Advisory Association, which still functions.

Need for more space prompted another move in 1978 to the center's present location at 17 Talbot Street. Here a two-family house was remodeled and expanded to accommodate a year-round program for forty children.

During the school year, the center operates weekdays from 2-6 p.m. A staff of eight trained workers led by Ms. Patricia Caldwell conducts a full program of recreational, educational and cultural activities, as well as counseling. The boys and girls enjoy a hot meal, play in a playground behind the building, and get help with homework from volunteers from Montclair State University and Montclair High School. There are programs in drama and dance, holiday festivities, trips to the library and nearby places of interest. Two computer labs set up by Montclair State University and the United Way of Montclair-North Essex offer instruction and practice in use.

Other community organizations continue to give their support; the project works jointly with local service clubs, YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Montclair Public Library, Montclair Board of Education and Montclair Police Department.

The center is available only to children of working parents. A sliding scale of fees ranges from nothing to an average of \$25 a week. During the summer months, the program continues as a day camp from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week.



## EXCERPTS OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Mrs. L. M. Connor, founder of Hollow Day Center/Kennedy Human Relations Project, speaks about establishing her organization. The project started at her home at 133 Valley Road. Later she rented a building at 147 Valley Road.

And that's where the organization started from- 133 Valley Road. What inspired me also to set up a project in the neighborhood is there was some children who came by my house...in my driveway one day; and they had flowers in their hand. So they saw me, when I called to them they didn't want to come because they knew they were breaking flowers I guess on other people's gardens. So I persuaded them anyway through love to come down, let's talk. So they did, about five of them; five, six, seven. So I asked their names. Then I asked where the pretty flowers came from. They hesitated, but I said to them, "Tell me the truth." So they did. They told me that they came out of different people's yards. So then I asked, "Did you get permission to break their flowers?" They told me "no." Then I asked them, "Why were they breaking the flowers?" They said, "We're gonna sell them." I said "For what?" They said, "So we can buy our father Father's Day cards." So I said, "Well, what a wonderful thought that is for you." I said "Well, you never, Sweethearts, never take flowers out of anybody else's yard or take anything that does not belong to you. Now you must always ask for them." I said, "Did you ask your mother for money to buy the cards?" They said, "Yes." I said, "What did your step-mother say?" "She said, 'No.'" "She said that Daddy wasn't with us, and that we weren't going to send him any cards." I said, "Well, could you tell me where you live?" So they did. So I went to someone's home, and I introduced myself to the first parent I met. I told them what I was trying to do and about the children. What they had said to me. And I said, "I'd like to talk to your family." So I said, "Could the children go into another room." After [that] they talked to me about the same thing the children had said to me about the father not being in the home and helping them. So I said to them, "But the children are not responsible for that," and what a wonderful thing I thought it would be for the children to express their love to their fathers, and how important it was. The children were not going to school at that time; some of the children. So I spoke to them about school [and] why weren't they in school? They said to me, "Well, they're going to work, and I don't care whether they finish school or not." So I talked to them about that. I knew that tutorial work was important, and how important school was. I felt right away that I must help these youngsters. So then we went up to the store. I told the parents I would purchase the cards and the stamps for the children if they could not afford it. So they gave me permission to do that, and that's what happened. We did give parent cards out to the children, the fathers.

And then I met this young man who was 13 years of age at the time. And I told him that we had started a club. We called it a club at that time. And I would like for him to help me to recruit some of the older youngsters. So he spun around the

post that was from the corner of William Street and Valley Road at that time, and he said, "Oh, Mrs. Connor, he says, you don't want any bad children in your club." I said, "Bad, what do you mean bad?" So I said, "You're not bad, there aren't any bad children." So he says, "What?" I said, "There are not any bad children. You may do some naughty bad things sometimes, but you're not bad, because you're too young to be bad." So I said, "I'm sure looking forward to your help," and he says, "All right." So he says, "Mrs. Connor, you're the only one that ever said that we weren't bad." Everybody else calls us bad. Today, I still say to people, you should not call your children bad. If you're going to call the child something bad, they're going to try to be bad. I've watched that down through the years. So, I don't advocate that at all - on calling them names.

That's why I hate "kids" - I detest that word. However, that went on and that took place.

So then we started work meetings at my house, and we would recruit these youngsters. And I felt that they really did need help, with school and with their homework. So I started recruiting. I met Dean Harris through Summer Fair. I had learned he was Dean of the Student Body up at Montclair State Teachers College, at that time, which of course is Montclair State University now. So he said he would try to recruit some youngsters to help me out. So he did. I told him I didn't have money, but it would be on a volunteer basis, but we would try to pay for their carfare, which I asked the parents if they had 50 cents even to give the youngsters for carfare. But if they didn't, I put it in. So that's what happened, we gave the youngsters 50 cents to come to my house. It all started with my house.

So then, as time went on, more and more youngsters became involved. As time went on, we tried again to grow [and] to get more people involved in the organization. We really organized in town in 1960. In 1964, I incorporated with [the help of Mrs. Martha C. Belle. So we would give block parties, talent shows, things like that to help to raise a few pennies also. 'Cause I said we have to create better relationships among the people in the area, which I found also were not even speaking to the next door neighbors at times, because there were some unwed mothers and mothers without fathers and husbands, and they were kind of embarrassed, I figured, to be involved. So I showed them right in [and told them] how important it was to be involved with the neighbors and the community because you never know that can happen. You can be of some assistance to each other. They have become so close together in relationships, which is marvelous. So, then we continued on with the block parties and talent shows, and some of the monies came from around the neighborhood and people that felt they could be of some assistance from the town. I would let them know [what] I was trying to do. And they all cooperated with me very well. And so I found that I would have to leave the hospital in order to see that this organization stayed on foot; because there were some people who were saying that they found out I did not have the degrees that they felt I should have, and that it wasn't going to be anything. Of course, they didn't really know Lillie Margaret Connor. That only made me work harder, because I was determined to make a success out of it. But I thought, I said, well, it's more important for me to work with these children, since I saw the

need to help bridge the gap between the children's school system and the community; that I would just have to give it up and someday I'd be able to get my beauty salon going and I'd get a job maybe later. I never thought I was going to get paid anything out of the Kennedy Hollow Day Care Center, which I didn't for almost seven years, maybe six years. So I gave my home, my time, everything, to the organization. And I have no regrets for that. So it grew, as I said, and other people became involved. The YWCA I involved, the YMCA, and the churches. I would take them in my car to different churches and found that they were not affiliated with any churches, and how important it was to serve God, because He created all of us, the entire universe, and without His creation, we wouldn't be anything. So, that worked out very well. Then I let them join the church of their choice, I just wanted them to be acquainted with different churches.

(Later: Mrs. Connor added this information to her interview: Thad Rowland assisted with the mortgage and funding of the purchase of the supermarket building at 147 Valley Road. Griffith Jones helped get us the IRS status.) (Mrs. L. M. Connor, oral history interview, 2000, 3-5)

Clarence Jackson, a student, and later an employee, at Hollow Day Care Center has these memories about Mrs. L. M. Connor:

We were out on the street playing one warm summer day, and we heard this lady saying "Young men, young men." And that's what took us by surprise, because we weren't used to be calling young men. And we looked up and we saw this woman coming down the street, and she had invited us over to her home. She said that she had some representatives from the township that would be there. And we went over there, and that started my personal relationship with her from 1963.

In the beginning it was, well, she was really trying to [get us to] understand what was going on around us and to try to get us to come together, to organize, to think. But it turned out that she became more of a second mother, because at that time a lot of the young guys were getting into juvenile mischief. You could see guys running through the neighborhood looking for Ms. Connors [sic], because she had become so effective as a buffer between the juvenile detectives and the young men that if they needed assistance, before they would tell their parents or look for a lawyer, they would go and they would look for Ms. Connors. She would loan us her car so that we could practice driving. That's how many of us received our driver's license. She would open up her basement for socials, so that gave us a place on Saturday nights to go and listen to music and socialize with one another. The main problem was the fact that we just did not realize what it was she was trying to do for us, and we didn't take advantage of it. But, like I said, she never gave up, and it was funny as I said, because when I came back from the service, she had continued with the project, and so now I had gone from a participant in the project to an employee. (Clarence Jackson, oral history interview, 2000, 3-4)

### **Works Cited**

Caldwell, Patricia. Personal interview. 22 September 2000.

Connor, L. M. Oral history interview. 10 November 2000.

Jackson, Clarence. Oral history interview. 6 December 2000.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON HOLLOW DAY CARE CENTER KENNEDY  
HUMAN RELATIONS PROJECT FOR YOUTH**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES  
50 South Fullerton Avenue  
Montclair, NJ  
973-744-0500**

**Public access available by appointment**

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**Hollow Day Care Center Collection, 1969-1999, 1 folder**

The collection contains miscellaneous brochures, histories, award certificates and fact sheets on the Hollow Day Care Center and its founder, Mrs. L. M. Connor.

**Montclair Photograph Collection**

**Hollow Day Care Center Collection, 1969-1976, 13 items**

The collection contains copies of photo album, 1969-1976, owned by Mrs. L. M. Connor.

**Archival Box B36**

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2000-2001**

The collection includes founder, Mrs. L. M. Connor and former or current board and staff members: Clarence Jackson, Leon Leach, Hershel T. White, and Louise Ford.

**Book**

Connor, Lillie Margaret. *A Lillie Blooms: Mud Between My Toes*.

Richmond, VA: NorthLight Publishing, 2000.

**Call No.: Local History B Connor**

**HOLLOW DAY CARE CENTER ARCHIVES**

**17 Talbot Street**

**Montclair, NJ**

**Private archives, contact organization**

**Hollow Day Care Center Archives, 1964-2000, 1 filing drawer, 2 boxes.** The archives includes: Board of Trustees Minute Book with Certificate of Incorporation, July-September 1977; programs, 1976-2000; dedication program for 17 Talbot Street building, October 18, 1982; newspaper clippings, 1977-2000; and photographs 1964-2000.

**MONTCLAIR ALUMNAE CHAPTER OF  
DELTA SIGMA THETA**

**1962-2001**

**History by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF MONTCLAIR ALUMNAE CHAPTER OF DELTA SIGMA THETA**

The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority for African-American women was founded at Howard University in 1913. Twenty-two members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority at Howard University decided to break away from that group to form Delta Sigma Theta. These twenty-two women were interested in social change and the women's suffrage movement and were the only African-American group to join this movement and march in the Susan B. Anthony marches. The national president of the organization has been involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Many famous women such as Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Betty Shabazz, and Alexis Herman are members of the sorority. The organization is still a public service-oriented organization.

The Montclair chapter was chartered in 1962 with a small handful of African-American women from the Suburban Essex region. Today the membership is 120. The group originally met at members' homes but today meets at the Catchings Annex of the Glenfield School. Programs sponsored by the local chapter have included author showcases at the public library, a leadership academy, movie theater private screenings of African-American films, forums for political candidates, letter-writing campaigns, scholarships for area high school students and other fundraising events. The sorority is a tax-exempt organization.

### **References**

Lang, Sandra, (past president). Personal interview. 10 July 2001.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON DELTA  
SIGMA THETA**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**Public access available by appointment**

**Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2001**

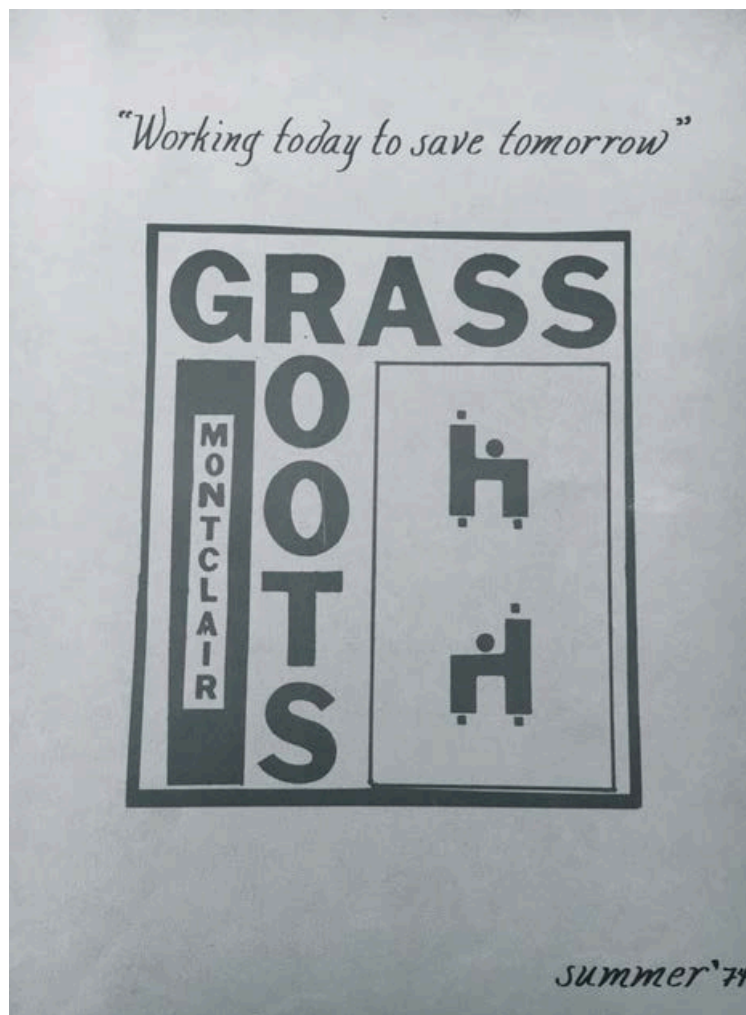
The collection includes an interview with Sandra Lang, member and past president of the local chapter of Delta Sigma Theta. The interview includes the historical information about Delta Sigma Theta that was used to write the history of the organization.



# **MONTCLAIR GRASSROOTS, INC.**

**45 Maple Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1969-2001**



**History written by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources written by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **HISTORY OF THE MONTCLAIR GRASSROOTS, INC.**

In 1969, the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. was established to fulfill a need to assist Montclair families who were looking for supervised summer programs for their children. The members also strived to provide a program that would offer recreational, educational and cultural opportunities to Montclair children. In the summer of 1969, the program started with thirty-five children in Glenfield Park, which is operated by the Essex County Park Commission. By the next summer, twenty-one other agencies had agreed to participate in the program.

The organization has seven goals listed in the *Annual Report 1971 Montclair Grassroots Summer Program*. (p. 4)

1. To save tomorrow by making a long term investment on the potentials of our Grassroots children, making town resources available today.
2. To remove the stigmas of class in blending children from all segments of the town in a uniform program.
3. To provide a means for Montclair's relevant agencies, public and private, to work together, combining the policies and operations of each under one umbrella program of merit.
4. To make an improvement in the lives of those whose conditions and exposures these resources were meant to improve.
5. To add new dimensions to our children's lives through new opportunities for self-expression and identification.
6. To bring to the citizens of Montclair a new method for dealing with their educational, recreational, and cultural needs for the improvement of the Montclair community.
7. To make the citizens of Montclair more conscious of their roles in producing first-class citizens.

A Board of Trustees made up of Montclair citizens and representatives of several local agencies manages the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. Since 1969, the agencies represented on the Board of Trustees are Montclair West Essex Guidance Center, Montclair Recreation Department, Montclair State University, YMCA, Office of the Mayor, Montclair Board of Education, Essex County Park Commission, Montclair High School, Boy Scouts of America and Montclair Public Library. Other organizations that have been represented on the Board are YWCA, Montclair Child Development Center, Montclair Planned Parenthood, Girl Scouts, and the Montclair Urban Coalition. The Essex County Freeholders, Essex County Youth and Rehabilitation, Glenfield Grassroots Association, Montclair Red Cross, National Council of Negro Women and the Unitarian Church of

Montclair have also given support for the Grassroots programs. Originally, several agencies including the Montclair Public Library, YWCA, Montclair State University, Montclair Board of Education and Montclair Urban Coalition took turns serving as the fiscal agents and administering grant funds for the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. The organization has been supported for most of its history by grants from the Florence and John Schumann Foundation and the Victoria Foundation. Wallace Choice, who was one of the founding Board members, has been the Director of the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. since 1972. In 1974, the organization was incorporated and in 1975 it became an independent non-profit organization. (Montclair Grassroots, 1974, p. 2-3, 9-10)

The main objective of the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. is to provide a supervised organized summer programming for local children. Montclair Grassroots, Inc. was the first organized free summer camp program for children in Montclair. The original program was for eight weeks from 9-5 Monday-Friday. The programming included educational, recreational and cultural activities for children ages 5-14. The children were divided into groups according to their age. Programs for parents and families were also offered at least one evening per week and as special weekend events. Also, in the mid-seventies the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. began the State Summer Food Program, which offered free lunches and snacks to the children. In the seventies, the Montclair Board of Education Food Service provided the food. In 1981, the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. took over preparing the meals at the Montclair High School kitchen. Senior citizens participated in preparing and serving the food. The Summer Youth Program hired over 100 youth to work as junior counselors. (Choice, personal interview, 2000)

Other programs for senior citizens and youth have been offered in the past by the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. Senior programs have been available since 1974, when Peggy Hill was hired as the Essex Park Commission Senior Citizen Director for Glenfield Park. The seniors took trips, engaged in recreation activities and served as volunteers for the summer camp program. In 1981, an Industry of Athletics Media Center opened at George Inness School. The Media Center had career information for athletes interested in the sports industry. (Montclair Grassroots, 1981, p. 12-13)

The Montclair Grassroots, Inc. fosters cooperation and participation with several agencies in town. All of the agencies on the Board of Trustees support the Grassroots programs. For example, the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. still has a program with the Montclair Public Library to introduce the children to the library. The children visit the library, are introduced to the library services, and receive their own library cards. Another effort was to provide public swimming pools for children by working with the Montclair Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. The children in the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. program received formal swimming lessons as well as opportunities for free swim. (Choice, personal interview, 2000)

For most of its history, the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. has been headquartered at the Essex County Glenfield Park House at 45 Maple Street. Essex County provides Montclair Grassroots, Inc. with the Park House facilities as well as Glenfield Park

grounds. Montclair Grassroots, Inc. also works in cooperation with Glenfield School using the school facilities such as the gym, computer room and classrooms. When the Glenfield Park was undergoing renovation, the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. was headquartered at Nishuane Park.

The Glenfield Task Force, which shares a board with the Montclair Grassroots, Inc., coordinates cooperation between the community and Glenfield School (the designated community school) and the Board of Education.

Today the program offers a six-week summer course for children ages 5-12. The children meet Monday-Friday from 9-3. The 13-14 year olds still have special events programs. There is now a \$25 registration fee for the summer camp. The Grassroots offers year-round programming for adults and children through scheduled activities at the Park House at 45 Maple Avenue. One new initiative is to offer computer courses to senior citizens. (Choice, personal interview, 2000)

During the Grassroots heyday in the seventies, there were over thousand students signed up for the summer camp with hundred youth workers. Today there is an average of three hundred children with twenty to thirty youth workers. The decrease in enrollment has been due to the success of Montclair Grassroots, Inc. concept in offering summer programming for children. Today, several other agencies in town offer structured summer programs. (Choice, personal interview, 2000)

### **Works Cited**

*Annual Report 1971 Montclair Grassroots Summer Program.*  
1971. Montclair: Montclair Grassroots, Inc.

Choice, Wallace. personal interview. 15 November 2000.

*Montclair Grassroots.* Summer 1974. Annual Report. Montclair:  
Montclair Grassroots, Inc.

*Montclair Grassroots.* 1981. Annual Report. Montclair: Montclair Grassroots, Inc.

## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON MONTCLAIR GRASSROOTS, INC.**

### **MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**Public access available by appointment**

#### **Miscellaneous Social, Civic, Business Associations Collection**

##### **Montclair Grassroots, Inc., 1971-1981, 1 folder**

The collection contains Annual Reports for the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. organization for 1971, 1974 and 1981.

**Archival Box A37**

#### **Montclair Subject Vertical File Collection,**

##### **Organizations-Montclair Grassroots Inc., 1973, 1996, 1 folder**

The collection contains articles from the *Montclair Times* about the Montclair Grassroots, Inc. organization, 1973, 1996.

#### **Montclair African-American Oral History Collection, 2001**

The collection includes an interview with Kassundra Miller, a former youth participant.

**NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION CENTER  
HELPS EVERYONE  
(NICHE)**

**375 Bloomfield Avenue  
Montclair, NJ**

**1974-1977**



**History by Asantewaa Gail Harris  
Historical Resources by Asantewaa Gail Harris**

## HISTORY OF NICHE

Neighborhood Information Center Helps Everyone (NICHE) was initiated as a community-based initiative. It was established in 1974 as a federally funded community information and referral service. The goal of NICHE was to provide information as a catalyst for social change.

NICHE was fully integrated into the operations of Montclair Public Library in 1979.

According to a report entitled "Evaluation of the 1974-1975 Project," the program objectives were as follows. Examples of the outcomes are included in italics.

1. To establish a neighborhood information and referral center, NICHE, in the disadvantaged community.  
*The service office for NICHE "opened for business" on May 7, 1975, at 375 Bloomfield Avenue, located in Census Tract 168.*
2. To acquire information, analyze it and make it available to clients as quickly as possible.  
*A Community Bulletin Board in the office window gave accessibility and prominence to resourceful information about community services (social, health and other human services) and the agencies delivering services.*
3. To interpret and/or translate information into a form comprehensible to clients.  
*A NICHE Community Newsletter was first published June 1975.*
4. To implement an effective and practical system of updating and cross-indexing community information resource files, particularly on survival matters.  
*The Ready Reference and Resource Files for NICHE were updated on a daily basis.*
5. To collect data documenting the informational interests and needs of the disadvantaged in Montclair, particularly those, which may be unique, and provide improved sources for information on subjects relevant to those interests and needs.  
*An Inter-Agency Council and Youth Agency Council were organized by NICHE to facilitate community information gathering and exchange activities.*
6. To provide accountable service in which the information and/or referral is followed up to ensure that it satisfies the clients' needs.  
*Clients reported satisfaction in the information and referral services received from NICHE.*
7. To recruit, train, and motivate individuals capable of executing the functions of NICHE.

*While the hired staff was highly qualified with substantial skills, they were encouraged to enhance professional development through a 10-week training program.*

8. To create total Montclair Public Library staff involvement and facilitate communication between NICHE and other library service units.

*NICHE had its origins as a concept defined by Cheryl M McCoy (Marshall), an African American resident of Montclair. The administrative and public service staff of the Montclair Public Library became an integral part of the joint Task Force on Information that ultimately submitted the NICHE proposal to the State of New Jersey.*

9. To reach out to the community with information useful to those who may be alienated.

*As well as on-going in-service activities with community agencies, the location of NICHE in an office that is a street level storefront is stated as visual proof of the Library's commitment to reach out to this population.*

10. To develop and initiate a public communication program to increase awareness of NICHE among the disadvantaged of Montclair, as well as throughout the general community of the town and the state.

*Several public appearances were made such as "Libraries Are Information Centers," a New Jersey Library Association Adult- Youth Services Section Workshop, organized by Cheryl M McCoy (Marshall) to present and describe the NICHE model to library staff and institutional representatives. Other presentations were made to the Madison Avenue Civic Group, Montclair High School, the Girl Scouts, St Mark's United Methodist Church, the North Jersey Annual Baptist Conference, and the New Jersey Welfare Council in Newark, the YWCA Senior Citizen's Program and the New Directions Program at Trenton State Prison.*

11. To increase citizen awareness by dissemination of information on a large scale.

*Progress in this area was considered "slower." However, NICHE initiated a monthly newsletter (1975) and documented its training sessions via videotape recordings.*

## **STAFFING & VOLUNTEER SUPPORT**

The original staff members were:

Cheryl M. McCoy (Marshall)

Administrative Coordinator/  
Community Information Specialist

Betty V. Jones

Community Information

Kathleen Smallwood Johnson

Assistant Community

Research Associate



Chris Fauntleroy

Community Communications Associate

Of the seventeen invitations made to participate as advisors to this new program, fourteen were accepted. NICHE Community Advisory Council members in 1974 were:

Ms. C01Tine Collins Ms. Audrey  
Fletcher Ms. Shirla Krause  
Ms. Marjorie Baskerville Ms. Roberta  
Hamer  
Ms. Rose Catchings Ms. Frieda Toker

Mr. Mark White Mr. William Swann  
Mr. Ron Murphy Mr. Wallace Choice  
Ms. Jeshia Schnitzer Mr. Donald  
Clifton Mr. James D. Ford, Jr.

(Lists are in the report "Evaluation of 1974-1975 Project")

Today (2002) Cheryl M. McCoy is the Director of Montclair Public Library. She previously served as the Assistant Director for several years. Ron Murphy is the Manager of Support Services and has been with the Montclair Public Library since 1975.

### **References**

"Evaluation of 1974-1975 Project." NICHE scrapbook. Local History Archives,  
Montclair Public Library.

McCoy, Cheryl M. Personal interview. 13 November 2001. Murphy,

Ronald. Personal interview. August 2001.

## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON NICHE**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES  
50 South Fullerton Avenue  
Montclair, NJ  
973-744-0500**

**Public access available by appointment**

### **NICHE Collection, 1974-1977, 6 folders, 3 binders**

Three binders include program reports, flyers, photographs, promotional materials and letters. Six folders contain reports, correspondence and newsletters regarding NICHE activities.

### **Ron Murphy Collection, 1974-1977**

Videotape collection of NICHE activities.

**Please consult the Library's Archivist.**

### **Montclair Photographic Collection**

#### **NICHE, ca.1976, 3 items**

The Montclair Photographic Collection contains images of the NICHE building on Bloomfield Avenue and staff members.

**Note: Patrons may consult the online Digital Photo Catalog for photographs.**

# MONTCLAIR AFRICAN - AMERICAN HERITAGE PARADE & FESTIVAL COMMITTEE, INC.

1989-2001



  
**MONTCLAIR'S**  
*7TH ANNUAL*  
African-American Heritage  
Parade and Festival  
*Saturday, June 1, 1996*  
Parade begins at 11 AM- Nishuane Park  
(rain or shine)  
Festival begins at 1 PM- Glenfield Park  
(rain date: Sunday, June 2)  
*COME VISIT THE AFRICAN  
VILLAGE!*  
New This  
Year!!  


For information, call (201) 509-0350



History by Asantewaa Harris  
Historical Resources by Asantewaa Harris

## **HISTORY OF THE MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE PARADE & FESTIVAL COMMITTEE, INC.**

According to founding member Audrey Fletcher, two constituents came to her office when she was a Township Council member and asked why the annual Montclair July 4<sup>th</sup> parade touched every ward except the Fourth Ward. After making several inquiries to the parade organizers and others, a group of residents were pro-active in problem solving. They established a plan to conduct an annual event that celebrated pride and heritage.

The Montclair African-American Heritage Parade & Festival Committee, Inc., was incorporated as a non-profit organization on July 30, 1992. The purpose of the committee is to foster and promote African-American culture and awareness through a variety of social, cultural and academic activities within the township of Montclair. It sponsors and produces an annual parade and festival in May or June.

African-American Heritage Parade & Festival Committee, Inc. (AAHPFC), is a membership organization. Membership is open to any member of the Montclair community who expresses a willingness to actively promote the goals and objectives of the Committee. Membership is granted by approval through a majority vote and payment of membership dues. There are three classes of membership: General, Student and Senior. According to the 1992 by-laws, annual membership dues were \$5 for General Members, \$1 for Student Members and "no fee" for Senior Members.

The 1990 members were Audrey Fletcher, Alonzo Brandon, Dolores (Bobby) Reilly, Molly Davis, Catherine Allen-Curry, Dr. Alfred Davis, Kathleen Smallwood Johnson, Barbara Smith, Ruth Taylor, Felice Harrison, Albertus Jenkins, Benjamin Powell, Wallace Choice, Geraldine Stewart, Edna Williams, Sandra Woody, Theresa Nance, Katherine Nicholas, Joan Pelham, Elizabeth Roberts, Bruce Tyler, John Griffith, Alice Branch, Flora Whitaker, Jewel 'Lea Hines, Gwenda Williams, Hershel T. White, Jeanette Oliverpo, Kathy Vick, F.A.I.R., Patricia Sturdivant.

The following standing committees assist in meeting the organization's program objectives: Parade, Finance, Festival, Entertainment, Festival Vendors, Public Relations, Program, and Fund Raising.

Some highlights of Montclair African-American Heritage Parade & Festival Committee include:

- (1991) The honorable Grand Marshals for this 2nd Annual Parade and Festival were Mrs. Hortense Tate and Mr. John Blunden, two longtime and well-respected residents of the township. The featured performers were acclaimed Ugandan singer and songwriter Samite, Popular singer Hunter Hayes (who was born and raised in Montclair), Rorie Nichols, Suburban Dog, The Trinity Temple Choir; Voices of the Folk and Word are the Music of Knowledge. According to a press release, the prior year's parade attracted more than 500 participants.

- (1992) Over 47 organizations registered for participation in the parade with marching bands, floats, community-based organizations, municipal agencies, media celebrities from radio and TV and a host of parade marchers.
  
- (1993) The performing artists listed on program materials for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Montclair African-American Heritage Parade & Festival included Iwa Pele, The Montclair High School Gospel Choir, Jazz Prophets, 911 The Hip Hop Cop and The Latin Jazz Express.
  
- (1996) Among the many groups listed on the parade registry were: Nostalgic Automobile Society of Montclair, Montclair High School Varsity Cheerleaders, Montclair High School Band and Color Guard, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Essex County League of Volunteer Workers, Inc., A Million Man Montclair, Flamingo Precision Drill Team, Omega Psi Shi Fraternity, Inc, NAACP Montclair Branch, National Council of Negro Women, Nation of Islam, Sigma Gamma Rho sorority, Inc./Gamma Nu Sigma, Women's International League of Peace & Freedom, Unitarian Church Montclair, HOT 97 KISSMobile, Neighborhood Club of Mission Street, Kappa Alpha Kappa Alumni Chapter, Penn Federal Savings, Bahai Faith Community of Montclair, and the Montclair Fire Department.

Co-Chairpersons Audrey Fletcher and Alfred Davis, Jr. currently lead the 2001 African American Heritage Parade & Festival Committee and over 11,000 people attended. The Committee meets the first Saturday of each month at 10:00 am at the Montclair Town Hall.

### **References**

Brandon, Alonzo. telephone interview. 29 November 2001.

Bruce Tyler Collection. 1990-1997. Local History Archives, Montclair Public Library.

Fletcher, Audrey. telephone interview. 28 November 2001.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
HERITAGE PARADE & FESTIVAL COMMITTEE, INC**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

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**Bruce Tyler Collection**

**African-American Heritage Parade & Festival, 1992-1997, 4 folders.**

The collection contains by-laws, minutes, flyers and program materials from 1992-1997.

**Montclair African American Oral History Collection, 2000 - 2001.**

Oral history interviews with Audrey Fletcher, Leona Smith and Bruce Tyler discussed the parade.

**Montclair Times Microfilm and CD Collection, 1989 - 2000.**

The *Montclair Times* has covered the parade activities since 1989. Archival copies are in several formats, including microfilm (to mid-2000), compact disc (2000-2002), and web based archives (since 1999).

# **MONTCLAIR CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION**

**P.O. BOX 695  
Montclair, New Jersey**

**1997-2001**

**History written by Kenneth French  
Historical Resources by Kenneth French**

## **HISTORY OF THE MONTCLAIR CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION**

The Montclair Civil Rights Coalition began in 1997 after current coalition member Larry Glover was not reappointed to a position on the Montclair Civil Rights Commission.

Then-Commission chairwoman Nancy Winkler and fellow members Susan Gubar, Barry Sage-El, and Nancy Shakir resigned from the Commission in protest. Though a reason for the action against Glover was never given, it was assumed to have been political, a result of Mr. Glover's outspokenness. The Civil Rights Coalition formed around the attempts to have Glover's non-reappointment reconsidered. The two organizations, though they have separate missions and members, also have strong links.

The Coalition's first order of business was to meet individually with Town Council members to discuss three items: Glover's reappointment, the decision-making process and criteria involved in appointments and reappointments to the Commission, and the council's plans on the direction it planned to take the Commission. Nancy Winkler stated that the Coalition would both strengthen and monitor the Commission.

The Coalition is a grass-roots organization, following up on work done before by the Commission. Its mission statement, written in the Montclair Civil Rights Coalition brochure, points out the township's other civil rights organizations and states, "We seek to provide a forum through which these groups can speak with a united voice to a broader public, thereby strengthening their individual efforts. Together we can accomplish what no one group can do alone."

Though the coalition has no direct connection with the Montclair Township's government or any official influence on the Town Council, its reasons for forming, as listed in the mission statement in the Montclair Civil Rights Coalition brochure, are reflective of the Town Council's actions:

1. "First, recent actions of the Township Council have threatened to undermine the independence and integrity of the town's official Civil Rights Commission."
2. "Second, no civil rights commission can be effective without a strong grass roots presence, agitating and advocating for justice for all residents."

According to the Montclair Civil Rights Coalition brochure, the Civil Rights Coalition works to assure that the town lives up to its stated civil rights agenda:

1. The elimination of all types of discrimination-in all areas of town life based on race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, sex, disability, or sexual orientation.
2. The effective implementation of affirmative action programs in recruitment, hiring, promotions, and all conditions of work for Township employees.



3. A public school system that values equity as much as excellence.
4. Accountability of the police to the community so that every resident can feel served and protected.

The Civil Rights Coalition is led by a steering committee (which includes Ms. Winkler and Mr. Glover, as well as eight other members) and also has standing committees in the areas of Advocacy, Affirmative Action, Education, Monitoring, and Police/Community Relations. The Coalition met monthly through fall of 2000. At present, the Coalition does not hold regularly scheduled meetings.

Throughout the year 2000 the Coalition sponsored a Peoples Millennium Celebration, a series of events honoring ordinary people who met social challenges. These included programs on women's labor history, fascism, gay and lesbian rights, school desegregation, anti-Apartheid struggles in New Jersey, and the showing of the film "Another Brother," about an African-American Vietnam veteran involved in social movements from the 1960s through the 1980s. Coalition members also attended an event honoring Dr. Martin Luther *King* Jr. The Coalition was supported in these events by the NAACP, CAAP (Concerned African-American Parents), the Undoing Racism Committee of the Unitarian Church of Montclair, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. ("People's Millennium Celebration," brochure, 2000)

Similar to the Civil Rights Commission the Coalition has addressed the problem of harassment by the police of African-American citizens. The Coalition has held meetings on the subject and has also printed and distributed a flier titled, "Keeping Safe When You Are Stopped by the Police."

Also, the Coalition drew up a series of questions for Township candidates, addressing civil rights issues, education, capital punishment, privatization of government services, and other issues concerning Montclair residents.

### **Works Cited**

"Montclair Civil Rights Coalition," Brochure, n.d

"People's Millennium Celebration." Brochure, n.d.

Winkler, Nancy. Personal interview. Spring 2001.

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES ON  
THE MONTCLAIR CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION**

**MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY  
LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES  
50 South Fullerton Avenue  
Montclair, NJ  
Public access available by appointment**

**Montclair African-American History Resource Guide Collection**

**Montclair Civil Rights Coalition Collection, 1996-2000, 1 folder**

The collection contains articles from the *Montclair Times* and papers relating to the Montclair Civil Rights Coalition, mostly copied from the collection of Nancy Winkler of the Coalition.

**MONTCLAIR CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION ARCHIVES**

**PO Box 695  
Montclair, NJ**

**Private archives, contact organization**

**Montclair Civil Rights Coalition Archives, 1996-2000**

Nancy Winkler holds the originals to articles mentioned above, as well as other publications and information.

**DESEGREGATION OF  
MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
1960-1975**

**History by Elizabeth Shepard  
Historical Resources by Elizabeth Shepard**

# **HISTORY OF SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IN MONTCLAIR**

## **School Desegregation on a National Level**

The United States Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas, in 1954 was the catalyst for the struggle for ending the system of segregation in America's school systems in both the South and the North. This case reversed the earlier U.S. Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which stated that separate but equal schools was allowed and acceptable. This practice in fact created inherently unequal schools for African-American students across this country. The *Brown v. Board of Education* case made the practice of separate but equal schools unconstitutional. In 1955, another Federal ruling ordered school boards to draw up plans for desegregation of their school districts; however, no timetable was given for implementing these plans. The lack of a specific timetable made school desegregation a long, painful process in America.

## **Segregation in Montclair**

Montclair was a segregated community. African-Americans were segregated at movie theaters, restaurants, and businesses. The hospitals did not allow African-American physicians to treat their patients at their facilities until Dr. Frederick Douglas, Dr. Arthur Thornhill and others integrated the hospitals in the 1950s. Due to this segregation, thriving African-American businesses, churches and organizations were developed to serve the African-American community. The segregated African-American YMCA and YWCA became focal points of the community. Both the YMCA and YWCA were integrated in the 1950s.

## **Neighborhood School System**

The Montclair Public School systems also practiced segregation. African-American teachers were not hired in the schools until 1946. Mabel Frazier-Hudson was hired as the first African-American elementary school teacher at Glenfield School. African-American elementary school teachers were assigned to the predominantly Black schools and the secondary school teachers were hired in nonacademic fields. In the early twentieth century, graduation ceremonies were segregated with the African-Americans processing at the end of the graduation line and having separate graduation parties. African Americans and White students did attend the same schools. Elementary and junior high schools were organized on a neighborhood school system. Everyone went to the same high school.

The neighborhood school system bred segregated schools due to the residential patterns in Montclair. African-Americans have traditionally lived in the South End (Fourth Ward), Frog Hollow (off of Valley Road), Pine Street, and North Fullerton/Forest Street neighborhoods. Students in the South End (Fourth Ward) attended Glenfield School and in some cases Hillside Junior High School. Africans-Americans who lived in Frog Hollow and North Fullerton Avenue/Forest Street attended Rand School or Grove Street School and George Inness Junior High School. Although the Fourth Ward was originally

a White neighborhood, in the twentieth century it was predominately African-American. In the first half of the twentieth century, there were also Italians living in the same neighborhoods with the African-Americans. As the twentieth century progressed, the Italians moved out of the South End and Pine Street neighborhoods, leaving a mostly African-American population. The southwestern part of Montclair traditionally had a wealthy White neighborhood and, in 1949, Southwest School was formed to serve this neighborhood. According to Jane Manners in her paper, "Selling Integration," White parents living in predominantly Black school districts could send their children to predominantly White school districts. (Manners, 1997, 9)

For most of the twentieth century, Upper Montclair was closed off to African-Americans, due to discriminatory practices by the Montclair real estate agents or owners who would not sell Upper Montclair property to African-Americans. Some real estate agents would only sell property to African-Americans in the South End (Fourth Ward). In 1965, a Montclair Fair Housing Committee was formed to investigate housing discrimination in Montclair. This committee and the NAACP worked several years on this issue until the passing of the Fair Housing Act in 1968 brought a legal end to such practices.

The result of these neighborhood patterns and discriminatory practices was that the schools in Montclair had an racial imbalance with the majority of African-American students attending Glenfield and Nishuane Schools and the Upper Montclair schools attended by predominantly White students.

### **Elementary Schools and Junior High Schools are Challenged**

On the grade school level, the NAACP and African-American parents of Glenfield School students challenged this issue of racial imbalance in the schools in June 1961. Harris Davis, president of Glenfield PTA, organized with other parents to establish the Parents Emergency Committee. The parents and NAACP representatives picketed Glenfield School and met with the Board of Education to request that the Board form a citizens advisory group to study segregation at the elementary and junior high schools and to reorganize the neighborhood schools' boundaries.

They charged that the Board of Education was providing an inferior education with inferior textbooks, curriculum and other school services at Glenfield School. Schools in the African-American neighborhoods often had hand-me-down textbooks and furniture, and a less rigorous curriculum than the predominately White schools in Montclair. (Renaissance School, 2000, 11-12)

The NAACP for many years was active in issues involving racial discrimination in the Montclair public schools. Earlier in the twentieth century, they were involved in getting the Montclair schools to hire African-American teachers and to integrate the graduation ceremonies. Throughout the 1960s, the NAACP assisted the parents in the fight to create equal education for African-Americans in Montclair. Joining in the fight for desegregation were African-American churches as well as many White residents.

## Montclair Schools' Response

The road to school desegregation in Montclair was a long and painful one. Throughout the 1960s, the Board of Education was unsuccessful and inadequate in its attempts to address the concerns originally expressed by the Glenfield parents and the NAACP. In 1962, the Board of Education first decided to close Glenfield Junior High School, which was about 90% African-American, and keep Glenfield as an elementary school. By using a lottery system, the Glenfield junior high students were bused to Mt. Hebron, Hillside or George Inness Junior High Schools. A group of White Mt. Hebron parents and a group called the Committee for Neighborhood Schools unsuccessfully sued the Board of Education in the case *Marean vs. the Board of Education* for denying the White Mt. Hebron children equal rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. (Montclair 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1995, 120-121)

Other groups attempted to address the issues of segregation. The Taylor Committee, a citizen-based group, proposed that Montclair build a six-year secondary school complex. The voters rejected the Taylor plan.

The Board of Education proposed the Montclair Education Plan in 1966, which included renovating Hillside and Mt. Hebron schools to be junior high schools for fifth and sixth graders, George Inness would be the junior high school for ninth graders, a new school for seventh and eighth graders, busing some fifth and sixth graders from Edgemont to Nishuane schools and making changes to the neighborhood boundaries for Rand, Watchung, Southeast and Edgemont schools. These changes were to make these schools have a 33% minority population. The Montclair Education Plan caused anti-busing groups to protest against busing children from Edgemont School to Nishuane School.

The plan was adopted by the Board of Education but was strongly opposed by some members of the Montclair community and was defeated by voters. (Manners, 1995, 22- 23; Montclair 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1995, 122)

After the Montclair Education and Taylor plans failed, the frustrated African-American parents sent a petition to the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, stating that the Board of Education was not making adequate plans for desegregation. In 1968, in the case known as *Rice et al vs. the Board of Education*, the Commissioner ruled that the Board of Education must create a plan to solve the racial imbalance in the Montclair schools. (Manners, 1995, 27)

According to the Renaissance School publication, "You Can't Give Up the Power," in response to the parents' petition to the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, in 1967 the Board of Education introduced the 5-3-4 Plan, which recommended sending African American students in the first through the fourth grades at Rand School to Watchung or Edgemont Schools, and White fifth and sixth graders at Watchung and Edgemont schools to Rand school. The proposal included sending fifth and sixth graders at Southwest to Nishuane School. This plan also was not accepted by the Commissioner of Education. (Renaissance School, 2000, 14)

On a national level, several important court rulings were made which affected school desegregation efforts in the United States. In 1967, the U.S. District Court ruled that *de facto* segregation was unconstitutional and ordered the abolition of the tracking system. Furthermore, schools were to be desegregated by the end of the year. In 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the end of all school segregation. In 1970, the Senate passed an amendment to deny federal funding to school districts that continued to maintain a racial imbalance as a result of housing segregation. These national rulings created additional pressure on the Montclair Board of Education to find a solution to the problems in Montclair.

### **Related Issues at the High School**

In the late fall of 1968, members of the Black Student Union at the Montclair High School protested the dismissal of an African-American guidance counselor at the High School. Some vandalism and violence against White students was reported.

In January 1970, African-American students took over the public address system making a list of complaints and asking their fellow African-American students to meet on the first floor of the school. Later, the students moved to the auditorium. This demonstration was more peaceful than the one in 1968 and a list of complaints were given to the administration for consideration. The issues summarized in the "Statement by the Board of Education" (February 5, 1970) included creating a percentage of African-American teachers proportionate to the percentage of African-American students; reassigning African-American seniors to African-American guidance counselors; offering courses in African-American culture and literature; providing space for the Black Student Union tutoring program; changing policies on cutting classes and making up assignments following a suspension; and ending of all tracking and grouping.

The Montclair High School, although integrated, used a tracking system to separate the African-American and White students. African-Americans were often placed into vocational rather than pre-college tracks and African-American students were not always encouraged to pursue a college education.

### **More plans are introduced to desegregate the schools**

Under court mandate, in 1971 the Montclair Board of Education developed an interim plan to reorganize the junior high schools but left the elementary schools as they were. This plan proposed busing African-American fifth graders to Glenfield and Nishuane, sixth graders to Hillside School and seventh and eighth graders to Hillside or Mt. Hebron. This plan was also not accepted by the Commissioner of Education. (Montclair 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1995, 123)

In 1972, the Board of Education tried another system, called the Plan of Action. Some of the elementary schools would choose one grade to be bused to another school that year. At Watchung, Grove Street, Edgemont, Hillside and the Southwest schools, students who lived in the African-American neighborhoods were bused to Bradford or Northeast and

students in White neighborhoods were bused to Nishuane or Glenfield for only one year. (Montclair 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1995, 123-124)

Anti-busing groups were also active throughout the sixties. BEAM (Better Education for All Montclair) was an anti-busing group which replaced the Committee for Neighborhood Schools. In the 1970s, BEAM and the anti-busing groups were able to gain control of the Board of Education.

### **Magnet School System is developed**

Starting in 1974, the Board of Education in the Freedom of Choice Plan allowed parents to send their children to schools outside of their neighborhood or assigned schools so long as the minority quotas were met. However, there were still students who could not attend the schools of their choice.

In April 1976, after attempting to initiate a no-busing plan, the Board of Education reinstituted the Plan of Action for the 1976-1977 school year.

In June 1976, plans for the magnet system were developed for the 1977-78 school year. Parents could choose which school their children could attend. Each school specialized in a specific educational area of expertise, and had to maintain a 25% minority student population. Nishuane, Glenfield and Hillside Schools were for gifted students. Nishuane covered grades K-2 and Hillside grades 3-5. Glenfield, for grades 6-8, emphasized a gifted student program for those interested in the performing arts. Bradford School was originally the basics school but later focused on information technology. Mt. Hebron was the basics school for junior high students. Grove, Edgemont and Watchung continued to be neighborhood schools. Renaissance School, which opened in 1997, also attracts gifted students. Grove Street School closed in 1982. (Renaissance Schools, 2000, 20)

For the most part, the magnet schools, which became a model for other magnet school systems in New Jersey, have been a successful solution to the segregation issue in Montclair.

### **Works Cited**

Montclair 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book Committee. *Montclair 1868-1995*. 1995.  
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Manners, Jane. *Selling Integration: A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair*. 28 February 1977. Student paper for Harvard University.

Renaissance School. *You Can't Give up the Power of the Struggle: Reflective Analysis of School Desegregation by American's Youth...* 2000. Montclair: Renaissance School.



## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON SCHOOL DESEGREGATION**

### **MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES**

**50 South Fullerton Avenue**

**Montclair, NJ**

**973-744-0500**

**Public access available by appointment**

#### **Montclair Subject Vertical Files**

##### **Schools-School Desegregation, 1960-1977, 1 folder**

The file contains newspaper clippings on this issue from the *Montclair Times*.

#### **Township of Montclair Collection**

##### **Board of Education, 1962-1974**

Collection contains information material on the Board of Education desegregation plans including the Plan of Action. Also included is a copy of the Taylor Plan, the *Rice vs. Board of Education* ruling of the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, statements regarding the high school demonstration and letters regarding anti-busing groups.

##### **Township of Montclair Boxes A1-A2**

#### **BOOKS:**

Anand, Bernadette, and Michelle Fine, et al. *You Can't Give Up the Power of the Struggle: Reflective Analysis of School Desegregation by American's Youth*. Published by Renaissance School as part of an Oral History Project, 2000.

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Montclair Board of Education, 1990. **Local History 378 Mon**

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# **MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**Written by Elizabeth Shepard**

## **INTRODUCTION TO MONTCLAIR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

The Montclair African-American Oral History Project was funded by a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities in 2000-2001. Elizabeth Shepard, Local History Archivist, research assistants Kenneth French and Asantewaa Harris, and a team of volunteers interviewed forty-one people. The interviewees were recommended through networking within the African-American organizations in town and the African American community. The interviews focused on the interviewees' lives in Montclair. Most of the interviewees were senior citizens or had resided in Montclair for at least fifty years. The topics discussed in the oral history interviews included family, schools, careers, neighborhoods, African-American businesses, African-American organizations and churches, civil rights and racial discrimination, and changes in Montclair. Following are summaries and excerpts from these interviews.

### **FAMILY LIFE IN MONTCLAIR**

The African-American community has been in Montclair since the colonial period. A small slave population resided in Montclair in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Histories written by Henry Whittemore and Philip Doremus mention some of the slaves owned by the Crane family who founded Cranetown (Montclair). One of the slaves, Joseph Howe, was freed and given property through Nathaniel Crane's will in 1831. He lived out his remaining years in a house on Claremont Avenue still known as the "Slave House." Doremus, in his *Reminiscences of Montclair*, also mentions a house on Orange Road and Myrtle Avenue where Nathaniel Crane's slaves and their descendents lived for several generations. An African-American woman known as "Aunt Polly" later occupied another Crane homestead on the corner of Plymouth and Orange Road. The 1850 census listed 47 free African-American males and 49 African-American females. (Doremus, Philip. *Reminiscences of Montclair*. Montclair: no publisher, 1908, 10-12).

In the 1870s, after the Civil War, large numbers of African-Americans moved to Montclair from the South, especially from Virginia. In 1870, there were about 36 African-Americans in Montclair; by 1894, the population had increased to about 1600. According to Henry Whittemore's *History of Montclair Township, New Jersey*, sometime in the 1870s, a Montclair resident traveled to Loudon County, Virginia, to recruit African-Americans for domestic positions in Montclair. Many African-Americans came from this county in Virginia during this early migration. Some of the oral history interviewees' families go back to the nineteenth century, including ancestors of Ruth Burton and Sharon Burton Turner. John Price's grandmother, Hannah Alexander, also came to Montclair in the late nineteenth century. (Whittemore, Henry. *History of Montclair Township, New Jersey*. Suburban Publishing Company, 1990, 105)

In the early twentieth century, the migration from the South continued. African Americans migrated to the North from the South to seek better lives and more

opportunities than could be found in the segregated South. Most people came to Montclair because a family member was already living here or in the surrounding area. In 1910, there were 2,000 African-Americans in Montclair; by 1940, there were 6,777. The 1990 census listed 11,697 African-Americans in Montclair. Some of the families represented by the oral history interviewees that came in the first half of the twentieth century include Belle, Bolden, Cannady, Douglas, Jones, Moms, Myatt, Owens, Page, Revies, Schuyler, Sturdivant, Tyler and Walthall.

Most of the people interviewed, or their parents or grandparents, came from Virginia and North Carolina. Some also came from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Illinois. A few are descended from a large population of people of African descent who came to Montclair from the West Indies and Bermuda. Families represented by the oral history interviewees that emigrated from the West Indies included Cummings, Leach and Tyson.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS**

Most African-Americans settled in the South End (Fourth Ward) of Montclair. Other pockets of African-American neighborhoods were in Frog Hollow off of Valley Road, and the Forest Street/North Fullerton Avenue, Grove Street and Pine Street areas. The South End was originally a predominantly White neighborhood. Gradually, African Americans moved into the South Ward as the Whites moved out. Italian-Americans tended to live in the same neighborhoods with African-Americans. Today there is a reverse trend as more Whites are moving back into these neighborhoods.

In the first half of the twentieth century, these neighborhoods are described in the interviews as nice quiet neighborhoods where everyone banded together to help each other. Children were looked out for by all of the neighbors.

Louise Dunbar speaks about growing up in her neighborhood on Linden Avenue in the South Ward in the late 1910s and 1920s:

Oh, the neighborhood. That was really the key word-neighborhood. Everybody was the same. I can remember when we lived on Linden Avenue. I lived on Linden Avenue until I was about five or six. The neighborhood was just great. People were good neighbors. They loved each other. They took care of each other's kids and it was just a neighborhood. And on Linden Avenue we had Black and White; who cared who was Black and who cared who was White? The Fishers lived next door to us when we lived at 33 Linden and they were in and out of our house and we were in and out of their house. And Willowmere Avenue and Hollywood Avenue were not even there. They were just like nothing [but] fields. And my grandfather Frank Schuyler and Mister Fisher's father and everybody was "Grandpa," Grandpa Fisher and George Greenleaf's grandfather, Grandpa Woody. And Marguerite Townes Rudd, her grandfather had cleared off all that land and made a great big garden and everybody on the street ate out of that garden. And on the other side of the street, on the left hand side of Linden Avenue going down they had mushroom houses, where they grew mushrooms.

And there was a lady, her name was Mrs. Hart who lived in Upper Montclair, I think she owned them. Because I can remember, she used to come down on a horse and then there was a man who used to stay with us, Mister Williams, he used to work for her and every night this horse and wagon thing would come down. If I can remember correctly, it was made like a wooden wagon but it was all covered over. It was made like barrel but it was a great big wagon. And they would somehow shoot steam into the mushroom houses and then the next day they'd go in and harvest the mushrooms. Because, see, a mushroom is a fungus and it grew on these dead logs in there. (Louise Dunbar, oral history interview, 2000, 7-8)

Orene Shelton speaks about her neighborhood on Fessler Place and North Fullerton Avenue in the 1920s and 1930s:

Every parent looked after every child. So, if Mrs. Jones on the corner saw you doing something wrong, she would tell you to stop, and you'd better stop because you obeyed those surrogate parents as well as your own. We played baseball and kickball in the streets after school. It was a good neighborhood. A lot of children. Always somebody to play with. Some of the parents worked, a few of the mothers were home. And, as I said, the mothers who were home supervised every child in the neighborhood. You never felt any fear of crime or violence. I think most of the neighborhoods in Montclair were like that back in those years. People took pride in their homes, and most of the people around me owned their own homes. And everybody got to know one another. I still see former neighbors as I go around Montclair. (Orene Shelton, oral history interview, 2001, 8-9)

Some of the older residents remember more segregated activities in the neighborhood, with African-American and Italian-American children having their own recreational sports teams. Others, born in the 1950s, remember Italian-Americans and African American children in these neighborhoods playing with each other in shared activities.

Louis Sturdivant, who lived on Forest Street in the late 1930s and early 1940s, remembers the interactions between African-Americans and Italian-Americans in his neighborhood:

It's always been mixed. Basically, if you go back to my childhood days, it was always was Italians and Blacks. And now it's 50-50 anyhow. Even when we were growing up as children, the Italian boys had their ball team and we had our ball team. If it was football season we had a Black team colored team and they had a White team. We never had any problems. It worked out well. (Louis Sturdivant, oral history interview, 2001, 6)

Audrey Fletcher, who grew up on North Fullerton Avenue and Fessler Place in the 1950s, speaks about some of the activities she engaged in and the interactions between African Americans and the Italians and Irish who also lived in the neighborhood:

There were six of us who actually grew up on a little dead end dirt road in Montclair that isn't paved to this day, and that's Fessler Place. It's right off of North Fullerton Avenue across from the public works buildings. (Audrey Fletcher, oral history interview, 2001, 2)

And I well remember the times as a kid growing up there on a day like today. Of course back in those days we really had some snow. And then all of the schools were neighborhood schools, and I went to Rand School which was just down one block from where I lived. And when schools would close back in the late '40s to '50s you knew that we had a lot of snow. We would all gather out in the street and we'd get our sleds and we would go down to George Inness Park. And there's a hill that leads from Park Street right down into the park and there's a brook down there. And we would start at the top of Park Street and we would take our sleds and we would do what we used to call a belly flop. And we would run and we'd throw the sled down, we'd jump on it and we'd go over the stairs, down the slope, into the brook. I would look up, here was Mary [her mother].

Here comes Mary. She'd come storming around that school building and she'd come down to where we were and she would say to us "Don't you have sense enough to come home? Look at you. You're freezing!" And we would be. I mean icicles would be coming off of us we would be so cold. We were having such a good time that we just didn't have sense enough to come home. She would make us go home. We would get warmed up. We'd go right back out again. (Audrey Fletcher, oral history interview, 2001, 3)

In the summer the township of Montclair used to fund summer activities in all of the local school playgrounds and I went to Rand playground. And we would start out, school would close a certain day in June and before the end of June the playground would open. I would say a week or so after school would close for that year. Rose Grieco was the Director of the playground. She and Vince Shelba, I'll never forget them. And they would be there in the morning. I guess [we] would start out about 8:30, 9:00 in the morning. We'd have a break at lunchtime; everybody would go home to have lunch. And then about 12:30, quarter to one they'd be back again and we'd stay until about 5:00 in the afternoon. And then Mr. Shelba would come back later in the afternoon for the older kids and they would have activities in the late afternoon until just before it got dark. In summertime it would get dark I guess about 7:30, 8:00. Horseshoes, checkers, badminton, tetherball, box-hockey. We would make weave baskets [and] we would make potholders. Rose Grieco was a master storyteller. She would get the whole group -- and you're talking about probably anywhere from sixty to a hundred kids each day would be on that playground. In the heat of the day if it got too hot for us to play baseball -- I was a baseball star. She gathered all of us, and I'm talking about different age groups, and we all go down to the

end of the playground which is now [the] parking lot and tennis courts right across from Rand playground. There was a softball field in there and all the way at the end there was a weeping willow tree and we would sit there with this little Italian woman who was like our mother. We loved that woman. And she would tell us stories, they were usually ghost stories and they were so real that there were times when we would break for lunch and go home and I'd be scared to go up the street. I'd be looking for the guy in that black car that she told us about, and there was a story, it was called "Room for One More," about this elevator.

There was this guy, this strange character who would be on this elevator and he would say to people, as the elevator would stop on the floor, "There's room for one more," and the elevator fell. I mean these were like little horror stories. We would make costumes and in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade we would be walking up Bloomfield Avenue, or we would have a float that we would make. And we would do the whole dance and all kinds of things related to our culture, African awareness even then. But we were one, big, solid family in that neighborhood; Forest Street, North Fullerton Avenue, Chestnut Street, the little streets off of Forest Street. That was our little area between Walnut Street and up to where I lived I guess that was the highest, going in that direction that we went. But we had those kinds of activities. And the coming together. .. Italians, Blacks, Irish, you name it, we were all one big family during the entire summer with this one woman who did all that.  
(Audrey Fletcher, oral history interview, 2001, 3-4)

All the people interviewed spoke of changes in their neighborhoods as these neighborhoods have become more diversified in recent years.

## **SCHOOLS**

For most of the twentieth century, Montclair had a neighborhood school system. African-Americans attended schools near or within the African-American neighborhoods. African-Americans in the South Ward went to Glenfield School or Nishuane School, Hillside Junior High School and Montclair High School. Glenfield School went up to the ninth grade. African-Americans in the Frog Hollow and North Fullerton/Forest Street areas went to Rand School or Grove Street School, George Inness Junior High School and Montclair High School.

Many of the people interviewed had pleasant memories of their schools. A few, however, shared experiences of racial discrimination from teachers, school administrators and other students. For example, many spoke of the track system at the Montclair High School, which tended to place African-Americans in the business or vocational rather than college bound tracks.

Leona Smith speaks about her early experiences with racial prejudice at her elementary school:

I first learned about prejudice when I was in elementary school. I remember it was really funny because I remember it so clearly. There were two girls, Jackie and Carol. They both lived on Cedar Avenue in Montclair across the street from each other. And at the time I didn't know how far...it was really funny because as an adult I realize that they lived right next door to the school and their mother could see and so one day...I guess I must have been in third grade or second grade... Carol [said], "Oh! Are you Black?" And I said, "I guess so." You know two little kids not knowing too much is going on. And she said, "Because if you're Black my mother said I can't play with you anymore." And I said, "Oh." We used to walk together and then we thought when her mother could see us we would split up like we weren't walking together.

Ms. Smith also remembers two kids in the fourth grade that "had a birthday party, which is fine, and they came to school and said, 'We are not having any Black people at our party.' They like threw it in your face." (Leona Smith, oral history interview, 2001, 4)

My parents didn't teach us prejudice. I learned that outside. We would come home and tell our parents and my mother would say, "Don't say you don't like anybody, don't say you hate them, just hate their ways." My parents were bringing us [up] in a different mode: you don't hate people, you just hate the things they do. The theory behind that was that people can change their ways, so you don't hate the person, you hate the ways that they have. (Leona Smith, oral history interview, 2001, 5)

Some of the people interviewed were teachers in the Montclair Public School system. African-Americans teachers were not hired until the 1940s in the Montclair Public Schools. Mrs. Tate first had to teach in Newark before finding work in Montclair. Daisy Douglas is another early African-American teacher in Montclair.

Daisy Douglas speaks about African-American teachers in Montclair:

There were certain areas in which we were hired. The first one that was hired was Mabel Frazier-Hudson, in the elementary school at Glenfield. They would hire elementary teachers and they were assigned to predominantly Black schools and then when we got to the secondary level, we were hired mainly in the nonacademic fields -- phys ed, home ec, special ed. So it was awhile before they got around to hiring us as academic teachers. But it was after 1957, 1958. The first Black, I think in the high school was in phys ed, Jeanne Heningburg. It was a few years after that before they hired anyone in academics. (Daisy Douglas, oral history interview, 2001, 8)

The neighborhood school system in Montclair was challenged in the 1960s. The system created a racial imbalance in the schools with Glenfield School becoming predominantly



African-American while Upper Montclair schools were predominately White. Parents felt that Glenfield School was not getting the same supplies and quality of education as the Upper Montclair schools. A class action lawsuit and court order led Montclair to develop the Magnet School system and to begin busing children to other neighborhood schools. Although none of the people interviewed attended school during the period of desegregation, some of them had children in the schools at this time.

## **CAREERS**

Many African-Americans in the early part of the twentieth century came to Montclair to provide domestic work for the wealthy families in Montclair. Many of the people interviewed had grandparents or parents who did domestic work or they themselves did domestic work. Although domestic work and other labor jobs were among the few opportunities for African-Americans in Montclair in the early twentieth century, there were many African-American businessmen and professionals in Montclair. As the twentieth century progressed, African-Americans saw more opportunities for employment. The people interviewed had a variety of occupations: teachers, secretaries, factory workers, cosmetologists, electricians, doctors, landscapers, businessmen, nurses, bankers, directors, executives, postal workers, chemists, social workers, employment counselors, carpenters, crossing guards, nutritionists, firefighters, and custodians. Some of the people interviewed were the first African-American to work at their respective workplaces. For example, John Sterling was Montclair's first African-American firefighter and Assistant Fire Chief. Alice Price was the first African-American at Mountainside School of Nursing and the Bloomfield Public Health Department. Dr.

Bolden was the first African-American Dean of the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-New Jersey Dental School.

## **AFRICAN-AMERICAN BUSINESSES**

At the start of the twentieth century, African-Americans had a thriving business community in Montclair. Many African-Americans had businesses on Bloomfield Avenue and in the South End. Several of the interviewees share memories of some of these businesses.

Orene Shelton talks about some of the early businesses in Montclair in 1930s and 1940s:

I remember Mr. Rudd who started out with a dairy. He and my father were friends. They were friendly at the YMCA. Mr. Rudd started with a dairy and then went into the real estate business. He was quite a visionary man in the town of Montclair and admired a lot by the African-American community. There was another man named Mr. Abernathy who was a carpenter, builder. He would buy old run down homes and fix them up, and sell them. I think he owned quite a bit of property when he died. (My father, Hugh Mon-is, founded a fuel --coal and oil-- business during this period). Tom Womble was the first person that we knew who had received a degree in pharmacy. He was the first Black pharmacist in Montclair. He had a business on Bloomfield Avenue, and I remember the day it

opened. Everybody was so proud of him. And we'd go there to get ice cream sodas and to meet our boyfriends. Tom Womble's drugstore on Bloomfield Avenue was kind of a landmark in Montclair. There were two Black morticians, Mr. Holcombe, who was my dad's great friend, had a mortician's place on Mission Street. Cotton was the other Black mortician on Bloomfield Avenue.

You had a choice when someone in your family died of picking one or the other. There were the Black doctors and dentists in Montclair. Most African-American families went to Black physicians. I think Dr. Douglas was the first African American to get a position at Mountainside Hospital. As time developed, more and more African-American doctors joined the staff there. Montclair was a choice place to live, and many professionals bought homes here. (Orene Shelton, oral history interview, 2001, 9)

Dr. Theodore Bolden also remembers African-American businesses from this period:

I just remember that on Bloomfield Avenue, facing Hartley Street. On the north side of the street, there used to be a restaurant. Well, there were businesses. There were barbershops and beauty parlors. Mr. Whitfield had a gasoline station, that was the Shell -- that was the one that was moved on Harrison up to the corner of Bloomfield Avenue. My recollection is that he held it open while the owners were away in the Army. Physicians, Dr. LaVerte Warren and Dr. Thompson, dentists, Dr. Johnny Fitzgerald, shoe repair shop, Mr. Henderson on Bloomfield Avenue, cleaning and pressing facility right down Bloomfield Avenue near Pine Street near Hartley Street and there was one that I worked in while I was going to school at night, Makasar Beauty Parlor owned and operated by two people who came here from St. Louis, Missouri, Mack Jenious. The wife was the beautician and ran the school. The husband was a salesman and sold beauty products. I worked with them a couple of summers and we sold beauty products all over Northern Jersey, one or two places in South Jersey. And even made a couple trips up into Connecticut, he carried his own label, Makasar Beauty Products. (Dr. Theodore Bolden, oral history interview, 2001, 9-10) John

Price also remembers businesses from the 1930s and 1940s:

Then the Leach [building] came in and they built this for recreation on Bloomfield Avenue. They had a pool hall upstairs. Walker had the pool club. You walked down the basement and you went to the bowling alley. Upstairs [there were] different rooms where you could have banquets and dances. And then the big dance used to go down [to] the main floor. (John Price, oral history interview, 2001, 19)

Sandra Lang speaks about some of the businesses in the 1950s:

Sonnie's Restaurant was a very popular restaurant. People would come after church on Sundays from all over Essex County to Sonnie's Restaurant. That was quite a thriving business. There were lots of shoeshine parlors on Bloomfield

Avenue. Barber shops. There was a pharmacy on Bloomfield Avenue. There was also a pharmacy on the corner of Mission Street and Bloomfield Avenue. There were thriving businesses back in those days. (Sandra Lang, oral history interview, 2001, 8-9)

Sandra Lang also speaks about the popular dance hall, the Sterington House:

It was on the corner of Gates and Bloomfield Avenue. It started as a dance hall catering establishment. People could have their wedding reception there. Organizations had their affairs there. It was a big to-do. Eventually downstairs on the first floor there was a restaurant and cocktail lounge. They used to have Jazz, tremendous Jazz on Saturday afternoons and Saturdays nights. People came from all over to hear the Jazz musicians at the Sterington House. It was very very popular for the African-American community. Oh it was, it really, really was a wonderful place. You didn't have to worry about where you wanted to go with an organization for luncheon, dancing, your fundraiser. Everything was always the Sterington House. You could go to a nice local restaurant and hear good jazz music. That was the only place. There were some other club bars but nothing like that. (Sandra Lang, oral history interview, 2001, 9)

## **RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Many of the people interviewed shared experiences with segregation and racial discrimination in Montclair. Segregation was in place in Montclair in the first half of the twentieth century. Businesses such as the movie theaters were segregated and other businesses did not welcome African-Americans.

Orene Shelton speaks about her memories of discrimination at Montclair businesses:

There was Grunings, it was an ice cream restaurant place. And, on Church Street, there were all kinds of little dining rooms and so forth that the African-American students wouldn't think of going in there. I don't know whether we were not allowed to, or we just never felt that we were welcomed. I do remember an incident of racial discrimination and picketing that I was involved in. There was a skating rink over the hill of Bloomfield Avenue, where there's now a car wash place. African-Americans were not permitted in there. And the NAACP, which my parents were always very active in, had a picket and protest march. I was in the picket line. Eventually, the NAACP was able to get that skating rink to desegregate. So, I was well aware of the practice of segregation although Montclair may have been more subtle than some other towns. (Orene Shelton, oral history interview, 2001, 10)

Hortense Tate remembers the segregated movie theaters:

You see now, there was a little segregation in Montclair at the movies, but I didn't go to movies. And right now, they have movies upstairs and I just don't go. I'd rather read a book or call up my friends and yak, yak, yak. Because I've been that way and I haven't the urge to see a movie. I'm not boasting but that's the way I am. In those days, if I had done anything I couldn't get a job in the stores. There are just so many things that I've recognized and I just won't do it. And Montclair had segregation that you sat upstairs or off to the side, so I just didn't go to the movies. The movies weren't exciting to me. (Hortense Tate, oral history interview, 2000, 3)

There were separate YMCAs for African-Americans (Washington Street Branch) and Whites (Park Street). Many people experienced racial discrimination in the workplace.

Discrimination was apparent in the Montclair school system, town offices and police and fire departments.

John Sterling remembers his first years at the Fire Department where he was the first African-American firefighter:

I went on the department in '52. I was the first Black on the department. Then in 1961 I became a lieutenant. Fortunato was the public safety director at the time. His cousin's husband came on the same time I did and he was promoted to lieutenant [at] the same time but when they promoted me there was a big deal about it. Guys were saying, "Where is he going to work? Who is he going to command?" And they made 13 different transfers to make sure I didn't get to command certain people. So I was assigned to a truck company at [the] headquarters on Bloomfield Avenue. Of course, the fellows under me, they were in a position to retire. If they didn't like it, they could say, "To hell with this, I'm going." It was quite a thing. In fact, when I first went on it was quite a mess. I had a whole dormitory to myself and I had a bed and a locker to myself.

Everyone shared the lockers and I had a big locker to myself; I had a bed to myself. So, in the dorm no one spoke to me. It was amazing to me; I really didn't expect that. I figured it was a job; I was only looking for a job. I was married and had two children. So I was just looking for a job to take care of my family. So all of that side stuff really didn't matter to me as long as I got a paycheck every other week. It was security for my family; I wasn't concerned about the social stuff within the department and the fact that most everybody on the department never spoke to me for the first year or so. There was one fellow from Mississippi who came on with me and at the change of shifts he would say, "Hi, how're you doing?" But the rest of them never said boo. That happened for I would say the first couple of years. Then the guys began to mellow, some began to talk. (John Sterling, oral history interview, 2000, 5)

African-American physicians could not care for their patients or practice at the hospitals in Montclair.

Dr. Elaine Douglas talks about her father, Dr. Frederick Douglas, and his integration of the Montclair hospitals:

He and Dr. Thornhill actually integrated the medical staffs at Mountainside, Community and St. Vincent's Hospitals. He grew up in Montclair. He graduated from Montclair High School and then he went to medical school at Howard University. When he left Montclair,... the hospitals were still segregated. In other words, when a Black patient had to enter the hospital, even though they had a Black physician on the outside, a White physician took care of them in the hospital. They were returned to the Black physician's care once they were discharged. When he left to go to medical school, one of his objectives was to come back to Montclair and try to become admitted to the medical staffs here in Montclair. So that was the goal of his, even as a young man. (Dr. Elaine Douglas, oral history interview, 2001, 2)

Dad was the first African-American to achieve full attending status at the hospitals, because Dr. Thornhill at that time was an older gentleman and was getting ready to retire when he came on staff. They both came on staff at the same time. But Dad was the one who actually had an active hospital practice. And like I said, it was something that he wanted to do and it was a difficult thing. He had to fight for every promotion that he got. (Elaine Douglas, oral history interview, 2001, 6)

Daisy Douglas, Dr. Frederick Douglas's wife, speaks about the difficulties her husband had integrating the hospitals:

He did the routine application, of course it was not accepted. He was working with the American Veterans Committee at that time (1946) and the NAACP. Kurt Campaign was the president of the American Veterans Committee. Between those two groups, they decided to push the application, find out why it was rejected. It was some time before they finally accepted Black physicians. About the same time, all three hospitals decided that they would accept some and he was accepted first at St. Vincent's, then Mountainside and Montclair Community. The first stage of entry into working in the hospital was as a courtesy physician and that was where they were all accepted at first. Then you have to do some other things; I don't remember what it was to be an attending. It required more work and commitment. He did work until he got full attending status at Mountainside. He was the first Black to get that at Mountainside. They did accept two or three of the other physicians. Frank Thompson, Jr., Albert Lynch, Arthur Thornhill, were also accepted at the various places. Each hospital accepted one or two at about the same time. It took awhile before they finally accepted them as courtesy and then they worked up from that. (Daisy Douglas, oral history interview, 2001, 7)

The real estate agents would not sell homes to African-Americans in Upper Montclair and other predominantly White neighborhoods in Montclair. Some apartment landlords would not rent to African-Americans.

As in the country nationwide, some segregation practices in Montclair began to subside during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s-60s. Although Civil Rights and Fair Housing legislation put a legal end to many of the segregation practices in Montclair, many African-Americans still feel they have a long way to go in achieving equal opportunities and treatment in Montclair and the United States.

### **AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS AND CHURCHES**

African-American organizations and churches as we have seen in the preceding chapters of this resource guide are an integral part of the Montclair African-American community. The senior residents interviewed remember fondly the Washington Street YMCA and the YWCA. Both of these organizations were central gathering places for young people in the first half of the twentieth century. Others spoke of the importance of their churches in their lives. Other groups mentioned in the interviews are the NAACP, the National Council of Negro Women, and the Neighborhood Center

### **CHANGES IN MONTCLAIR**

There are different views on how Montclair has changed over the years. One positive change mentioned by many was the improved racial relations and diversity in the town. Older residents commented that Montclair is not as segregated as it once was in the first half of the twentieth century. However, many felt that racial discrimination is still present in Montclair. Many voiced concerns about changes in the neighborhoods and the housing crisis in town brought on by the Montclair Connection, high taxes and development in the town, which are pricing out many African-Americans out of their homes and neighborhoods. Some discussed the change in the African-American business community, which is not as thriving as it once was.

## **ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER**

### **Alston, Frank Sr. - RESTRICTED**

*Interviewed by Asantewaa Harris, July 19, 2001*

Frank Alston was born in Montclair in 1924. His parents came from Virginia. He attended Glenfield School, Grove Street School, and George Inness Junior High School. He lived in several places in the Fourth Ward. He owned the Alston Linoleum and Carpet store. He also worked as a truck driver and at General Electric. He spoke about movies in Glenfield Park and African-American businesses. Mr. Alston, a survivor of the Port Chicago Explosion during World War II, discussed the 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of this historical event.

### **Bolden, Theodore**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, April 2, 2001*

Dr. Bolden was born in Middleburg, Virginia, and came to Montclair in 1930. He is the son of Theodore D. Bolden and Mary Elizabeth Bolden nee Jackson. He attended Nishuane School, Glenfield School and Montclair High School, Lincoln University, Meharry Medical College, and the University of Illinois. He was the first African-American Dean of the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-New Jersey Dental School. He also taught at Seton Hall College of Medicine and Dentistry. He lived in the Linden Avenue and Montague Place neighborhoods. He spoke about the Washington Street YMCA and St. Paul's Baptist Church, as well as school sports, African-American businesses and race relations.

### **Burton, Ruth**

*Interviewed by Asantewaa Harris, July 24, 2001*

Ruth Burton's family came to Montclair from Virginia in the 1880s. She attended Glenfield School, Nishuane School, Hillside School and Montclair High School. She worked as an insurance underwriter. She also spoke about the YWCA and African-American businesses. Her husband, Joseph Burton, was the first African-American Superintendent for the New Jersey Transit System. Joseph Burton was the first African American to be inducted in the Hall of Fame for New Jersey Transit in 1999. Her son, Ron Burton, was inducted into the New Jersey Sports Hall of Fame. Her daughter, Sharon Burton-Turner, was also interviewed.

### **Cannady, William**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, July 6, 2001*

Mr. Cannady was born in Phoenixville, PA, and came to Montclair in 1935. His parents, Robert Lee Cannady and Rose Gives, were from West

Virginia. He attended Glenfield School, Hillside School and Montclair High School, and the Montclair Art School at the Montclair Art Museum. He worked at Maxwells, Bamburgers, a cold storage warehouse, and as a rigger and a carpenter. He is a member of St. Peter Claver Church. He also spoke about the YMCA, racial discrimination at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, movie theaters and bowling alleys. He lived in the South End and on Marston Place.

**Connor, Mrs. L. M.**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, November 10, 2000*

Mrs. L. M. Connor was born in Virginia and came to Montclair in the 1930s. She is the founder of the Hollow Day Care Center and Kennedy Human Relations Project. She also is a cosmologist at her own beauty salon and Overbrook Hospital. She lived on Valley Road and worked in Frog Hollow. She also spoke about Union Baptist Church, where she was a Sunday School teacher, founder of the Welcome Club, executive director of the Nursery School and chairman of the building fund, and about the NAACP. She was also a charter member of the National Council of Negro Women. She wrote a book, *A Lillie Blooms: Mud Between My Toes*, published in 2000. Only the transcript of this interview is available.

**Credle, Maude**

*Interviewed by Laura Krause, January 2001*

Mrs. Credle was born in Montclair in 1919. Her parents were John Tyson and Maude Alberta Cooke, both from the British West Indies. She grew up in the Pine Street neighborhood, and attended Montclair High School. She worked at Picatinny Arsenal, Mountainside Hospital and the Senior Nutrition Project. She spoke about the YWCA and St. Mark's United Methodist Church. Her husband was John Francis Credle.

**Douglas, Elaine and Daisy**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, March 19, 2001*

This interview focused on Dr. Frederick Douglas and his integration of Mountainside, Montclair Community and St. Vincent Hospitals. Dr. Douglas was the first African-American physician at Mountainside Hospital. His daughter, Dr. Elaine Douglas, took over his practice. His wife, Daisy Douglas, was a teacher in the Montclair Public Schools. They also spoke about Nor Jer Men and NAACP. Their home and practice are on Lincoln Street.

**Dunbar, Louise**

*Interviewed by Kenneth French, November 24, 2000*

Mrs. Dunbar was born in Montclair in 1913. Her parents were Leslie and Elmyra Schuyler. Her grandfather, Charles Schuyler, was a former slave. She attended Nishuane School, Glenfield School and Montclair



High School. She worked in mail-order advertising and as a clerk-typist at the Labor and Industry in Newark. She lived on Charles Street, Linden Avenue, Monroe Place and Walnut Street. She spoke about the Pastime Rod and Gun Club, the African-American Elks lodges in Montclair, the YWCA, the NAACP, St. Mark's United Methodist Church and racial discrimination in the schools, businesses and movie theaters.

**Fletcher, Audrey**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, February 5, 2001.*

Mrs. Fletcher was born in Montclair in 1944. Her parents were Morton and Mary Revies. She attended Rand School, George Inness Junior High School and Montclair High School. She is the director of the Montclair Child Development (Head Start). She also was on the Township Council. She discussed the Chestnut, Fullerton Avenue and Fessler Place neighborhood. She also spoke about the Rand School Playground, sports, Fourth of July Parade, African-American Heritage Day Parade and Festival, civil rights and desegregation of the Montclair schools.

**Ford, Louise**

*Interviewed by Asantewaa Harris, September 25, 2001*

Mrs. Ford was born in Western Pennsylvania. She moved to Montclair in 1954. She spoke about Montclair school desegregation, African-American businesses, the YWCA, Trinity United Presbyterian Church and the Hollow Day Care Center. She lives on Southern Terrace.

**Hamm, Lawrence**

*Interviewed by Asantewaa Harris, September 9, 2001*

Mr. Hamm was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in Newark, N.J. He married Montclair resident Michele Miller and moved to Montclair in 1991. He founded the People's Organization for Progress in Newark; the organization now has branches in Montclair and other towns in New Jersey. He spoke about the Rainbow Coalition, Million Man Montclair, NAACP, school segregation and police brutality.

**Jackson, Clarence - RESTRICTED**

*Interviewed by Josephine Bonomo, December 6, 2000*

Mr. Jackson was born in Montclair and attended Rand, Hillside and Montclair High Schools. He also attended Essex County College. He worked for the Hollow Day Care Center, Essex County Prosecutor's Office and U. S. Postal Service. He spoke about Mrs. L. M. Connor, founder of the Hollow Day Care Center, and about racial discrimination in the workplace and schools. There is only the transcript of this interview.

**Johnson, Lillie Mae**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, November 11, 2000*

Mrs. Johnson was born in Wilmington, Del., and grew up in Richmond, Va. She came to Montclair in 1924 at the age of 18. She lived at the YWCA building, now the Crane House, when she first came to town, and later lived with a sister on Elmwood Avenue. Later, with her husband, she lived on Willowmere Avenue, Orange Road and in Orange, N.J. She worked as a secretary at several non-profit organizations in Montclair including the Neighborhood Center, YWCA and the Family Children Society. She worked as a bookkeeper at the Planned Parenthood in Newark until she retired. She was active in the National Council of Negro Women, Trinity Presbyterian Church and the Montclair Branch of the NAACP where she was honored with several service awards. She spoke about discrimination at the movie theaters and business in Montclair. Her husband, William H. Johnson, was the second African-American police officer in Montclair and died at the age of 51. She had two sons, seven granddaughters and seven great-granddaughters. She died at the age of 92 on July 27, 2001. The interview was not taped.

**Kinoy, Arthur**

*Interviewed by Kenneth French, April 4, 2001*

Mr. Kinoy is a national civil rights lawyer and activist. He was the appeals lawyer for the 1968 Chicago Seven, including Abbie Hoffman, and the 1972 case on federal government wiretapping without a warrant. He was the lawyer for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964. He came to Montclair in 1973. He was a professor at Rutgers Law School. In Montclair, he has been involved in the Rainbow Coalition, Montclair Civil Rights Coalition and Senior Citizens Advisory Commission.

**Lang, Sandra**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, July 10, 2001*

Ms. Lang is a Montclair native. Her grandparents were Andrew and Roxie Myatt. Her parents were James and Roxie Myatt Lang. She attended Glenfield School, Montclair High School, Hampton University (VA) and Rutgers University. She worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, IBM and McGraw-Hill Companies. She grew up on Lexington Avenue and lives on Lincoln Street. She spoke about the Neighborhood Center, YWCA, National Council of Negro Women and Delta Sigma Theta. She also discussed running for the Town Council, the Italian Fest, African-American businesses and discrimination of Jewish people in Montclair.

**Leach, Leon - RESTRICTED**

*Interviewed by Josephine Bonomo, January 29, 2001*

Mr. Leach was born in Montclair. His parents were from Barbados and St. Croix. He attended Nishuane and Hillside Schools. He worked at Atlantic Chemical and as Electrical Inspector for New Jersey Department of Transportation. He lives on Madison Avenue. He spoke about the Hollow Day Care Center, leisure activities, 1940s, Nishuane Park, Italian Americans, racial discrimination in the workplace, schools and real estate. His sister, Leona Smith, was also interviewed.

**Lewis, Aubrey**

*Interviewed by Asantewaa Harris, August 17, 2001*

Aubrey Lewis was born in Montclair. His father was from St. Thomas and his mother's family from Virginia. He attended Grove Street, George Inness and Montclair High Schools. At the Montclair High School he was an outstanding star football player and has been inducted into the New Jersey Sports Hall of Fame. He joined the FBI the first year that African Americans were accepted. He was the first African-American Vice President of the Woolworth Corporation. In his interview, he discussed the Washington Street YMCA, St. Paul's Baptist Church, a military trip to Germany and sports. He died in December 2001.

**Lewis, Fannie**

*Interviewed by Kathryn Hammond, January 9, 2001*

Ms. Lewis has born in 1920 in Chesterfield County, Va., and came to Montclair in 1935. Her parents were James Jones and Virginia Tazell, both from Virginia. They traveled on the Old Dominion Line to New Jersey. She attended Glenfield School and Montclair High School and Sawyers' College in Clifton. She worked at RCA and Picatinny Arsenal and later as a nurse and crossing guard. She lived in numerous houses in the South End, Glenridge Avenue/Greenwood Avenue and Cedar Avenue areas. She attended St. Paul's Baptist and Trinity United Presbyterian Churches. She also spoke about Eastern Star, Crawford Crews-American Legion Post 251 and the South.

**Miller, Kassundra**

*Interviewed by Asantewaa Harris, September 19, 2001*

Ms. Miller came from East Orange. She moved to Montclair in 1981 as a child. She attended Watchung, Mount Hebron and Montclair High Schools. She spoke about her youth participation in the Neighborhood Center and Montclair Grassroots Inc. programs.

**Page, James Howard and Carolyn**

*Interviewed by Kenneth French, January 23, 2001*

Mr. Page, a Montclair native, was the fourth African-American to join the Montclair Police Department in about 1936 and was on the force for 42 ½ years. He attended Grove Street, Rand, and Montclair High Schools. He grew up on Walnut Street and now lives on North Fullerton Avenue. Mrs. Page is a native of North Carolina and came to Montclair as a child in 1933. She grew up in the Fourth Ward and attended Hillside and Montclair High Schools. Mr. Page discussed his early days on the police force and the North Fullerton Avenue neighborhood.

**Price, John and Alice**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, April 2001.*

Mr. Price was born in Montclair in the 1920s. His wife, Alice, is from Bloomfield. His parents were Lolita and John Price, Sr. His grandmother was Hannah Moore Alexander. He attended Glenfield School. He worked for the Montclair Public Schools as a fireman/custodian. Mrs. Price was the first African-American to teach at the Mountainside Nursing School and Bloomfield Public Health Service. She also taught at Fairleigh Dickinson and Hoffmann-LaRoche and served as Director of the School of Nursing at St. Mary's Hospital in Orange. The Prices spoke about the YMCA, YWCA, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, trolley cars, sports, the circus, farms in Upper Montclair, the Italian-American Festival, Glenfield Park, the Eureka Lodge of Masons, African-American businesses and racial discrimination in businesses. They lived on Ward Place and now live on Gardner Place.

**Shelton, Orene**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, January 17, 2001*

Mrs. Shelton was born in Montclair in 1924. Her parents, Hugh and Addie Morris, were from Virginia. She attended Rand, George Inness and Montclair High Schools, Fisk University and Atlanta University. She worked for the Mental Health Resource Center. She grew up on Fessler Place and Greenwood Avenue. She spoke about the YWCA, St. Paul's Baptist Church, African-American businesses and racial discrimination in businesses and movie theaters. Only the transcript of this interview is available.

**Smith, Leona**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, June 6, 2001*

Mrs. Smith was born in Montclair in the 1940s. Her grandparents were James Elliot and Milmie Leach. Her father was Leon Leach, Sr. She attended Nishuane, Hillside and Montclair High Schools. She worked for the New Jersey Employment Office. She lived on Madison Avenue and Chestnut Street. She spoke about St. Peter Claver Church, Bond's Ice

Cream Store, Applegate Farm, African-American businesses and racial discrimination. Her brother, Leon Leach, was also interviewed.

### **Sterling, John**

*Interviewed by Kenneth French, November 27, 2000*

Mr. Sterling was born in Caldwell around 1925 and moved to Montclair in 1943. He worked at Curtiss-Wright Aeronautics and became the first African-American firefighter in Montclair in 1952. He spoke about racial discrimination in World War II, businesses and movie theaters, and the Montclair Fire Department.

### **Sturdivant, Louis**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, July 9, 2001*

Mr. Sturdivant was born in Alexander County, Virginia, around 1925 and moved to Montclair in 1937(38). His mother was Rebecca Sturdivant. He attended Rand, Grove Street, George Inness and Montclair High Schools. He worked at General Motors and the Senior Citizen Center. He lived on Forest Street and Friendship Place. He spoke about St. Peter Claver Church, the Church of the Immaculate Conception, the YWCA and African American businesses.

### **Tate, Hortense**

*Interviewed by Kenneth French, November 24, 2000*

Mrs. Tate was born in Kansas in 1899 and came to Montclair in 1921. She worked at the YWCA and later as a teacher in Newark and Montclair. She lived on Glenridge Avenue and Forest Street. She also spoke about National Council of Negro Women and racial discrimination in the movie theaters and restaurants. She was 102 at the time of her interview.

### **Turner, Lincoln and Sharon**

*Interviewed by Asantewaa Harris, July 19, 2001*

Sharon Burton Turner was born in Montclair. Her family came here in the 1880s. She attended Glenfield, George Inness and Montclair High Schools. She grew up on Southern Terrace, Elmwood Avenue and Clairidge Court. Her husband, Lincoln Turner, came to Montclair in the 1970s. They spoke about African-American businesses, St. Mark's United Methodist Church and racial relations in Montclair. Sharon Turner's mother, Ruth Burton, was also interviewed.

### **Tyler, Bruce**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, September 18, 2001*

Mr. Tyler was born at the Montclair Community Hospital in Montclair, New Jersey. He lived in Verona and later moved to Montclair at about age seven. His father, Walter McDonald Tyler, his aunt, Ruby Tyler

Brandon, and several other members of his family came to Montclair from Oxford, North Carolina. His mother was Edith Bernice Tyler. He attended Lanning School in Verona, and George Washington, Rand and Montclair High Schools. He later attended Essex County College, the J. D.S. School of Music in Boston and the Jazz Mobile in New York City. Mr. Tyler is a professional drummer, production manager and arts activist. He played the drums with Tayata (of which he was also the leader), B.D. Eyz, Jazz Prophets and Richard Banks Trio. He was the founder of B.T./Tayata Productions, which managed several area bands. He discussed musicians and the music scene in Montclair in the 1960s and 1970s at great length. He also discussed his work as the founder/producer of the Montclair Blues Jazz Festival, entertainment committee/production chairman of the African-American Heritage Day Parade and Festival, founder/co-developer of the Montclair Arts Awards, board member of the Montclair Arts and Cultural Alliance and production coordinator for the Talent and Performance Show of the Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Summit.

### **White, Hershel T.**

*Interviewed by Josephine Bonomo, December 16, 2000*

Mr. White was from Springfield, Illinois, and came to Montclair in 1957. He attended the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. He worked as a chemist at Exxon Research and Engineering Company. He lived on Bellaire Avenue. He spoke about Hollow Day Care Center, Montclair Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs and the Fourth of July Parade. He also spoke about racial discrimination in real estate, businesses and schools. Only the transcript is available.

### **Yarborough, Elizabeth, and Gwenda Williams**

*Interviewed by Elizabeth Shepard, September 18, 2001*

Mrs. Yarborough and Mrs. Williams are sisters who were born in Montclair. Their parents were Elizabeth Lillian and Dudley Culvert Cummings who came to Montclair from Nevis and Barbados respectively. Their parents worked as domestics and later their father worked for the Curtiss-Wright Aeronautics in West Caldwell. Their brother, Alfred Louis Cummings, was killed in the Picatinny Arsenal Explosion in 1949. They attended Rand, Nishuane, Hillside, George Washington and Montclair High Schools. Mrs. Yarborough worked at New Jersey Bell for forty years. Mrs. Williams worked at Picatinny Arsenal and New Jersey Bell.

They grew up on Oak Place and Pine Street. They spoke about Trinity Episcopal Church, Montclair Connection, Black teachers in the Montclair schools, YWCA, YMCA, Toni's Kitchen, Grassroots and Glenfield Taskforce.

The Montclair Public Library thanks the oral history participants for sharing their stories with us. The following oral history participants decided not to release their transcripts to the public: Frank Alston Sr., Effie Brown, Ruth Catchings, Dorothy Crews, Joseph Greene Jr., Clarence Jackson, Josephine Janifer, Vivian Johns, Leon Leach, Richard Owens, and Edythe Sydnor.

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**ON**

**AFRICAN-AMERICANS**

**IN MONTCLAIR AND NEW JERSEY AT THE**

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**ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS**

**Bruce Tyler Collection, 1989-1997, 47 linear inches**

Bruce Tyler is a well known drummer, arts activist and music producer in Montclair. He was the chairman of the Entertainment Committee/Production Manager for the African-American Heritage Day Parade and Festival, founder of the Montclair Blues and Jazz Festival and on the Board of the Montclair Arts and Cultural Alliance. He also has been the producer for several music groups in Montclair. He has been the drummer for Tayata, Jazz Prophets and the Richard Banks Trio and board member of the Garden State Music Awards. He also participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Summit.

The collection contains his files on the African-American Heritage Day Parade and Festival, 1990-1997; Montclair Blues and Jazz Festival, 1989-1997; and Montclair Arts and Cultural Alliance (MACA), 1991-1996. In addition, there are files on his production company, B. T. Tayata Productions, and on local bands, including Tayata, Rhythm Method, B. D. Eyz and Sinister Force.

The collection also includes audiocassettes and CDs for Rhythm Method, B. D. Eyz, Richard Pierson, Bruce Tyler, Gail Allen, Ed Stills, Hunter Hayes and others. Ephemera includes tickets, hats, t-shirts, banners and posters for the Montclair Blues and Jazz Festival and the African-American Heritage Day Parade and Festival.

**Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church Collection, 1976-2001, 1 folder**

The collection includes church bulletins (2001), memorial service bulletins for Revs. James and Myrtle Jackson (1976, 1995), anniversary booklet and articles.

**Township of Montclair Collection, Board of Education  
Affirmative Action Reports, 1985-1989, 2 items**

The collection contains the *Affirmative Action Report, School and Classroom Practices*, 1985-1986, and *Affirmative Action Reports, Employment Contract Compliance*, 1985- 1989.

## **Township of Montclair Collection, Sponsored Events**

### **African-American History Month, 1990-1999**

The collection contains calendars about the town's African-American History Month events, 1990-1999; a program for the Committee for the Coordination for African American History Month; and historical information about the Montclair African American community.

### **Township of Montclair Archival Box A12**

### **Townswomen Collection, 1950s.**

History on the Townswomen Club, an African-American women's group of Montclair natives who were interested in Montclair history.

## **NEWSPAPER CLIPPING FILES**

### **Montclair Biography File, 1920-1950**

The Montclair Biography file contains biographical information on many African Americans. The files are arranged alphabetically by surname. Below is a list of the relevant files:

African-Americans--General history

Alexander, Maude and Jessie

Allen, Geri and William

Alston, Frank and Rev. Perce! Atkinson,

Doris

African-Americans--B

(includes E. S. Ballou, Dr. William Barnes, Alice Barnett, Phil Bingham, James Blair,  
Arnold Bostic, Alonzo Brandon, Frances Brittingham, and Leslie Brooks)

Barrett, Marvin, Jr., and Lydia

Baskerville, Charles, Sr. & Jr., Edward and Eleanor

Belle, Martha and Josephine (Janifer)

Blanchard, Lottie Boggs,

Gail and Alice Boldin,

Dr. Theodore

Brewington, John

Brown, Ronald, Kathryn and Regnald

Bullock, Charles

African-Americans--C

(includes Rev. Benjamin Chavis, Wallace Choice, and Kyle Copeland) Carter,  
Matthew (Mayor)

Catchings, Rev. Lincoln Maynard, and Rose  
Catlett, Octavia  
Clarke, Ruth and Joseph  
Coleman, Leonard

African-Americans--D

(includes: Carole Darden, Norma Jean Darden, Dr. David Dickson, and Carol  
Dokes)  
Doby, Larry

African-Americans--F

(includes: E.T. Felder, Mary Kathleen Figaro, Dr. John Fitzgerald, James  
Foreman, and Mabel Frazier-Hudson)  
Faison, Frankie  
Finger, Claudia  
Fletcher, Audrey  
Foster, Alice Frye,  
William

African-Americans--G

(includes: Elsie Gamble, Barbara Garnes, Gladys Games, Constance Geddis,  
Linda Gibson, and Kia Goodwin, and Henry Eugene Grant)  
Gaines, Edythe Jones and Richard  
Gill, Brenda (Yearwood), Nia, and Vincent Greene,  
Evelyn, Gordon, and Joseph, Sr.  
Griffith, John  
Grigsby, William

African-Americans--H

(includes: Patricia Hairston, Lorraine Hale, John Hamilton, Henry Hazzard, Henry  
Henderson, Sr., Jeanne Heningburg, George Holmes, Mr. & Mrs. Elwood Hoyle,  
Larry Hubbard, and Jason Hunt)

Haines, Robert  
Harris, Jessie Fauset  
Harris, Dr. James  
Hatchett, Buddy  
Howard, Raoul  
Howe, Joseph

Israel, Yoron

African-Americans--J

(includes: Edward Jenkins and Henry E. Jennings)

Jackson, Robert (Mayor)  
Johnson, Paula, Kathleen (Smallwood), Myrtle, Dr. Byelle, and Paula Yaa  
Jones, Willie Mae and Calvin

King, Martin Luther Jr.  
King, Ophela

African-Americans--L  
(includes: Nicole Leach, Judge Betty Lester, Prince Lewis, Patricia Little, and Rev.  
Ernest Lyght)  
Lanton, Wendell (artist)  
Leach, Colonel A.  
Lewis, Aubrey and John

African-Americans M-O  
(includes: Anita Mack, Thomas McCrae, Roz Miller-Sparks, Florence Moore,  
Arnold Nash, Lillian Oats, and Howard Ott)  
Marsh, Bessie, and Leo  
McGee, C. Lincoln McMickle,  
Rev. Marvin Micheaux, Oscar  
Miller, Donald (artist), and Judy  
Morris, Barbara

Noble, Gil  
Nunery, Leroy

Oliver, Henry and Dorothy

Paige, Lola

Ramsey, James (Mayor)  
Reid, Irvin and Garvice  
Reilly, (Bobby) Dolores  
Rice, Rev. Deual  
Richardson, Pearl and Bob  
Robeson, Paul (Actor/Singer)  
Robinson, Harry  
Rudd, John

African-Americans-S  
(includes: Charles Shepherd and Dr. Carl Snipes) Sadler,  
Bertha  
Scantlebury, Brian and Patrico

Scott, Bill and Patti Johns  
Shirley, George Singletary,  
Mary  
Smith, Barbara, Gladys, Samuel and Charles  
Soaries, Dr. Buster  
Syndor, Edythe

African-Americans-T

(includes: Keimon Thompson, Dr. Adewale Troutman and Lincoln Turner)  
Tate, Hortense, and Herbert  
Taylor, Raymond  
Terry, Miriam, and Harriet  
Thornhill, Dr. Arthur Tucker,  
James, and Frank

Van Ness, Stanley C.  
Veal, Betty

African-Americans-W

(includes: Marion Waples, Roosevelt Weaver, Herschel White, Thomas Womble,  
Joseph Woods, and Marion Thompson Wright)  
Walker, George (composer)  
Webb, Mariana and Sophia  
Wesley, Richard (author)  
Whitlock, Guy and Dudley  
Williams, Earl, Theodora, and Mary  
Willis, Dr. Carole and James Henry

## **Montclair Times Collection, 1877-present**

The *Montclair Times*, the local newspaper, has articles about African-American residents and organizations' activities.

**Inquire at Reference Desk. Microfilm available 1877-2000; CD-ROM available 2000-2002; on-line archives available since 1999 at [www.montclairtimes.com](http://www.montclairtimes.com).**

## PHOTOGRAPHS

### **Montclair Photographic Collection, 1890s-2001**

The Montclair photographic collection contains over 10,000 images of Montclair. There are photographs of some of the African-American churches and organizations as well as the Montclair High School Gospel Choir, the "Slave House" on Claremont Avenue and "Aunt Polly" house on Orange Road. Photographs of Montclair African-American residents include: James Howard Page (the fourth African-American policeman); Maly Rice Hayes Allen (Civil Rights Activist, Head of New Jersey-NAACP); Matthew Carter (first African-American Mayor of Montclair); Dr. Frederick Douglas (first African American physician at Mountainside Hospital); Jessie Faucet Harris (author); Oscar Micheaux (filmmaker); Gil Noble (TV anchor, longest running African-American public affairs program, "Like It Is"); George Walker (Pulitzer award winning composer); Dr.

John Fitzgerald (one of the first African-American dentists in Montclair); Leonard Coleman (New Jersey Commissioner of Energy, 1982, President, National League Baseball, 1994); and Mayor James Ramsey. The collection also includes photographs of the African-American Nostalgic Day and Washington Street Branch YMCA Homecoming Celebration programs.

**Note: Patrons should consult the Montclair History Online on the library's website:**  
**<http://www.digifind-it.com/Montclair/home.php>**

## VIDEOTAPES

The Montclair Public Library has videotapes and audiotapes for the following public programs held at the library:

African-American Nostalgic Day, October 1999

Washington Street Branch YMCA Homecoming Celebration, February 10, 2001

African-American History Day, May 2001

## BOOKS

These books are available at the Montclair Public Library:

Doremus, Philip. *Reminiscences of Montclair*. Montclair: No Publisher, 1908.

**Local History 974.934 Dor**

Hodges, Graham Russell. *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York & East Jersey 1616-1863*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. **974.71**

McCray, Carrie Allen. *Freedom's Child*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1998. (Carrie McCray speaks about her childhood memories in Montclair).  
**973.0496**

Montclair 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book Committee. *Montclair 1868-1993*. Montclair 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book Committee, 1995.  
**Local History 974.934 Mon**

New Jersey Public Policy Research Institutes. *New Jersey African Americans and the 1990 Census*. New Jersey Public Policy Research Institute, 1993.  
**R331.6396**

Parker, Marjorie. *An Alpha Kappa Alpha Family Album*. Alpha Kappa Alpha, 1984.  
**R 371.856**

Whittemore, Henry. *History of Montclair Township, New Jersey*. New York: Suburban Publishing Company, 1894.  
**Local History 974.934 Whi**

Women's Project of New Jersey Inc. *Past and Promise: Lives of New Jersey Women*. Metuchen: Scarecrow Press Inc., 1990. (includes chapters on Montclair residents Jessie Fauset Harris and Edythe Syndor)  
**305.409749**

Wright, Giles. *Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History*. Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1988.  
**974.9**



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