

GRANT

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**African
American
Segregation
in
New Mexico**

Draft Narratives for Nine Study Cities:

**Alamogordo, Artesia, Carlsbad, Clovis, Hobbs, Las Cruces, Roswell,
Tucumcari and Vado**

15 November 2021

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TimeSprings, Inc. (Mesilla)

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Figure 1. Map of New Mexico depicting the nine study cities

Map of Southeastern New Mexico depicting the nine study cities, where schools that were once racially segregated remain extant

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Roswell, Tucumcari and Vado

The History of African American Segregation in New Mexico

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Prepared by:

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Racism is a dehumanizing, cruel and unpleasant experience. My childhood was in part shaped and defined by the racial atmosphere that existed in our country at that time.¹

-- Dr. Charles E. Becknell (Hobbs)

Introduction

This compilation is intended to illuminate what it was like growing up Black in an atmosphere of racism and segregation in New Mexico. The research focuses on the nine New Mexico cities that still maintain the buildings that once served as segregated schools: Alamogordo, Artesia, Carlsbad, Clovis, Hobbs, Las Cruces, Roswell, Tucumcari, and Vado. This story has not been told before. The hope is that these preliminary results will serve as a springboard for additional inquiry. Buildings and landscapes venerated for their association with the Black experience should be considered for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places if they still exist in some tangible or intangible manner. A preliminary list of sites worthy of additional attention are provided for each city. Each narrative concludes with a list of "Suggestions for Future Research." Although the following topics are more fully explored in the individual case studies, these introductory vignettes provide a brief thematic overview.

A Segregated United States

The simple and stark truth of the matter is that America has been a segregated society from its inception. Right up until the outbreak of the Civil War, the colonies -- and later States -- most often 'reserved' public accommodations for Whites only. Blacks were either excluded altogether from public conveyances including railway cars, horse-drawn buggies, stagecoaches, and steamboats, or were assigned to special often inferior sections:

[T]hey sat, when permitted, in secluded and remote corners of theaters and lecture halls; they could not enter most hotels, restaurants, and resorts, except as servants; they prayed in 'Negro pews' in the white churches... Moreover they were often educated in segregated schools, punished in segregated prisons, nursed in segregated hospitals, and buried in segregated cemeteries.²

¹ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 27.

² Litwack, Leon F. *North of Slavery: The Free Negro in the United States, 1790-1860*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 97.

Precursors to Segregation New Mexico (1850s)

Because the New Mexico Territory relied upon other sources of coerced labor, including Native American slaves, indentured servants (who often labored for entire lifetimes to pay off debt) and cheap Mexican labor, the Territory never had more than a dozen or so Black slaves at any one time.³ In the late-1850s, New Mexico was pressured by Texas into passing a 'Slave Code' to help discourage fugitive slaves from seeking refuge in neighboring Territories. The laws restricted slave travel, prohibited slaves from testifying in court, and limited the owners' right to arm slaves.⁴

Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857)

Prior to the Civil War, in the infamous *Dred Scott v. Sanford* decision of 1857, chief Justice Roger Taney wrote for the Supreme Court that "Negroes" were not "citizens," would never become citizens, and therefore "had no rights which the White man was bound to respect."⁵ Although the institution of human slavery was finally abolished in the United States by the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, it took another 100 years and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments for the law to translate into any semblance of day-to-day equality.

Black Codes (1865 – 66)

Discriminatory laws existed throughout the United States, originating from the Black Codes that were largely passed between 1865 and 1866. They arose out of the animosity that the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery in the United States wrought:

Black codes were strict local and state laws that detailed when, where and how formerly enslaved people could work, and for how much compensation. The codes appeared throughout the South as a legal way to put Black citizens into indentured servitude, to take voting rights away, to control where they lived and how they traveled, and to seize children for labor purposes.⁶

The legal system was stacked against Black citizens, with former Confederate soldiers working as police and judges. The Black Codes worked in conjunction with labor camps for the incarcerated, where prisoners were treated as slaves. Black offenders typically received longer sentences than their White equals, and because of the grueling work, often did not survive their

³ Kaubisch, Barrett. The New Mexico Territory Slave Code (1852 – 1862) available on-line at blackpast.org/african-american-history/new-mexico-territory-slave-code-1859-1867 (23 July 2008).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The *Dred Scott* decision, available on-line at pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2933t.html.

⁶ "Jim Crow Laws," *History.com* editors, revised 26 March 2021. Available on-line at history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws.

sentences.⁷ Every quality of a Black person's public life was adversely affected by the laws and mores of the time. During the 1830s, 'Jim Crow Cars' referred to segregated cars on some northern railroad lines. Although rooted in the Deep South, eventually the term 'Jim Crow' was applied to the body of racial segregation laws and practices throughout the nation.⁸

Activist Ida B. Wells (1862-1931)

Memphis teacher Ida B. Wells became an early and prominent activist against Jim Crow laws after refusing to leave a first-class train car designated for White people only. She successfully sued the railroad after a conductor forcibly removed her, though that decision was later reversed by a higher court. Angry at the injustice, Wells devoted herself to fighting all forms of discrimination. Journalism was her vehicle for dissent. When in 1889 she became co-owner of the *Memphis Free Speech and Headlight*, she leveraged her public position to confront the dual scourges of school segregation and sexual harassment.⁹ Despite the decades-long efforts of Ida B. Wells and many others nationwide to countermand discrimination, millions of Black Americans were born into a system that remained unchanged throughout many lifetimes.

Discrimination Against Mexicans Sets the Stage

Although not the focus of the current study, it is worth mentioning that a Mexican minority faced very similar conflicts, tensions, and prejudicial ebbs and flows during this same time period. At mid-19th-century, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the election of Mexican candidates to the Territorial legislature gave some Latinx citizens reason to believe that they would soon be accepted as equals by Anglo Americans. However, voting trends, legal and extralegal violence, and discrimination and segregation of Mexicans throughout the region indicated that, although they were 'White by law,' most Anglos regarded Mexicans as racial inferiors. "The hostility and abuse against Mexicans at the close of the nineteenth century set the tone for race relations in the Southwest during the twentieth century."¹⁰ The unethical treatment of Native Americans, Asians, and other minorities, although outside the current scope of inquiry, needs to be more completely understood within the context of this era of legally-sanctioned discriminatory practices.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Waggoner, Cassandra. "Jim Crow/Jump Jim Crow," 20 November 2007. Available on-line at blackpast.org/African-american-history/jim-crow. See also: Gilbert Thomas Stephenson, "The Separation of the Races in Public Conveyances," *The American Political Science Review* 3.2 (1909): 180-204.

⁹ "Jim Crow Laws," *History.com* editors, revised 26 March 2021. Available on-line at history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Land Ownership and Sharecropping

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Southern landowners no longer owned slaves, and most freed Blacks owned no land. This dilemma resulted in the sharecropping system, in which free Blacks (and many poor Whites and other minorities) farmed someone else's land in return for "one-quarter to two-thirds of the crop, depending upon how much the landowner was obligated to provide for them."¹¹ Future crops often became collateral to pay for immediate subsistence needs, a situation that commonly resulted in perpetual debt. Sharecropping was often used as simply another method for denying landownership, particularly when unscrupulous owners took advantage of the farmers by overcharging for seed or equipment, and by underpayment after the crops were harvested. It was a system that exacerbated racial tensions, and that eventually caused many to seek land ownership elsewhere.

Federal Civil Rights Act (1875)

The quest for equality among all Americans has always evolved in fits and starts, with progress made, and backlashes incurred. A federal Civil Rights Act, for example, was passed as early as 1875. Congress enacted far-reaching civil rights legislation, asserting "the equality of all men before the law," and declaring that all persons "shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land and water, theaters, and other places of public amusement."¹² The mood of the country changed soon after passage of the 1875 Civil Rights Act, however, and the North abandoned its efforts to "Reconstruct" the South. The abandonment left the liberated Black families to the "scant mercies of embittered, defeated, White Southerners."¹³

The result was the development of a judicially-sanctioned caste system in which Blacks and other minorities became American outsiders, subjected to humiliating segregation and to the most crippling forms of discrimination. Black Codes ruled throughout the former Confederacy, brutally enforced by mob violence, Ku Klux Klan lynchings, and other vigilante 'night riders.' The federal quest for American domestic racial equality was essentially abandoned.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

The judicial ratification of sanctioned segregation came in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, decided in 1896. It addressed a Louisiana statute requiring all railway companies in the state to provide "equal but separate accommodations for the White and colored races."¹⁴ Unfortunately, there was nothing equal about the separate conveyances. Equality was

¹¹ "Freedom Just Around the Corner: Black America from Civil War to Civil Rights," in *Smithsonian*, available on-line at postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/freedom-just-around-the-corner.

¹² Urofsky, Melvin I. *Civil Rights Act of 1875*, U. S. Legislation, text available on-line at britannica.com/topic/Civil-Rights-Act-United-States-1875.

¹³ "Equality Much More an Ideal Than Fact of American Life," The Regents of the University of California Extension (San Diego) "College Courses by Newspaper," funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and reprinted in the *Hobbs Daily News*, 16 November 1975, p. 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

relegated to serving as an American ideal rather than being a fact of life. Judge Harlan, the lone dissenter in the *Plessy* case, reminded anyone who would listen that “There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens.”¹⁵ It would be many decades before his wisdom would be instituted.

Astonishingly, despite protests, the Supreme Court also decided to find the country’s original 1875 Civil Rights Act unconstitutional. The Court said that the act was:

... not authorized by either the Thirteenth or Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. In essence, the Court found that individuals were protected from the infringement of their civil rights by federal and state governments, but not by other individuals.¹⁶

African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Bishop Henry McNeal Turner condemned the Supreme Court ruling as a “barbarous” decision. He thundered that

it reduces the majesty of the nation to an aggregation of ruffianism, opens all the issues of the late war, sets the country to wrangling again, puts the negro back into politics, revives the Ku Klux Klan and white leaguers, resurrects the bludgeons, sets men to cursing and blaspheming God and man, and literally unties the devil.¹⁷

In many respects, the Supreme Court’s decision simply codified what had already taken place in much of the country, with the exclusion (by custom and law) of Blacks from most public places. It came in the wake of a growing movement, particularly in the South, to exclude and segregate based solely upon skin color. Thus this era was characterized by a steadily-increasing geographical extent, and a growing uniformity of discrimination sanctioned by the highest court in the land.¹⁸

Lynchings (1890-1910)

With the U. S. Army no longer suppressing the Klan or enforcing the political rights of freedmen, southern states introduced racial segregation and passed laws that made it difficult for Black men to vote. Lynchings peaked between 1890 and 1910. Anti-lynching legislation became a perennial

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ U. S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations*. National Historic Landmarks Program Theme Study. (Washington, DC: Cultural Resources, National Park Service. (2004) Revised 2009, p. 13.

¹⁷ *Richmond Dispatch* (9 December 1875), n. p.

¹⁸ U. S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations*. National Historic Landmarks Program Theme Study. (Washington, DC: Cultural Resources, National Park Service. (2004) Revised 2009, p. 14.

concern of new civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.¹⁹

New Mexico's Territorial Status

New Mexico's status as a Territory until 1912 meant that the State abided by Federal laws. Many of the harshest Black Codes, including vigilantism, lynching, voter discrimination, and forced child labor – although they could flourish in the Deep South under State rule – were forbidden by Federal law.²⁰ Even so, after being pressured by government authorities during the mid-19th century, the state legislature and interim governor W. W. H. Davis passed a bill restricting the movement of free Black people to New Mexico. Blacks living in the territory were required to “post the sum of \$200 to ensure good behavior and the ability to support themselves.”²¹ Freed slaves were not allowed to stay for more than 30 days, and inter-racial marriage was subject to a sentence of one to two years in the penitentiary:

One act provides ‘that no free negro nor mulatto, whether he, she or they be born free or were emancipated’ shall be permitted to establish themselves in the territory or stay for more than thirty days, the penalty being a penitentiary sentence of one to two years. Marriage of negroes and whites is prohibited under penitentiary penalty of two to three years and the minister who performs the ceremony is to be fined.²²

‘Jim Crow’ Laws

These acts of unkindness and racial inequity were rooted in a system of discrimination dubbed by a curious nickname. “Jim Crow” laws, as we have seen, were a collection of state and local statutes borne out of the Black Codes that legalized racial segregation. Named after a minstrel show character, the laws—which existed in written legal ledgers for about 100 years, from the post-Civil War era until 1968—were meant to marginalize African Americans. Every aspect of a person's life was infused with inequality, from false voting disqualifications, to the ability to qualify for bank loans, inequities in educational and job opportunities, police brutality, and

¹⁹ “Freedom Just Around the Corner: Black America from Civil War to Civil Rights,” in *Smithsonian*, available on-line at postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/freedom-just-around-the-corner.

²⁰ Hinton, Arthur R., “New Mexico – A New State,” in *The West Coast Magazine* edited by John S. McGroarty (Las Angeles: Grafton Publishing Company, 1910), p. 178.

²¹ Sálaz, Rubén D. *New Mexico: A Brief Multi-History*. (Albuquerque: Cosmic House, 2005).

²² “Salary Bill is Passed by Both Houses; is Now Up to Governor – Party Lines are Strictly Drawn in Senate but Palmer Goes Over the Traces in Vote in the House – Action of the Exectuve is Veiled in Mystery – Flood of Oratory Precedes Final Adoption of Measure; Socialist Members Side with Democratic Colleagues,” *The Carlsbad Current*, 26 February 1915, p. 2.

judicial unfairness. “Those who attempted to defy Jim Crow laws faced arrest, fines, jail sentences, violence and death.”²³

Blackface and Minstrel Shows

The nickname “Jim Crow” dates back to 1828 when a White New York comedian, Thomas Dartmouth ‘Daddy’ Rice, performed in blackface his song and dance that he called *Jump Jim Crow*. Rice’s performance was purportedly inspired by the song and dance of a physically disabled Black man he had seen in Cincinnati, OH named Jim Cuff or Jim Crow. The song became a popular hit in the 19th century as Thomas Rice performed it across the country as ‘Daddy Jim Crow,’ a “caricature of a shabbily-dressed African American man.”²⁴ Several characters in minstrel shows became archetypes. In addition to Rice’s rural dancing fool in tattered clothing; there was “‘Mammy,’ an overweight and loud mother figure; and ‘Zip Coon,’ a flamboyantly-dressed man who used sophisticated words incorrectly.”²⁵

Given that it was the only way at the time to break into the entertainment industry, African Americans also performed in blackface. However their performances countered some of the primitive representations. Black artists Bert Williams and George Walker, for example, invested political commentary into their comedic minstrel routines, offering an intelligent representation of African Americans.²⁶ Despite some participation by Black artists themselves, David Leonard, a professor of comparative ethnic and American studies at Washington State University, states unequivocally that blackface is “a part of the toxic culture of racism.”²⁷ New Mexico educator and cultural liaison Geni Flores views Black-face ‘entertainment’ as:

another means that was designed to humiliate Black people, and to keep the prejudice alive by continually reminding and convincing White folks of the ignorance and lesser value of Black folks. It is a piece of U. S. history that should not be forgotten but should also not be repeated.²⁸

²³ “Jim Crow Laws,” *History.com* editors, revised 26 March 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws](https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws).

²⁴ Waggoner, Cassandra. “Jim Crow/Jump Jim Crow,” 20 November 2007. Available on-line at blackpast.org/African-american-history/jim-crow. See also: Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Dale Cockrell and Don B. Wilmet, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and their World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Clark, Alexis. “How the History of Blackface is Rooted in Racism,” *History Stories*, revised 20 April 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/blackface-history-racism-origins](https://www.history.com/news/blackface-history-racism-origins).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Personal communication with Geni Flores (Portales, NM). Written responses to a research questionnaire (Fall 2020).

It is no coincidence that blackface and minstrel shows became popular in the U. S. in the aftermath of the Civil War. White performers played characters that demeaned and dehumanized African Americans. The portrayal of Blacks by Whites – by darkening their skin with shoe polish, greasepaint or burnt cork; and painting on enlarged lips and other exaggerated features – is steeped in centuries of racism. It peaked in popularity “during an era in the United States when demands for civil rights by recently emancipated slaves triggered racial hostility.”²⁹ It realized a resurgence decades later, particularly at fraternal lodges and predominantly White college campuses. Blackface is “an assertion of power and control,” declares Professor David Leonard. “It allows a society to routinely and historically imagine African Americans as not fully human.”³⁰ Blackface served to rationalize violence and to sanctify Jim Crow segregation.

The Birth of a Nation Movie (Released 8 February 1915)

In the blockbuster movie *The Birth of a Nation*, blackface characters were seen as rapists and ruthless marauders. The movie-fostered stereotypes were so powerful they became a recruiting tool for the Ku Klu Klan.³¹

William Joseph Simmons is considered to be the founder of the 1915 resurgent Ku Klux Klan emanating out of Atlanta, GA. Inspired after viewing the *Birth of a Nation* movie, Simmons and his fellow Klansmen -- dressed in white sheets and Confederate uniforms -- paraded down Peachtree Street with hooded horses, firing rifle salutes in front of the theater:

The effect was powerful, and screenings in more cities echoed the display, including movie ushers donning white sheets. Klansmen also handed out KKK literature before and after screenings.³²

Adapted from the book *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon Jr. (who was a classmate and friend of President Woodrow Wilson) *The Birth of a Nation* movie portrayed Reconstruction as catastrophic. As the film continued to be screened and re-screened well into the 1920s, additional Ku Klux Klan chapters formed with membership reportedly reaching into the millions nationwide. “New Klansmen were shown *The Birth of a Nation*, and the film was used as a recruiting tool for decades to come.”³³ The film depicted ‘Radical Republicans’ encouraging equality for Black people, who in the film are represented as uncouth, intellectually inferior and predators of White women. “This racist narrative was widely accepted as historical fact.”³⁴

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Clark, Alexis. “How the History of Blackface is Rooted in Racism,” *History Stories*, revised 20 April 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/blackface-history-racism-origins](https://www.history.com/news/blackface-history-racism-origins).

³² Clark, Alexis. “How *The Birth of a Nation* Revived the Ku Klux Klan,” *History Stories*, revised 29 July 2019. Available on-line at [history.com/news/kkk-birth-of-a-nation-film](https://www.history.com/news/kkk-birth-of-a-nation-film).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Black Migration (Beginning c1916)

Drought, dead-end sharecropping ventures, the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and other factors created an untenable situation that motivated substantial numbers of Black families to migrate to the cities and elsewhere. Some researchers estimate that more than six million individuals migrated outward from the South beginning in 1916 and lasting a generation. This in turn led to some segments of the larger White society to demand more laws limiting opportunities for African Americans. “Jim Crow laws soon spread around the country with even more force than previously.”³⁵ African Americans were forbidden from public parks, and some beaches were cordoned off to separate the races. Theaters and restaurants were segregated. Separate waiting rooms in bus and train stations were constructed and maintained. Water fountains, restrooms, building entrances, elevators, cemeteries, skating rinks, municipal services, and amusement parks disallowed Blacks. Separation by skin color extended into sports, civic and social organizations, and schools. Laws forbade African Americans from living in white neighborhoods. “Segregation was enforced at public pools, phone booths, hospitals, asylums, jails and residential homes for the elderly and handicapped.”³⁶

Early Segregation New Mexico

In 1915, Silver City opened one of the earliest segregated schools in the state at Chihuahua Hill to separate Anglo children from others. Mines statewide were segregated, with Hispanos and Blacks generally excluded from all jobs above the level of laborers. No matter the employment circumstance, Blacks were nearly always paid less than Anglos for the same jobs. During the 1920s, state legislators decreed that separate rooms should be provided for teaching “pupils of African descent.”

In 1921, New Mexico passed a constitutional amendment known as the “alien land law” to ban Asian immigrants from owning property. A State law passed in 1923 and amended in 1925 allowed municipal and county boards of education to establish segregated schools when it was “for the best advantage and interest of the school.”³⁷ It stipulated that facilities and classroom instruction for Black students and White students be equivalent, although studies undertaken afterward proved that educational circumstances were far from equitable.

Beginning around 1925, White residents of Southern states—especially Texas—began moving to the Southwest to seek better jobs. New Mexico subsequently adopted ‘Jim Crow’ laws in 1925, nearly 50 years after they were established in former Confederate states. If not already

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Jim Crow Laws,” *History.com* editors, revised 26 March 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws](https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws).

³⁷ “Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the Proposed State of New Mexico Held at Santa Fe, New Mexico,” between 3 October 1910 and 21 November 1910 (Albuquerque: *Press of the Morning Journal*, 1910).

segregated by the 1920s, the typical New Mexico city or town thus became segregated by law or by an accepted tacit social contract.

In 1949, a three-member field team from Peabody College in Nashville, TN described New Mexico's segregated schools as "forgotten and substandard," and largely in a "shameful condition." During the 1950s, restaurants still posted "No Mexicans or Dogs Allowed" signage. Juan H. Ytuarte, a lifetime resident of Vado, NM remembers that his first brush with racism was seeing "No Blacks" and "No Mexicans" signage at nearby El Paso, TX restaurants when he was a child in 1958. Popular after-school hangouts including drug stores and lunch counters would not admit Black students. Indeed, most public spaces and privately-owned establishments remained segregated until the mid-to late-1960s. Other realms, including sports, labor, and neighborhoods remained so until the 1970s. African Americans knew where they were welcomed and where they were not.

We must remain mindful that segregation did not occur uniformly throughout the United States or New Mexico, and that the form and content of this injurious practice changed through time. Variations had much to do with the places in which they occurred, and the specific groups involved.³⁸ Although the State laws, local ordinances, and unspoken customs that segregated Whites and Blacks were also applied to other minorities, the Black experience in particular serves as the focus of this research.

Influx of Southerners (1920s - 1930s)

As previously mentioned, many observers attributed the spread of Jim Crow in New Mexico to an influx of Southerners beginning in the mid-1920s and 1930s. A State Tourist Bureau was created during Governor Clyde Tingley's administration. In response to extensive advertising campaigns:

... thousands of migrants from Texas, Oklahoma, and the Deep South – who had been hit by the Depression and were looking, ... for a new hospitable frontier – headed for New Mexico. The line on the immigration graph rose steeply with the years; in the immediate post-war period – which saw Albuquerque quintuple its population – the line spiraled right off the graph paper.³⁹

Some witnesses chided Gov. Tingley for bringing the "first mass invasion of *Tejanos*" to New Mexico by virtue of the State Tourist Bureau's "siren song."⁴⁰ Restaurant and hotel owners succumbed to pressure from the influx of Southern visitors to separate White patrons from

³⁸ U S. Department of the Interior. *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations*. National Historic Landmarks Program Theme Study. (Washington, DC: Cultural Resources, National Park Service. (2004) Revised 2009, pp. 2-3.

³⁹ Rosenfeld, Albert. "New Mexico's Fading Color Line: Albuquerque Shows the Way," Abrams, Nathan, ed. *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59: "A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion,"* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1955), p. 204.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Black. Discrimination became so prevalent that, according to one journalist writing in 1955, “it is as difficult to get a Negro a meal in Albuquerque -- of 100,000 population -- as it is in Ruidoso, a small mountain resort.”⁴¹

“There was a time in Albuquerque,” said Hobart LaGrone (a mail carrier who also headed the local NAACP) that when you went to a public place, “your color didn’t matter.”

Then things began to tighten a bit as Southern customers in bars and cafes [began] complaining about having to eat and drink with Negroes. They would threaten not to come back, and the proprietors were afraid of losing business. If you came in with some White friends, the proprietor usually wouldn’t refuse you service – but he would watch you uneasily all the time you were there, and the waitress would serve you as fast as she could. If you came back to same place alone, there would be some pretext for not serving you. Or they would treat you with deliberate discourtesy and charge absurd prices.⁴²

Discrimination became more and more widespread. Even movie theaters that had welcomed all patrons to sit anywhere began steering African Americans to segregated sections of the balconies where the seats were often situated too close to the noisy projection booth, or were located behind columns or other obstructions. Noted one observer, “A Marian Anderson could still get a room at the Alvarado, and a Hazel Scott could stay at the Hilton, but an ordinary colored tourist had to find some all-Negro accommodations.”⁴³

African American Involvement in WWI

“In spite of segregation,” remembers Hobbs, NM-born Charles Becknell, “we pledged loyalty to the country that divided us by race and excluded us by law.”⁴⁴ At a national level, in a circumstance affecting all states including New Mexico, Black nurses who tried to enroll in the Army Nurse Corps during World War I in 1917 were rejected because of their skin color.⁴⁵ More than 9,000 Black nurses who desired the chance to serve their country and earn a steady military income filled out applications and received the following letter:

⁴¹ Hill, Gladwin. “Survey Shows Decline in Racial Bias in Far West,” *New York Times*, 29 May 1955, p. 19.

⁴² Rosenfeld, Albert. “New Mexico’s Fading Color Line: Albuquerque Shows the Way,” Abrams, Nathan, ed. *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59: “A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion,”* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1955), p. 204.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Clark, Alexis. “When Black Nurses Were Relegated to Care for German POWs,” *History Stories*, revised 10 March 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military](https://www.history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military). A few Black nurses eventually served, but not because the Army Nurse Corps accepted them. The flu epidemic wiped out so many thousands of people that a handful of African American nurses were called to assist out of necessity.

*Your application to the Army Nurse Corps cannot be given favorable consideration as there are no provisions in Army regulations for the appointment of colored nurses in the Corps.*⁴⁶

The military didn't see them as fit to wear an army nurse uniform, despite their comparable education and training. The National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (NACGN) — an advocacy organization founded in 1908 for Black registered nurses, challenged the letter. And with political pressure from civil rights groups and the Black press, 56 Black nurses were finally admitted into the U. S. Army Nurse Corps in 1941. Each was then promptly sent to segregated bases in the South.⁴⁷

African American Involvement in WWII

Later, many of the Black nurses were sent to care for German Prisoners of War. There were 371,683 German POWs who were captured in Europe and Northern Africa during World War II. They were shipped to the United States and detained in more than 600 camps across the country.⁴⁸ At the segregated bases, Black nurses served in all-Black units, lived in “colored” barracks, worked in “colored” hospitals, ate in separate dining areas and socialized in segregated spaces on base. Along with the separate facilities, Black nurses endured racist treatment from local White residents in town, fellow White army officers, and from the German prisoners of war they were caring for.⁴⁹

World War II and the “Double V” Campaign

Certain trends ensured that racist ideologies continued to be perpetuated. During the early 1930s, for example, American eugenicists embraced the Nazi Party's ideas regarding racial purity and republished their propaganda. There were many prominent and outspoken Nazi sympathizers in the years leading up to U. S. involvement. American aviator and national hero Charles Lindbergh, for example, accepted a swastika medal from the Nazi Party in 1938. Circumstances came to a head with the onset of World War II. Once the United States entered the war, it took a decidedly anti-Nazi stance. However:

Black American troops noticed the similarities between the two countries, and confronted them head-on with a “Double V Campaign.” Its goal? Victory abroad against the Axis powers— and victory at home against Jim Crow.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Clark, Alexis. “When Black Nurses Were Relegated to Care for German POWs,” *History Stories*, revised 10 March 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military](https://www.history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Little, Becky. “How the Nazis Were Inspired by Jim Crow,” *History Stories*, revised 26 March 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/how-the-nazis-were-inspired-by-jim-crow](https://www.history.com/news/how-the-nazis-were-inspired-by-jim-crow).

In 1942, a prominent Black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*—in response to a letter to the editor by James G. Thompson, a 26-year-old Black soldier, in which he wrote, “Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?”—launched the “Double V” Campaign. The slogan, which stood for a victory for democracy overseas and a victory against racism in America, was touted by Black journalists and activists to rally support for racial equality at home and abroad.⁵¹

Despite efforts to the contrary, the same Jim Crow discrimination practiced in day-to-day society was applied to every branch of the armed forces. Many of the bases and training facilities were located in the South. The largest military installation for Black soldiers, Fort Huachuca, was located in Arizona:

Regardless of the region, at all the bases there were separate blood banks, hospitals or wards, medical staff, barracks and recreational facilities for Black soldiers. White soldiers and local White residents routinely slurred and harassed the Black enrollees.⁵²

Because the military’s top officials wrongly believed that African Americans were unfit for combat or leadership positions, they were mostly relegated to labor and service units. Working as cooks and mechanics, building roads and ditches, and unloading supplies from trucks and airplanes were common tasks for Black soldiers. “And for the few who did make officer rank, they could only lead other Black men.”⁵³ Despite the daily indignities and inequities on top of the challenges of difficult wartime circumstances, the Black WWI soldiers brought honor to themselves and their country. Using the demeaning parlance of the day, local newspapers went out of their way to extoll the virtues of the “darkie doughboys” --

Colored troops from America already have established themselves in Europe as being cool and reliable fighters in the front line. Both American and French commands say so... the German command [also] has a decidedly high respect for American colored infantry. Up and down the line, after the test of a year’s service, you hear no doubts expressed regarding the colored infantry. The darkie doughboys have made good in the line as well as behind. They have proven themselves cool and brave soldiers in the trenches and gentlemen when back at rest in French towns... The French folk like the colored boys, and felt highly honored at the way the latter learned French.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Clark, Alexis. “Black Americans Who Served in WWII Faced Segregation Abroad and at Home,” *History Stories*, 20 August 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/black-soldiers-world-war-ii-discrimination](https://www.history.com/news/black-soldiers-world-war-ii-discrimination).

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ “Negro Soldiers Making a Great Record in France,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 22 October 1918, p. 1.

Black WWI and WWII Veterans and Mob Violence

When dozens of brutal race riots erupted across the U. S. in the twin wakes of World War I and the Great Migration, Black military veterans stepped up to defend their communities against White violence. The racist attacks in 1919 were widespread, and often indiscriminate, but in many places, they were initiated by White servicemen -- and centered upon the 380,000 Black WWI veterans who had just returned from the war. "Because of their military service, Black veterans were seen as a particular threat to Jim Crow and racial subordination," noted a report by the Equal Justice Initiative.⁵⁵

Between April and November 1919, there were no fewer than 25 riots and instances of mob violence nationwide, 97 recorded lynchings, and a three-day-long massacre in Elaine, Arkansas during which more than 200 Black men, women, and children were killed after Black sharecroppers tried to organize for better working conditions. The Ku Klux Klan, which had been largely squealched by the government after the Civil War, experienced a resurgence in popularity and began carrying out dozens of lynchings across the south.⁵⁶

Black military veterans, including medical personnel, had returned to a country that recognized neither their service nor their worth. Having just returned from battle, however, Black veterans were no longer inclined to endure the abuses quietly. Across the country, former soldiers used their government-provided weapons training to defend their neighborhoods against vicious White mobs hell-bent on maintaining the status quo.⁵⁷ A report by the Equal Justice Initiative found that, from Reconstruction to just after World War II, "thousands of Black veterans were assaulted, threatened, abused, or lynched following military service...No one was more at risk of experiencing violence and targeted racial terror than Black veterans who had proven their valor and courage as soldiers during the Civil War, World War I, and World War II."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Higgins, Abigail. "Red Summer of 1919: How Black WWI Vets Fought Back Against Racist Mobs," *History Stories*, 26 July 2019. Available on-line at [history.com/news/red-summer-1919-riots-chicago-dc-great-migration](https://www.history.com/news/red-summer-1919-riots-chicago-dc-great-migration).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Tulsa Race Massacre

The year 1921 would witness one of the most sickening incidences of racial violence in American history, the Tulsa Race Massacre, during which a White mob attacked residents, their homes, and their businesses in the predominantly Black Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa, OK. Many of the Black men who tried in vain to protect their community were World War I veterans. News reports were largely squelched, despite the fact that as many as 300 people were killed and thousands were left homeless.⁵⁹

Editorial Summarizing Racial Tensions (1946)

Such horrific treatment can only happen when one group of people considers another group inferior. "When we exclude, Charles Becknell reminds us, "we assume an arrogance that can lead to the assumption of superiority."⁶⁰ A *Las Cruces Sun-News* editorial in 1946 summarized the landscape of racial tensions as being:

a place where an uneducated White, simply by being White, considers himself superior to any Negro, no matter how well-educated the Negro is, just because he is Black.⁶¹

Continues the editor:

Without a true feeling of tolerance and brotherhood in every person, there can never be a satisfactory solution. For the present, we can merely consider ourselves lucky to be living in New Mexico, reasonably well-removed from the center of the question. But as long as we remain Americans, the responsibility cannot escape us.⁶²

Charles E. Becknell echoes the sentiment that New Mexico was rarely characterized by the deep-seated loathing and systemic racism that was entrenched in the Deep South. He notes that in general the atmosphere for African Americans in New Mexico is "not one of hostility, but one of indifference."⁶³ Small steps towards racial equality were seen by many as "reflections of general indifference -- social bandages to a New Mexico population too small to warrant passionate engagement."⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 7.

⁶¹ Beaty, Orren. Editorial. "Chaparral," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 28 July 1946, p. 1.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 233.

⁶⁴ Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. "Black in Santa Fe," *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.

Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training (1948)

In 1948, a Black activist named Grant Reynolds testified before the House Armed Services committee as the national chairman of the “Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training.” He showed the committee a card stating that he would not be drafted into ‘Jim Crow Military Service.’

Reynolds said this is the first such card to be signed. They will be circulated nationally, he testified, and others of all races will be urged to sign them. Besides the cards, Reynolds said, his organization has placed an order for 100,000 buttons with the inscription ‘Don’t Join a Jim Crow Army.’ Reynolds continued: ‘Upon delivery we expect to launch the sale of these buttons – outside the White House and on the steps of the capitol. In this way, we hope to impress the mind of white America that negroes have had enough of this bi-partisan maneuvering on civil rights [and] that, come what may, we are withdrawing our support of Herr Jim Crow.’⁶⁵

Changing Roles Black Soldiers WWII

As casualties mounted among White soldiers toward the final year of the war, the military had no choice but to utilize African Americans as infantrymen, officers, tankers, and pilots, in addition to their traditional roles:

From August 1944 to November 1944, the Red Ball Express, a unit of mostly Black drivers delivered gasoline, ammunition, food, mechanical parts and medical supplies to General George Patton’s Third Army in France, driving up to 400 miles on narrow roads in the dead of night without headlights to avoid detection by the Germans.

The 761 Tank Battalion, became the first Black division to see ground combat in Europe, joining Patton’s Third Army in France in November 1944. The men helped liberate 30 towns under Nazi control and spent 183 days in combat, including in the Battle of the Bulge.

The Tuskegee Airmen, the all-Black fighter pilot group trained at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, escorted bombers over Italy and

⁶⁵ “Negroes Protest Segregated Army Draft,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 19 April 1948, p. 1.

Sicily, flying 1600 combat missions and destroying 237 German aircraft on ground and 37 in air.⁶⁶

Post WWII: The G. I. Bill of Rights and the Racial Gap

Despite stellar records of service, Black military personnel faced additional discrimination from many sources upon their return. The G. I. Bill of Rights, also called the G. I. Bill and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, was federal legislation adopted in 1944 that provided various benefits to veterans of World War II. Administered through the Veterans Administration (later the Department of Veterans Affairs), the act enabled veterans to obtain grants for school and college tuition, low-interest mortgage and small-business loans, job training, hiring privileges, and unemployment benefits. While the G. I. Bill's language did not specifically exclude African-American veterans from its benefits, it was structured in a way that ultimately shut doors for the 1.2 million Black veterans who had bravely served their country.⁶⁷

Though the G. I. Bill guaranteed low-interest mortgages and other loans, they were not administered by the Veterans Administration (VA) itself. Thus, the VA could co-sign, but not actually guarantee the loans. "This gave White-run financial institutions free reign to refuse mortgages and loans to Black people."⁶⁸ Colleges denied housing. Prospective homeowners were intimidated. Veterans were denied unemployment benefits if any other work was available to them -- even work that provided less than subsistence wages. Some postmasters were accused of refusing to deliver the forms Black veterans needed to fill out to receive their unemployment benefits. Benefits were doled out inequitably. The majority of skilled jobs were given to White workers at the same time training programs excluded Blacks. Financial lenders froze out poorer neighborhoods -- a process called "redlining" referring to the maps that were used to provide or deny loan assistance. New White suburbs often relied upon racist covenants that denied entry to people of color.⁶⁹ "Though Congress granted all soldiers the same benefits theoretically," writes historian Hilary Herbold, "the segregationist principles of almost every institution of higher learning effectively disbarred a huge proportion of Black veterans from earning a college degree."⁷⁰

The original G. I. Bill terminated in July 1956. By that time, nearly 8 million World War II veterans had received education or training, and 4.3 million home loans worth \$33 billion had been handed out. But most Black veterans had been left behind. As employment, college attendance and wealth surged for Whites, disparities with their Black counterparts not only continued, but widened. "There was," writes historian Ira Katznelson, "no greater instrument

⁶⁶ Clark, Alexis. "Black Americans Who Served in WWII Faced Segregation Abroad and at Home," *History Stories*, 20 August 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/black-soldiers-world-war-ii-discrimination](https://www.history.com/news/black-soldiers-world-war-ii-discrimination).

⁶⁷ Blakemore, Erin. "How the GI Bill's Promise Was Denied to a Million Black WWII Veterans," *History Stories*, revised 20 April 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits](https://www.history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

for widening an already huge racial gap in postwar America than the G. I. Bill.”⁷¹ Today, a stark wealth gap between Black and White Americans persists. The median income for White households in 2019 was \$76,057, according to the U. S. Census. For Black households, it was \$46,073.⁷² Sociologists and other professionals continue to document the very real causes of the continuing disparities, beginning with slavery, continuing with the federal programs that largely only benefitted a White majority, and other discriminatory educational, training, employment, and lending patterns.

Parallel Southwest Latinx Experience

Drawing a very close parallel to the African American experience, by the 1930s and 1940s, people of Mexican origin were legally excluded from public facilities reserved for Whites more as a matter of habit than of law throughout the Southwest. At the same time, just as for Black Americans, “courts occasionally weighed in to legally reinforce discrimination against Mexicans.”⁷³ While most may think of the Southwest in general, and New Mexico in particular, as being less stringent regarding segregation, real estate covenants barred Black and Hispanic people from buying or leasing homes in certain parts of many towns throughout the Southwest. For decades, half of the African Americans in Phoenix lived south of downtown. Also until the 1960s, nearby Tempe was a ‘sundown town.’ Black people could work there during the day but were forced to take up residence elsewhere.⁷⁴ Born in Artesia in 1925, Lucille Rowland Wolfe remembers as a young child that, “We had no Blacks in the community at all, none.” She continued:

If they came to town they had to leave before the sun set, and go someplace else. They were not allowed to stay in the town. After Roosevelt, of course, they could come and stay, but I can remember as a child there in Artesia, kids throwing rocks at the little Black kids that were in school.⁷⁵

As we shall see in our individual city studies, lending discrimination and other inequities rooted in the era of Jim Crow persist in New Mexico to this day.

⁷¹ Blakemore, Erin. “How the GI Bill’s Promise Was Denied to a Million Black WWII Veterans,” *History Stories*, revised 20 April 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits](https://www.history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits).

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁷⁴ Snow, Anita. “Phoenix Race Relations Tinged by Southwest’s Segregated Past,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, 1 August 2019. Available on-line at [phillytrib.com/news/across_america/phoenix-race-relations-tinged-by-southwests-segregated-past/article_dcf4bc64-2a55-5022-b154-d4d79b68f6a7](https://www.phillytrib.com/news/across_america/phoenix-race-relations-tinged-by-southwests-segregated-past/article_dcf4bc64-2a55-5022-b154-d4d79b68f6a7).

⁷⁵ Oral history. Lucille Rowland Wolfe (Artesia). New Mexico Rural Heritage Oral History Project. 14 July 2018.

U. S. Residential Segregation

Residential segregation reflected the operation of both government and market forces. Beginning in the 1930s, federal regulations disfavored the extension of mortgage credit to homeowners in mixed-race neighborhoods. Restrictive covenants prohibited integration in some areas (until the Supreme Court ruled them unenforceable in 1948). Decisions by public housing authorities and other agencies often reinforced existing patterns of discrimination.⁷⁶ After the Supreme Court forbade judicial enforcement of racial covenants, Black migrants tended to cluster in the centers of U. S. cities, which in turn were ringed by “all-White, Federal Housing Administration-financed suburbs.”⁷⁷

In a poignant if not strange reminder that segregation was not limited to the Deep South, or to one ethnic group, three American Legion posts stand within a few miles of one another in central Phoenix:

Soldiers returning after World War I in 1919 chartered one of the first posts of the U. S. veterans’ organization near downtown. But when Black and Mexican American men returned from World War II, they opened their own posts, in their own neighborhoods farther south.⁷⁸

Segregation New Mexico

As an important topic that will be explored later in detail, schools were segregated by skin color in some eastern New Mexico cities including Hobbs, Roswell, and Clovis near the Texas border. Charles E. Becknell Sr. of Rio Rancho, grew up in a ‘Jim Crow’ Hobbs. Becknell remembers the indignities small and large that permeated his world and sense of self-worth:

... when someone calls you a name, someone slights you by delaying service in a restaurant because of your color, or a driver looks at you and keeps on driving... being turned down for a job promotion because of the color of your skin -- and you and everyone else knows that you are the best qualified. Or when layoffs occur and you are handed the first pink slip. Or when you are turned down for an apartment rental... only to have a White friend check later and land the apartment.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Glaeser, Edward and Jacob Vigdor. Senior Fellow and Adjunct Fellow, Manhattan Institute. *The End of the Segregated Century: Racial Separation in America’s Neighborhoods, 1890-2010*. Civic Report No. 66 (January 2012).

⁷⁷ Miller, Loren. “The Negro Voter in the Far West,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 26, No. 3, The Negro Voter in the South (Summer, 1957). Available on-line at jstor.org/stable/2293409.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 28.

He recalls entering some restaurants with his family from the back because only Whites could enter from the front. He also attended at least one sit-in at a lunch counter where Blacks were not allowed to dine at all. "Even our high school football games had segregated seating," recalled Becknell, who said that "close friends of differing races would sit on each side of a dividing rope on the bleachers so they could watch a game together."⁸⁰ He describes in a straightforward and eloquent fashion the deep-seated pain of prejudice as something that pervaded every facet of his life.

Traveling in New Mexico Prior to 1964

Gloria Brown, the wife of a Black officer traveling the country before the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 was signed, recalls the following:

Along the way, I tried to have my clothes washed at a Laundromat... before I could get to the door, they told me they didn't take colored clothes. We had trouble finding a place to stay. Most of the hotels would not accept blacks at that time; they just told us they didn't have any room. The *Washington Post* published an article about a booklet that was put out that told blacks where they could stay. Some of the places were places that I would not want my family to go.

In New Mexico, Brown remembers that one hotel manager had been in the Navy, and took pity on her family. At the same time:

He let us know that he was doing us a favor. We did have a tent-trailer that we used. We would park in the woods and he'd sleep outside, and at the time we had two children so we had a station wagon that had a sedan seat in front. So, one child slept in the front and I slept on the back on a mattress with the other child. Sometimes it rained, and so we drove all night because he couldn't sleep out in the rain. I couldn't understand why my husband, who had been in combat, could not find a decent place to stay.⁸¹

Albuquerque's Anti-Discrimination Ordinance (Approved 1952)

A committee designated to assess Albuquerque's situation to determine whether or not an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance should be passed found:

⁸⁰ Snow, Anita. "Phoenix Race Relations Tinged by Southwest's Segregated Past," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, 1 August 2019. Available on-line at phillytrib.com/news/across_america/phoenix-race-relations-tinged-by-southwests-segregated-past/article_dcf4bc64-2a55-5022-b154-d4d79b68f6a7.

⁸¹ "Freedom Just Around the Corner: Black America from Civil War to Civil Rights," in *Smithsonian*, available on-line at postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/freedom-just-around-the-corner.

from the repeated testimony of a parade of Negro witnesses, that there was indeed discrimination against Negroes all over town – not in every bar, restaurant, hotel, motel, barber shop, beauty parlor, public hall, and swimming pool in the city, *but in most of them*.⁸²

Supporters of a proposed Anti-Discrimination Ordinance were culled from diverse groups. Large numbers of Albuquerque’s newcomers, from the East, Midwest, and Far West preferred the relaxed atmosphere that encouraged folks to live and let live regardless of creed. Sandia Base and Kirtland Field -- secret atomic and jet installations – “brought in thousands of well-educated people who had no stomach for Jim Crow.” And, most encouraging of all, “it turned out that a number of Southerners had left home precisely to get away from that South which now pursued them.”⁸³ Despite the eventual passage of the Albuquerque’s Anti-Discrimination Ordinance, restaurant owners “could still find pretexts for refusing service” to a Black patron on the grounds that the person “was not dressed neatly enough, or... was acting obnoxious, or most anything that couldn’t be proved one way or another.”⁸⁴ Clearly, laws alone cannot change human nature. Some restaurant owners, however, did confide that they were able to take a stand against discrimination once there was official backing to do so.⁸⁵ Although deep-seated personal prejudices cannot be legislated away, abiding by Albuquerque’s new ordinance gave some owners the excuse they needed to resist customer and peer pressure.

Lack of Political Representation (Late 1950s)

Relegated to inferior schools and uncomfortable seating, banned from municipal spaces despite their status as taxpayers, overlooked by federal programs and denied lending opportunities, African Americans suffered from being painfully absent from the political realm. Even though awareness of ethnic disparities had captured the national consciousness with the integration of the military by President Harry S. Truman in 1947, and New Mexico Senator Dennis Chávez played an influential role in Truman’s executive order establishing a Fair Employment Practices Committee at the federal level in 1951,⁸⁶ rural Blacks in particular still had a long way to go.

⁸² Ibid., p. 206. Emphasis added.

⁸³ Rosenfeld, Albert. “New Mexico’s Fading Color Line: Albuquerque Shows the Way,” Abrams, Nathan, ed. *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59: “A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion,”* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1955), p. 206. One such Southerner, named Geni Flores, was interviewed for the current project during the course of researching Clovis, NM. She brought with her to New Mexico a passion for celebrating diversity and equality after witnessing the opposite behavior in Virginia and Louisiana.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 209.

⁸⁵ “Racial Law to be Eyed Tomorrow,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 17 December 1951, p. 5.

⁸⁶ Kern, Robert. “Organized Labor: Race, Radicalism, and Gender,” in *Essays in 20th-Century New Mexico* edited by Judith Boyce DeMark (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), p. 157.

At the close of the 1950s, Blacks held not a single elective office in the rural states of Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Oregon or New Mexico where their numbers were small “both relatively and absolutely.”⁸⁷

Even so, by 1957 -- despite the lack of political representation -- Washington, Oregon, New Mexico and Colorado had passed fair employment laws. Also in 1957, California, Washington, Oregon, Colorado and New Mexico banned discrimination in places of public accommodation.⁸⁸ The most conspicuous progress to overturn discrimination was made in those states exerting the strongest legislative and judicial pressures. It is worth remembering that the peaceful passage of the 1950s fair employment and anti-discrimination legislation was preceded by decades of racial unrest and relentless turmoil. Success was by no means easy or assured at the outset.

Paradoxical Inequities

Inequities spawn paradoxical predicaments. The following example illustrates the heartache of being trapped inside two contradictory conditions. In locales throughout the United States, Blacks were not allowed inside public libraries. As a result, a false stereotype of intellectual laziness ensued:

I am a middle-class White. I was in grade school in Alexandria, Virginia, during the 1950s. When I was growing up, I knew about segregation, but I didn't know the extent of it. It wasn't until the 1990s that I learned that, before desegregation, the public library in Alexandria did not admit Black people (even though their taxes help support it), and — what is worse — that there was no separate public library for the Black population. As a child, I spent many happy and ignorant hours in that library, and *I 'learned,' because they did not use the library, that African-Americans had no interest in intellectual pursuits.* Such lessons that are intuited through ignorance, lessons that are not taught but that come through osmosis, can be the most damaging and insidious.⁸⁹

Charlotte Becker (Roanoke, VA)

In New Mexico, there is no known case of public libraries being off-limits to certain groups, however, library usage was often limited in small towns to school libraries, which were segregated. Contemporary fieldwork and personal remembrances confirm that segregated libraries were most often substandard.

⁸⁷ Miller, Loren. “The Negro Voter in the Far West,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 26, No. 3, The Negro Voter in the South (Summer, 1957). Available on-line at jstor.org/stable/2293409.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “Segregation in Public Places/Remembering Jim Crow.” Available on-line at americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/public (2018). Emphasis added.

Mary Titcomb's horse-drawn wagon provides perhaps the earliest example of traveling libraries as they clip-clopped their way across Maryland. The federal Works Progress Administration Pack Horse Library Project supplied books to Appalachia.

Elsewhere, Black sororities had taken their own tack to addressing literacy and lack of access to libraries by underwriting private bookmobile initiatives, starting in the late 1930s. In the Jim Crow South, where every institution was segregated, including libraries, the bookmobiles they started were open to Black youths and elders.⁹⁰

At least three bookmobiles were known to have operated in New Mexico.⁹¹ The history of bookmobiles in New Mexico requires further research, to make sure that the reasons for their necessity had to do more with rural (as opposed to racist) conditions.

Other intolerable 'Catch-22' situations existed when potential jurors were excluded from consideration because they weren't registered to vote, despite the fact that registering to vote was hampered by intentional pitfalls designed to prevent voter registration. Impossible 'literacy' tests and poll taxes were levied against African Americans, and something known as the "Grandfather clause" was invented. Descendants of slaves (who were not considered citizens and therefore could not vote) were denied access to the polls because their grandfathers did not vote. Their grandfathers didn't vote because they weren't allowed to vote.

Prejudice is not logical, and hinges upon twin feelings of majority (White) supremacy and privilege. "I'm not prejudiced against Negroes," became a well-worn refrain, "I'm simply prejudiced in favor of White people."⁹² Another pat excuse routinely made its way into print pieces and other avenues of discourse: "The Negroes are much happier keeping with their own kind... Why force them to mix?"⁹³ Similar prattle sowed dislike, and reaped distrust. Educator and long-time Portales resident Geni Flores recalls a logic-defying comment memorably proffered by her bigoted yet beloved grandmother: "I don't have a prejudice bone in my body. I just don't want to sit next to a 'nigra' in church."⁹⁴ Charles Becknell, born and raised in Hobbs, remembers as a college-aged student "talking to some friends on a corner in Albuquerque. A

⁹⁰ Guzman, Alicia Inez. "Between the Lines: For Rural Communities, the Bookmobile is the Library, the Bookstore, and a Mobile Community Center. And It's Needed Now More Than Ever," *New Mexico Magazine* (2020). Available on-line at [nmmagazine/articles/author/alicia-inez-guzman/5beb3fcb6b1ee69d90b29fc0](https://nmmagazine.com/articles/author/alicia-inez-guzman/5beb3fcb6b1ee69d90b29fc0).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Rosenfeld, Albert. "New Mexico's Fading Color Line: Albuquerque Shows the Way," Abrams, Nathan, ed. *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59: "A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion,"* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1955), p. 207.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Personal communication with Geni Flores (Portales, NM). Written responses to a research questionnaire (Fall 2020).

police officer came by and told us to ‘break it up.’ Four Blacks congregating on a corner in downtown Albuquerque was unacceptable.”⁹⁵

Preconceived opinions based solely upon a person’s appearance are not rooted in reason. Such notions nourish mistrust. To separate Black students from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their skin color “generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community,” wrote educator and sociologist Arthur E. Sutherland in 1955. Such actions “may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.”⁹⁶ It is a simple but hard truth that discrimination can render a sense of worthlessness if mitigating factors are not put into play.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

The work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) provided one of the most critical mitigating factors in offsetting the cruelties of racism. It is inconceivable that the strides toward racial equality would have been accomplished in its absence. Before WWI, the NAACP had 9,000 members nationwide. By the early 1920s, in response to the factors already delineated, membership had blossomed to 100,000 members.⁹⁷ There were “no chapters of the Urban League in New Mexico, nor of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), both of which were viewed by many to be more militant than the NAACP. In fact, “none of the major African American civil rights organizations aside from the NAACP had a presence in New Mexico.”⁹⁸ It seems that aside from Albuquerque, few towns in New Mexico had a Black population large enough to support a NAACP chapter. In 1953 Chapters existed in Roswell (seventy-one members), Hobbs (seventy-seven members), Clovis (thirty-three members), Carlsbad (sixteen members) and Las Cruces (fifty-six members). There was no chapter in the state capital of Santa Fe.⁹⁹

Despite the relatively small membership statewide, the New Mexico NAACP effectively addressed racism on several different fronts, including the exclusion of Spanish speakers and Blacks from supposedly democratic trade unions such as the Brotherhood of Firemen and Engineers.¹⁰⁰ It fell to the NAACP to urge industry leaders in New Mexico to “avail themselves of

⁹⁵ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 85.

⁹⁶ Sutherland, Arthur E. “Segregation by Race in Public Schools Retrospect and Prospect,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* (Winter, 1955) Vol. 20 No. 1 (Durham: Duke University School of Law), p. 176.

⁹⁷ Higgins, Abigail. “Red Summer of 1919: How Black WWI Vets Fought Back Against Racist Mobs,” *History Stories*, 26 July 2019. Available on-line at history.com/news/red-summer-1919-riots-chicago-dc-great-migration.

⁹⁸ Cooper, George M. “The Modern Civil Rights Movement in New Mexico, 1955 - 1975,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 207.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁰⁰ “NAACP Votes to Hold Its 1958 State Convention in Las Cruces,” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 15 October 1957, p. 7.

the talents and skills to be found among Indian and Negro youths and youth of other minority groups” and to set up company-sponsored training programs for them.¹⁰¹ During their 1957 state convention, NAACP delegates also urged their members to support political candidates who supported the aims of the Fair Employment Practices Commission. The NAACP reported during its state convention that there was “widespread discrimination”¹⁰² in New Mexico’s public accommodations. They fought for a stronger state law forbidding discrimination that actually penalized offenders. In the absence of existing penalties, the NAACP leaders and members vowed to alert the authorities including the attorney general when they encountered infractions to the anti-discrimination law.¹⁰³

The NAACP found its strongest voice in speaking out against school segregation. A spokesman for the NAACP reported “deplorable”¹⁰⁴ conditions in schools at Hobbs, Clovis, Roswell, Alamogordo and Las Cruces. In 1951, U. Simpson Tate, regional special counselor for the NAACP, said a suit to challenge segregation in Roswell would be filed in district court soon. The NAACP’s steady drumbeat, and the financial hardships imposed by the maintenance of separate schools, set the stage for integration several years before the 1954 Supreme Court decision mandated desegregation.

The continuing importance and influence of the NAACP became very apparent in 1956, when Texas attempted to ban the NAACP by issuing a temporary injunction against the organization. Thurgood Marshall responded by saying that he considered the effort to thwart the NAACP in Texas the most crucial point in the fight for integration at that time. “I have dropped everything else to work on this case,”¹⁰⁵ he said. Despite the setback in Texas, which successfully shut the Texas NAACP down, the group fought and won many important achievements elsewhere. A steadily increasing membership, a burgeoning boldness and strong cohesion despite many obstacles, ultimately planted the seeds for the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s.¹⁰⁶

Brief Summary of the Precursor to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s

In addition to the successes of the NAACP, an influential Black press, and the hard work of other organizations, a series of factors over many decades culminated in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The impetus for a change in the *status quo* began with the mass Black migration, which took place beginning around 1916 from rural areas to urban centers. For the reasons

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² “NAACP Critical of New Mexico’s ‘Discrimination,’” *Clovis News Journal*, 14 October 1957, p.9.

¹⁰³ “NAACP Votes to Hold Its 1958 State Convention in Las Cruces,” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 15 October 1957, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ “State Schools Rapped,” *Clovis News Journal*, 19 September 1951, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ “Says NAACP to Fight Texas Ban to Top Court,” *Clovis News Journal*, 23 September 1956, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Higgins, Abigail. “Red Summer of 1919: How Black WWI Vets Fought Back Against Racist Mobs,” *History Stories*, 26 July 2019. Available on-line at history.com/news/red-summer-1919-riots-chicago-dc-great-migration.

already cited, African Americans made their way out of the Deep South and to other parts of the country including the Southwest. Despite a period of severe and punishing backlashes, for the first time, Blacks formed a politically effective voting bloc.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal (1933-1939) brought the beginning of what historian O. Vann Woodward has called 'the New Reconstruction,' a revival of concern for the condition of Black Americans. Two world-wide wars, with their severe labor shortages, gave African Americans a chance at previously unattainable jobs – and gave many Whites the first experience of working and living alongside minorities.

As we have seen, the post-World War II era saw an increase in civil rights activities in the African American community, with a focus on ensuring that Black citizens were able to vote. In 1948 President Harry Truman enacted integration within the military, and in 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that schoolwide segregation was unconstitutional, bringing to an end the fiction of "separate-but-equal" education. "We conclude," Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, "that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."¹⁰⁷

The reasoning behind the termination of segregated schools applied to all forms of publicly supported and publicly managed facilities. It meant that discrimination could no longer hold sway in parks and playgrounds, swimming pools and beaches or any other recreational opportunities operated under government auspices. Unfortunately, legislation alone cannot guarantee racial harmony. The decision was followed by years of heroic 'freedom rides,' and 'sit-ins,' and 'marches' and 'prayer demonstrations' – many of them encountering violent and brutal resistance.

In 1964, goaded first by President Kennedy and later by President Johnson, Congress enacted a comprehensive civil rights law. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act halted efforts to keep minorities from voting. The Fair Housing Act of 1968, which ended discrimination in renting and selling homes, followed. If equality of opportunity and of participation in the life of the community is still an ideal and not yet altogether a reality in America, "it remains an ideal toward which men and women must strive unceasingly."¹⁰⁸

Although Jim Crow laws were technically off the books, that fact has not guaranteed full integration or adherence to anti-racism laws throughout the United States. Despite the seemingly insurmountable hardships, the resiliency and success of America's Black community is something to be acknowledged, respected, and celebrated. There continues to exist a disparity between our principles and our practices regarding human equality. A look backward may help us as we gain our bearings moving forward.

¹⁰⁷ "Equality Much More an Ideal Than Fact of American Life," The Regents of the University of California Extension (San Diego) "College Courses by Newspaper," funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and reprinted in the *Hobbs Daily News*, 16 November 1975, p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Early African American Settlement in New Mexico

Early African American pioneers played a pivotal role in weaving New Mexico's rich cultural and economic tapestry. Contributing first as slaves, and then as explorers, soldiers, cowboys, miners, farmers, railroad laborers and porters, domestic servants, educators, ministers, health providers, and entrepreneurs -- maximizing every opportunity afforded to them or that they forged themselves. Independent communities such as Blackdom near Dexter provided sanctuary and sovereignty. Whether living with or apart from the dominant White society, Black New Mexicans sustained themselves through strong families, religious activities, social and cultural organizations, neighborhood alliances, educational pursuits, a wide range of entertainment venues including sports; print publications, and radio broadcasts.

Perhaps the first and one of the most famous Black newcomers was Esteban (or Estevan), a Muslim who accompanied Alvar Nufiez Cabeza de Vaca from Texas to Sinaloa. In 1539, he became the first person of African descent known to have entered Arizona and New Mexico. Later that same year, the Vasquez de Coronado expedition gathered together many Blacks to travel through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and probably Oklahoma and Kansas. As a result of this enterprise, "Negroes became the first non-Indian settlers in New Mexico and, possibly, Kansas."¹

The Zuni puebloans have passed down an oral account related to Esteban as the inspiration for a *kachina*—a small doll used in Zuni ceremonies. According to their account, Esteban was killed due to a ceremonial misunderstanding. Others stories say he was killed because he arrogantly demanded women and turquoise. "Regardless, he's still depicted as *Chaiwaina*—a warrior bejeweled, his flesh midnight black, his hair wooly, simultaneously depicting the dread and awe of a first encounter."²

Historian Jack D. Forbes, writing during the 1960s, notes that since very few Spaniards of European lineage were available to populate newly conquered regions, "this task fell primarily to Hispanicized natives, mixed-bloods of all kinds, and Negroes."³ During the seventeenth century, persons of African ancestry were present in New Mexico as colonists or soldiers... and "*mulattos* or Euraficans were frequently utilized as *mayordomos* (head butlers or stewards) in Spanish missions."⁴

¹ Forbes, Jack D. "Black Pioneers: The Spanish-Speaking Afroamericans of the Southwest," *Phylon* (1960 -), Vol 27, No. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1966), pp. 233. (Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University). Available on-line at jstor.org/stable/274264.

² Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. "Black in Santa Fe," *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.

³ Forbes, Jack D. "Black Pioneers: The Spanish-Speaking Afroamericans of the Southwest," *Phylon* (1960 -), Vol 27, No. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1966), p. 234. (Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University). Available on-line at jstor.org/stable/274264.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Historian and lecturer Dedra S. Macdonald tells us that another of the earliest known Black arrivals to New Mexico was Isabel de Olvera. She was a free woman of mixed racial heritage born in Mexico during the 1500s. Around 1600, Olvera travelled with the Juan Guerra de Resa expedition from her birthplace in Querétaro to Santa Fe. As a precaution, Isabel de Olvera dictated the following deposition to protect herself:

I am going on the expedition to New Mexico and have some reason to fear that I may be annoyed by some individual since I am a mulatta, and it is proper to protect my rights in such an eventuality by an affidavit showing that I am a free woman, unmarried and the legitimate daughter of Hernando, a Negro, and an Indian named Magdalena... I therefore request your grace to accept this affidavit, which shows that I am free and not bound by marriage or slavery. I request that a properly certified and signed copy be given to me in order to protect my rights, and that it can carry full legal authority. I demand justice.⁵

After citing figures regarding the thousands of Black slaves brought to Mexico and New Mexico, and the inter-relationships including marriages between Spanish, Blacks, Native Americans, and their multi-ethnic descendants, Dedra S. MacDonald points out that the August 1680 Pueblo Revolt, which temporarily drove the Spanish out of New Mexico, is best understood “as a multi-ethnic revolt against the Spanish conquerors, waged collectively by American Indians *and the bi-racial castes*.”⁶

In 1774 a Spanish royal official asserted that the Hispano population of northern Mexico was of “Negro, Indian and European ancestry,” so intermixed as to make it difficult for anyone to trace their ancestry. Spanish census records discontinued enumerating race or color after about 1800.⁷

In 1846, when the United States Army ventured down the Santa Fe Trail, the region now called ‘The Land of Enchantment’ was inhabited by only 300 United States citizens -- most of them adult male merchants and traders.⁸ The first United States census to include New Mexico in 1850 found 61,500 ‘non-Indians’ (nearly all Hispano) and 45,000 Native Americans spread over 235,000 square miles comprising the present states of New Mexico and Arizona.⁹ To put these numbers into perspective, professional football league stadiums enjoy an average seating

⁵ Dedra S. Macdonald (2008). "To Be Black and Female in the Spanish Southwest: Toward a History," In Quintard Taylor; Shirley Ann Wilson Moore (eds.). *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000*. University of Oklahoma Press.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Welsh, Michael. “Often Out of Sight Rarely Out of Mind Race and Ethnicity at the University of New Mexico 1889-1927,” in *New Mexico Historical Review*, Vol. 71, Issue 2 (April 1996), p. 108.

⁹ Welsh, Michael. “Often Out of Sight Rarely Out of Mind Race and Ethnicity at the University of New Mexico 1889-1927,” in *New Mexico Historical Review*, Vol. 71, Issue 2 (April 1996), p. 108.

capacity of just under 70,000, while some arenas can accommodate more than 100,000 people – essentially the entire population of what we now know as Arizona and New Mexico in the middle of the 19th-century.

A few African American slaves were brought into New Mexico before the Civil War, “principally by military officers from slave-holding states.”¹⁰ U. S. Census records indicate that there were only 22 Blacks living in the New Mexico Territory in 1850. These numbers grew gradually to 85 Black residents in 1860, and 172 in 1870.¹¹ These sparse totals help to explain why slavery was certainly not on the tops of the Territorial citizens’ minds at the onset of the Civil War.

Many politicians in Washington had long recognized New Mexico as a land unsuitable for slavery “because the agriculture was small in scale and native labor was both plentiful and cheap.”¹² Territorial New Mexico’s citizens had approved anti-Slavery resolutions in 1848 and again in 1850. A reversal in sentiment came in 1859, with the adoption of the Slave Code engineered by Miguel A. Otero, the New Mexican delegate to Congress.

The code, designed to protect slave owners and their property, “was more an expression of Otero’s own pro-Southern sympathies than it was a sign of any fundamental shift in attitude among Territorial residents.”¹³ At the outbreak of the Civil War, New Mexicans felt only a small stake in the issue of whether or not slavery should be expanded into the western territories. New Mexicans preferred to be left alone, rather than becoming embroiled in the looming national divide regarding the dilemma of human bondage.

While New Mexico’s role in the Civil War is taken up elsewhere – principally in the discussion regarding “Southeastern New Mexico as Little Texas” -- it is worth noting that transient, Black cowboys, and, in particular, Black infantrymen, sometimes remained in New Mexico. This despite the Southern anti- Black prejudice infecting some parts of New Mexico after the Civil War.¹⁴

¹⁰ Santa Fe Trail Association. *Wagon Tracks*, Volume 34, Issue 4 (August 2020), p. 24. Available on-line at digitalrepository.unm.edu/wagon_tracks. For example: Captain James H. Carleton arrived at Fort Union in 1851 with his wife, Sophia and at least 2 slaves. Leo E. Oliva, *Fort Union and the Frontier Army in the Southwest* (Washington: National Park Service, Southwest Cultural Resources Center, Professional Papers No. 41, 1993), p. 188.

¹¹ Negro Population 1790 – 1915. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Sam L. Rogers, Director. Government Printing Office. Washington, D.C. 1918. pp. 43 – 44; Hall, Charles E (Specialist in Negro Statistics). Negroes in the United States, 1920 –32. Prepared under the supervision of Z. R. Pettet, Chief Statistician for Agriculture. United States Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1935. pp 9 – 10.

¹² New Mexico Museum of Art. “History: People, Places, and Politics – A Multicultural Society,” available on-line at nmartmuseum.org/nmhistory/people-places-and-politics/a-multicultural-society/history-a-multicultural-society (2010).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Although approximately 180,000 African Americans had served in the Union Army during the Civil War, they were at first barred from joining the regular peacetime Army:

In 1866, however, Congress passed the Army Reorganization Act, a law that doubled the size of the regular Army, including the addition of six African American regiments, the first professional Black soldiers in the United States Army.¹⁵

Also in 1866, the 57th and 125th infantry regiments brought the first African American soldiers to New Mexico, where they served continuously for almost 40 years.¹⁶ These men came to be known as “Buffalo Soldiers,” a name reportedly given to them by Native Americans who thought the soldiers’ curly dark hair resembled buffalo fur. Other historic accounts state that the name was given as a nod to the Black soldiers’ bravery and strong fighting power.¹⁷ Between 1866 and 1900, more than 3,000 Buffalo Soldiers served at New Mexico forts. “In 1876, Buffalo Soldier musicians performed in the Santa Fe Fourth of July celebration.”¹⁸

Among the earliest stewards of the nation’s national parks were soldiers from segregated Black military regiments. Beginning in the 1890s, Buffalo Soldiers, who had earned valor fighting in the Indian Wars and Spanish-American War, added park ranger to their titles and played a critical role in protecting and building the infrastructure of the country’s vast public lands.¹⁹ Approximately 500 Buffalo Soldiers served as Park Rangers at Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant National Parks, in 1899, 1903 and 1904. Their duties, which were the same as White regiments, included evicting timber thieves, extinguishing forest fires, and constructing roads and trails.²⁰ Additional research is warranted to determine if any of those former Buffalo Soldiers were ever detailed to work on New Mexico’s public lands.

The 1870 U. S. Census reported that of almost 92,000 residents living in New Mexico, only 173 were “colored.”²¹ This was about to change, due to several important factors. On the one hand,

¹⁵ Clark, Alexis. “Why Buffalo Soldiers Served Among the Nation’s First Park Rangers,” *History Stories*, revised 28 January 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/buffalo-soldiers-national-parks-rangers](https://www.history.com/news/buffalo-soldiers-national-parks-rangers).

¹⁶ Tim Roberts and Scott Smith, “Buffalo Soldiers in New Mexico,” [newmexicoculture.org/guide/2018/winterguide/buffalo-soldiers-in-new-mexico](https://www.newmexicoculture.org/guide/2018/winterguide/buffalo-soldiers-in-new-mexico). Cited in: Santa Fe Trail Association. *Wagon Tracks*, Volume 34, Issue 4 (August 2020), p. 24. Available on-line at digitalrepository.unm.edu/wagon_tracks.

¹⁷ Clark, Alexis. “Why Buffalo Soldiers Served Among the Nation’s First Park Rangers,” *History Stories*, revised 28 January 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/buffalo-soldiers-national-parks-rangers](https://www.history.com/news/buffalo-soldiers-national-parks-rangers).

¹⁸ Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. “Black in Santa Fe,” *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at [sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe](https://www.sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Clark, Alexis. “Why Buffalo Soldiers Served Among the Nation’s First Park Rangers,” *History Stories*, revised 28 January 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/buffalo-soldiers-national-parks-rangers](https://www.history.com/news/buffalo-soldiers-national-parks-rangers).

²¹ *1870 Census, A compendium of the Ninth Census* (June 1870), “Population of the United States, Tables I and III,” available online at [census.gov/Library/publication/decennial/1870/population/1870-04.pdf](https://www.census.gov/Library/publication/decennial/1870/population/1870-04.pdf). Cited in: Santa Fe Trail Association. *Wagon Tracks*, Volume 34, Issue 4 (August 2020), p. 24. Available on-line at digitalrepository.unm.edu/wagon_tracks.

anecdotal evidence suggests that Blacks who had worked in the West and served in the military went home and talked about their experiences, inspiring the next generation to journey westward. On the other hand, living conditions became intolerable for those living in what were formerly Confederate states. The allure of the West and Southwest, urban job opportunities, and the need to escape insurmountable hardships created a massive exodus.

Between 1875 and 1880, many African Americans migrated to Kansas, as part of a movement called the “Exodusters.” Smaller groups left the South to live in Missouri, Colorado, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), Arkansas, Nebraska, Iowa, the Dakota Territory, and Mexico. African Americans continued to leave the South to escape Jim Crow statutes and extreme racial prejudice through the 1920s, moving to areas in the North, Midwest and the Southwest, where they sought employment opportunities and the chance for a brighter future.²²

In 1917, the predominantly Black national readership of *The Crisis* magazine published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People initially cited “industrial betterment” (factory jobs) as the immediate reason for the mass migration. The following litany, however, clearly and painfully recites the underlying causes for the imperative need to escape:

the destruction of the Negroes’ political rights, the curtailment of his civil rights, the lack of protection of life, liberty and property, low wages, the Jim Crow car, residential and labor segregation laws, poor education facilities... mob violence... a desire to escape harsh and unfair treatment, to secure a larger degree of personal liberty, better advantages for children, and a living wage... prejudice, disfranchisement, lynching, bad treatment on the farms, the boll weevil, the floods of 1916... the insurmountable barriers of caste... and the lack of legal protections.²³

An October 1923 *Alamogordo News* article headlined “The Negro Exodus” explained to its readers that, based upon the 1920 census, the chief manufacturing states of the North showed a marked increase in “negro” population:

These facts were attributed – and rightly no doubt – to the effects of the war, with the exceptional opportunities for labor and the high pay offered by the great industries that [are] largely centered in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois.... The Georgia State College of Agriculture reports that 86,000

²² Charles E. Hall (Specialist in Negro Statistics). *Negroes in the United States, 1920–32*. Prepared under the supervision of Z. R. Pettet, Chief Statistician for Agriculture. (United States Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1935), pp. 9-10. Cited in Moody, Terry and Clarence Fielder, “More to Explore: African-American Experience in Southern New Mexico,” available on-line at newmexicohistory.org/2000/10/29/african-american-experience-in-southern-new-mexico.

²³ *The Crisis* magazine, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1917), p. 65.

negroes have recently left that state. A similar investigation indicated that 48,000 have migrated from South Carolina since 1 November 1922.²⁴

The *Alamogordo News* article concluded by observing that a new immigration law had diminished the supply of unskilled labor in the North, and blamed the boll weevil for its widespread crop destruction. Missing from the article was the need to escape the unimaginably harsh cruelties imposed by Jim Crow so clearly detailed in *The Crisis* article.

The Black migration to the New Mexico Territory is reflected in the population records of the U. S. Census. While the general population of New Mexico grew steadily throughout the 1800s, New Mexico's Black population did not increase significantly until after 1880. Up from 1,015 in 1880, the population reached 1,956 in 1890.²⁵

This relatively late migration pattern is understandable in light of the fact that slavery did not formally end until 1865. During Reconstruction, freed Blacks received some measure of protection from the abuses of former slave owners. In 1876, federal troops were withdrawn from the South, leaving freedman to cope with what was essentially a caste system imposed by White dominance. Former slaves had little opportunity to make a living as laborers or tenant farmers. Equality in terms of jobs, schools, voting, and other daily civil rights were denied. Wages were abysmal, and rent for housing and land sky high.²⁶ Facing an untenable situation at home, many people of African descent decided to try their luck elsewhere, including the West and Southwest.

One of the ways in which freed former slaves found employment in the West and Southwest was through becoming ranch hands and "cow boys" or "cow hands" as they were called. While Texas ranchers were away fighting during the Civil War, they relied upon their slaves to maintain their ranches and cattle herds:

In doing so, the slaves developed the skills of cattle-tending (breaking horses, pulling calves out of mud and releasing longhorns caught in the brush, to name a few) that would

²⁴ "The Negro Exodus," *Alamogordo News*, 18 October 1923, p. 2.

²⁵ Negro Population 1790 – 1915. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Sam L. Rogers, Director. Government Printing Office. Washington, D.C. 1918. pp. 43 – 44; Hall, Charles E (Specialist in Negro Statistics). Negroes in the United States, 1920 –32. Prepared under the supervision of Z. R. Pettet, Chief Statistician for Agriculture. United States Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1935. pp 9 – 10.

²⁶ Tolnay, Steart E. and E. M. Beck. "Rethinking the Role of Racial Violence in the Great Migration," in *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South*. Edited by Alferdteen Harrison. (University Press of Mississippi: Jackson, Mississippi, 1991), pp. 20 – 21. Cited in Moody, Terry and Clarence Fielder, "More to Explore: African-American Experience in Southern New Mexico," available on-line at newmexicohistory.org/2000/10/29/african-american-experience-in-southern-new-mexico.

render them invaluable to the Texas cattle industry in the post-war era.²⁷

Because barbed wire had not yet been invented, coupled with the shortage of cowhands, meant that the cattle population for the most part grazed at will. Ranchers returning from the war discovered that their herds were either completely lost or out of control. “They tried to round up the cattle and rebuild their herds with slave labor, but eventually the Emancipation Proclamation left them without the free workers on which they were so dependent.”²⁸

Desperate for help rounding up maverick cattle, ranchers were compelled to hire newly-freed, skilled, African Americans as paid ranch hands. “Right after the Civil War, being a cowboy was one of the few jobs open to men of color who wanted to not serve as elevator operators or delivery boys or other similar occupations,”²⁹ says William Loren Katz, a scholar of African-American history and the author of 40 books on the topic, including [The Black West](#). Most Western history scholars agree that one out of every four cowboys were Black at the height of the cattle-herding boom.

One of the most famous Black cowboys – perhaps because he wrote a memoir – was Nat Love. Born a slave in Tennessee in 1854, Love headed west at the age of 14. Love drove cattle and horses over the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains and south into Mexico. His autobiography recalls many trail drives to Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota that took him through New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Utah. “In 1890 Love, who had married the year before, quit the cowboy business, moved to Colorado, and became a Pullman porter on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad.”³⁰

Bose Ikard was born a slave in Mississippi in 1847, and grew up in Texas. After the Civil War, he worked with Charles Goodnight on several cattle drives on the trail that Goodnight and Oliver Loving carved from Texas through New Mexico and Colorado into Wyoming and Montana. “He was one of Goodnight’s most valuable employees for years, often entrusted to carry large sums of money that the cattle baron collected at the end of the trail.”³¹

James Coody Johnson was the son of Robert Johnson, an African Creek interpreter for the Seminole nation, and Elizabeth Davis Johnson, daughter of Sarah Davis. After college, he hired on as a cowboy with a cattle company, and for the next year and a half he rode the range in New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. After the death of his father in 1886, James Coody returned to

²⁷ Nodjimbadem, Katie. “The Lesser-Known History of African-American Cowboys – One in Four Cowboys was Black. So Why Aren’t They More Present in Popular Culture?” Available on-line at smithsonianmag.com (13 February 2017), p.8.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hardaway, Roger D. “African American Cowboys on the Western Frontier,” *Negro History Bulletin*, January – December 2001, Vol. 64, No. ¼, p. 28-29. Available on-line at jstor.com/stable/24766998.

³¹ Ibid.

Creek country. “He used his bilingual abilities and education to secure a job as the interpreter for Judge Isaac Parker, who presided over the Federal District Court for Western Arkansas, which at the time had jurisdiction over the Indian Territory.”³²

Bill Pickett was born in 1870 in Texas to former slaves. He became one of the most famous early rodeo stars. He dropped out of school to become a ranch hand, and gained an international reputation for his unique method of catching stray cows. Emulating the way that herd dogs caught wandering cattle, Pickett subdued and controlled a steer by biting the cow’s lip:

He performed his trick, called bulldogging or steer wrestling, for audiences around the world with the Miller Brothers’ 101 Wild Ranch Show... In 1972, 40 years after his death, Pickett became the first Black honoree in the National Rodeo Hall of Fame.³³

George McJunkin was born a slave in Texas around 1851. After the Civil War, he decided that he wanted to escape the prejudicial atmosphere of his native state. He left home in 1867 and soon had jobs with ranches in southern Colorado and northeastern New Mexico. He remarked that “he was often lonely because he was the only Black permanent resident in the area.”³⁴

It bears remembering that not all new arrivals seeking work found lawful employment. Among those arriving to stake out a land claim and a livelihood were, inevitably, the outlaws who preyed on the mining camps, townspeople, farmers, stagecoaches, banks, railroads, and cattle ranchers. These bandits came in every shape, size, gender, and skin color. From the end of the Civil War to the end of the century, most men wore at least one gun belted at the waist. Dance hall keepers installed signs that read, ““Don’t shoot the musicians, they are doing the best they can.””³⁵

Another dynamic that will be discussed in more detail later was the formation of all-Black Western utopias. The most successful in New Mexico was Blackdom, south of Roswell, near Dexter. Blackdom was initially the dream of Henry Boyer, a Black soldier who in 1846 traveled through the Pecos Valley at a time when free Blacks in New Mexico were required to post a

³² Zellar, Cary. “James Coody Johnson (1864 – 1927),” 30 January 2007. Available on-line at blackpast.org/African-american-history/johnson-james-coody-1864-1927. Please note that additional research needs to be done on other Black cowboys working in New Mexico, including George Washington, George Robinson, and Zebrien Bates.

³³ Nodjimbadem, Katie. “The Lesser-Known History of African-American Cowboys – One in Four Cowboys was Black. So Why Aren’t They More Present in Popular Culture?” Available on-line at smithsonianmag.com (13 February 2017), pp. 8 and 10.

³⁴ Hardaway, Roger D. “African American Cowboys on the Western Frontier,” *Negro History Bulletin*, January – December 2001, Vol. 64, No. ¼, p. 28-29. Available on-line at jstor.com/stable/24766998.

³⁵ New Mexico Museum of Art. “History: People, Places, and Politics – A Multicultural Society,” available on-line at nmartmuseum.org/nmhistory/people-places-and-politics/a-multicultural-society/history-a-multicultural-society (2010).

sum of \$200 to ensure good behavior.³⁶ New Mexico nevertheless struck Boyer as “a beautiful place where a man could live free from slavery, segregation, discrimination, and Jim Crow laws.”³⁷ Henry Boyer instilled in his son Francis (Frank) the idea that a New Mexico Black Elysium was possible. Frank Boyer founded Blackdom in 1903. By 1920 it boasted some 300 residents. It failed sometime “before 1930, owing to a lack of water, and insect infestations that destroyed crops.”³⁸ Inevitably, such communities attracted animosity from non-Black neighbors. Although additional research is warranted, apparently the community – in addition to facing water shortages and crop-annihilating pests -- was also threatened by the southeastern New Mexico chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.³⁹

Brenda Dabney’s family history provides a microcosm of the some of these same settlement trends. She can trace her family’s footsteps through more than a century of Blacks in New Mexico:

Her great-grandfather came to the state as a Buffalo Soldier in the 1850s, later settling down as a garbage collector, university groundskeeper and tour guide. Her grandfather worked as a janitor in Albuquerque but also owned a small ranch on the eastern outskirts of the city, she said. Her mother took some of that land and built dozens of houses, mostly bought by Black families, before being pushed out by larger developers.⁴⁰

While the majority of Black females in New Mexico in the labor force during the period between 1910 and 1940 were categorized as domestic and personal services, there were also a number listed as teachers, trained nurses for the ill and dying, housekeepers; restaurant, café, and lunchroom keepers; dressmakers and seamstresses, musicians, and teachers of music. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Black women also found work as laundresses, cooks and caretakers of children, and as servants to wealthy ranch owners and their wives. “In no decade did more than 2 percent of working Black women in the West work as farmers or farm laborers.”⁴¹ Gerda Lerner concludes from her study of the post-slavery period that Black

³⁶ Sálaz, Rubén D. *New Mexico: A Brief Multi-History*. (Albuquerque: Cosmic House, 2005).

³⁷ Source: Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. “Black in Santa Fe,” *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.

³⁸ “Blackdom, The First All-Black Settlement in New Mexico,” rgis.unm.edu/blackdom/. Cited in: Santa Fe Trail Association. *Wagon Tracks*, Volume 34, Issue 4 (August 2020), p. 24. Available on-line at digitalrepository.unm.edu/wagon_tracks.

³⁹ Bruce Glasrud and Charles Becknell, cited in the Santa Fe Trail Association. *Wagon Tracks*, Volume 34, Issue 4 (August 2020), p. 24. Available on-line at digitalrepository.unm.edu/wagon_tracks.

⁴⁰ Smallwood, Scott. “Blacks Don’t Let Small Numbers Hold Them Back,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 19 September 1999. Available on-line at abqjournal.com/2000/nm/who/34who09-19-99.

⁴¹ Baton, Maisha, “New Mexico’s Black Women: Establishing Perspectives,” in Bruce Glasrud, ed. *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits from Five Hundred Year* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013).

women, more than Black men, seem to have equated farming with slavery. Therefore, western Black women generally worked in domestic services when possible.

Despite natural and manmade dangers, it is clear that many Black settlers sought and found refuge and a variety of livelihoods in the Southwest. Many returned to retrieve their families, while others started their families after they arrived. Part of the attraction was the general acceptance of newcomers. What we call 'New Mexico' has always presented a unique amalgamation of cultures that made it difficult to categorize based upon skin color alone:

In general, as the status of a person improved, his race changed. He might begin life as a Negro, pure or otherwise, and end life as a *mulatto* or Eurafrican, mestizo or Eurindian, or even as Español.⁴²

Writer, scholar and social activist Jack D. Forbes concludes that race, therefore, "was not definite by the late eighteenth century." Many New Mexicans were of such a "mixed character that they were simply *de color quebrado*, that is to say, 'all mixed up.'"⁴³ Social commentator and journalist Darryl Lorenzo Wellington summarizes the Black Experience in New Mexico in the following poignant way:

In Blackdom, and on many occasions throughout New Mexico history, Blacks have expressed deep feelings of appreciation for the ways in which the state's unique racial flux facilitated personal liberation. This is the pole which the state's Black history revolves around: A feeling sometimes of rootlessness and a contrary sense of liberation, remaking stereotypes by leaping out of traditional boundaries, and shunting the baggage of the past.⁴⁴

The racial flux Wellington refers to had much to do with the diverse cultures already thriving together, and the fluctuating status of "race" definitions. Race, after all, is a social construct. Although we differ in our appearance (phenotypically), we are all genotypically *Homo sapiens querida* -- aka modern human beings.⁴⁵ The notion of "race" is a contrived idea, a social construct designed to create barriers and separation.

⁴² Forbes, Jack D. "Black Pioneers: The Spanish-Speaking Afroamericans of the Southwest," *Phylon* (1960 -), Vol 27, No. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1966), pp. 235. (Atlanta: Clark Atlanta University). Available on-line at jstor.org/stable/274264.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. "Black in Santa Fe," *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.

⁴⁵ "*Homo sapiens sapiens*, in anthropology and paleontology, the subspecies of *Homo sapiens* that consists of the only living members of genus *Homo*, modern human beings." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, available on-line at Britannica.com/topic/Homo-sapiens-sapiens.

This discussion of early African American settlement in New Mexico will be followed by a closer look at the settlement of nine different cities located in the southeastern part of the state. At least one observer has said that, generally speaking, Blacks at the turn of the 20th-century were less a sustained community of kinship, and more “an assortment of mavericks and oddities.”⁴⁶ However, from around 1900 onward, tangible roots and patterns including neighborhoods began to take hold. The Black male population in New Mexico increased from 891 in 1910 to 4,592 in 1920. During the exact same time period, the Black female population only increased from 737 to 1,140. This disparity between males and females persisted until the 1930s. By 1940, Black women in New Mexico for the first time outnumbered Black men.⁴⁷ Despite all odds and many hardships, including several we are poised to discuss, Black New Mexicans thrived.

United States Census

The 15 April 1910 census returns showed that the population of the United States (excluding Alaska, Puerto Rico, and other outlying possessions) was “sub-divided by color” as follows: White 88.9%, ‘Negro’ 10.7%, and all other persons (Indians, Chinese, Japanese, etc.) at 0.1%.⁴⁸ “Ten percent of Population is Negro” blared the local headlines, “Census of 1910 Has Brought Out Startling Figures Regarding Blacks.”⁴⁹ The tallies showed that increases to the northern and western White populations were largely the result of foreign immigration. The increase of the Black populations in those same regions was in large part due to the mass migrations from the south.⁵⁰

Ku Klux Klan

The 1920s were marked by strong social divisions and ideological differences between various segments of Americans. Tensions existed between native-born Americans and immigrants, between rural-born Americans and those raised in the city, between Blacks and Whites, between traditionalists and progressives, and between Protestants, on the one hand, and Catholics and Jews, on the other.⁵¹ These divisions manifested themselves in many regions of the country, and spawned a number of controversial social movements. One of the most frightening developments was the reappearance of the Ku Klux Klan – a reincarnation of the

⁴⁶ Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. “Black in Santa Fe,” *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.

⁴⁷ Baton, Maisha. “New Mexico’s Black Women – Establishing Perspectives,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 155.

⁴⁸ “Ten Per Cent of Population is Negro,” *Census of 1910 Has Brought Out Startling Figures Regarding Blacks*, *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, 23 November 1911.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Cary, John H., Julius Weinberg, and Thomas L. Hartshorne (eds.) *Volume II: The Social Fabric: American Life from the Civil War to the Present*, (Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, Sixth Edition), p. 167.

White vigilante organization that terrorized former slaves during the post-Civil War Reconstruction era.⁵²

A number of similarities between the Ku Klux Klan of the Reconstruction period and the Klan of the 1920s should be noted. Both were virulently anti-Black, both used violence and intimidation to achieve their ends, and both were composed of White, native-born Americans. There were important differences, however. Unlike the nineteenth-century Klan, the Klan of the 1920s served as a source of profit to its leadership through the sale of insurance along with memberships; it flourished in the Middle West, the Southwest, and on the Pacific Coast in addition to the South; and it broadened the focus of its hatred to include Catholics and Jews in addition to Blacks and immigrants.⁵³

The first Klan responded to the defeat of the South in the Civil War, and the threat of integration and equality between Blacks and Whites afterwards. The Klan of the 1920s “grew out of a fear that forces of change would destroy the values and way of life created by native-born Protestant, Anglo-Saxon Americans” between the end of the Civil War and the outbreak of World War I.⁵⁴

In 1921, The New Mexico Department of Justice (DOJ) proclaimed that lawlessness was not an issue, and warned that the Ku Klux Klan should beware. “There are no members of the Ku Klux Klan in New Mexico as far as is known,” said Mr. A. R. Gere, a DOJ agent:

If there are any members of the Ku Klux Klan in New Mexico they are advised to keep their heads under cover. The department of justice in New Mexico will investigate any of the white-robed order if any peep into view... ‘There are no members of the Ku Klux Klan in New Mexico as far as is known... and lawlessness is not so bad in this state that we need any of them.’⁵⁵

Although the NM Department of Justice may not have known about a KKK presence in 1921, or at least professed ignorance, apparently New Mexico’s political parties were acutely aware. The Republican party in particular appears to have viewed the 700 Klan in and around Tucumcari and Roswell – and their “wives, etc.” -- as potential voters. The following excerpt from a letter

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Cary, John H., Julius Weinberg, and Thomas L. Hartshorne (eds.) *Volume II: The Social Fabric: American Life from the Civil War to the Present*, (Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, Sixth Edition), p. 167.

⁵⁴ Cary, John H., Julius Weinberg, and Thomas L. Hartshorne (eds.) *Volume II: The Social Fabric: American Life from the Civil War to the Present*, (Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, Sixth Edition), pp. 166-167.

⁵⁵ “Ku Klux Klan Must Keep Under Cover in State – Agent of Department of Justice Ready to Act,” *The (Albuquerque) Evening Herald*, 22 September 1921, p. 1. Please note: The following archival source will be consulted once public entry is allowed. *Finding Aid of the William A. Keleher Papers, 1714-1999* at the Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Box 8, Folder 34: “Ku Klux Klan in Portales, New Mexico (1924).”

written to the Republican State Chair by the President of the Mesa Oil Company (Artesia) is included because it reveals several important details regarding the presence of the Ku Klux Klan in southeastern New Mexico, particularly in Roswell and Tucumcari, and it references the possible influence of the Klan on political campaigns during the late 1920s:

Now, as to another matter that may come up in this campaign, pertaining to the Democratic nominee for Governor, Mr. Dow. I feel that you ought to know the actual facts, as I know them. Two years ago, next November, when Mr. Dow was getting the election returns on his race against Judge Barnes for Attorney General, Mr. Dow, Mr. A. D. Hill, Mr. Bob Halley, myself and some others were in a hotel room at Santa Fe, and Mr. Hill noticed that Mr. Dow was running well in K. K. K. centers like Roswell and Tucumcari and he asked Mr. Dow the question, "Say, Bob, do you belong to the Klan?" and Mr. Dow replied, "No, I don't belong to the Klan, but I got all their support."

Now, anti-Dow Democrats are now raising this point against Dow, since he has been quoted (I understand by Greiner of Roswell) as trading off Al Smith for the Democratic State ticket, and the issue as to Dow's probable connection with the Klan is almost sure to get into the campaign, before it closes. Of course, as Republicans we are not concerned about Al Smith, but are vitally interested in the welfare of our Republican State Ticket that might be hurt by a Klan trade against it. In the Klan hot bed at Roswell, I understand the Klan boasts of 700 members, plus the votes of their wives, etc., and I understand that the Klan plans to especially "knife" Dillon and Pankey and they may pull off any kind of "dirty work" against them.

Yours sincerely, William Dooley⁵⁶

Several other towns in New Mexico preceded Roswell in activating Klan chapters. The local Klans in New Mexico were evidently numbered in the order in which they were chartered. Assigning the Roswell Klan "No. 15" suggests there were already 14 additional established chapters. With the records of Pioneer Klan No. 15 are lists of the charter members of about two dozen local chapters in other towns in the state. These records remain in private hands.⁵⁷

By June 1927, the Roswell Pioneer Klan No. 15 had formed a corporation called the Roswell Benevolent Association. This name, and not that of the Klan, was used in all legal matters. The

⁵⁶ Richard C. Dillon Papers, Identifier A063, Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, University of New Mexico (Albuquerque). Note: The letter is written on company letterhead: "Mesa Oil Company, Inc., P. O. Box 793 – Telephone 36, Artesia, New Mexico" and is dated 9 October 1928. William Dooley is listed as the President of the company. It is addressed to "Mr. Ed Safford, Republican State Chairman, Santa Fe, N. M."

⁵⁷ Elvis E. Fleming, "Pioneer Klan No. 15: The Ku Klux Klan in Roswell, 1924-1934" in the *Doña Ana Historical Review*, available on-line at donaanacountyhistsoc.org/HistoricalReview/2013/RoswellKKKHistoricalReview2013.

trustees of the Roswell Benevolent Association purchased land on 6 June 1927, two miles east of Main Street on East Pine Lodge Road at Calumet Road. Membership lists show that 508 men were members of the Roswell Klan at one time or another. The numbers of members in good standing suddenly fell from 350 in the last quarter of 1927 to 237 in the first quarter of 1928 as the result of unpaid dues. There were some brief rallies in 1928 and 1929, but the trend was mostly downward.⁵⁸

During the 1930s, the Klan's focus switched from "Catholics, Negroes, Jews, and foreigners" to Communists and "labor agitators."⁵⁹ It proved to be an unrewarding strategy. Although it may have gained support from employers, especially those in the South, it won back few members.⁶⁰

In 1977, the Grand Dragon of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan promised a presence along the southern border in New Mexico and several other states adjacent to Mexico. "We will be here as long as it takes to meet the response of the illegal alien problem," said David Duke, the 27-year-old leader of the white supremacist group. Duke said about 230 Klan members were to patrol the border in Southern California, with another 150 in Texas, 60 to 75 in New Mexico, and almost none in Arizona... Observers reported sighting at least 10 Klan members, along with six Klan vehicles. The cars and pickup trucks had "Klan Border Watch" signs taped to the sides.⁶¹

Due to its secrecy and the general reluctance of the media to report on them, the exact extent and nature of the Ku Klux Klan throughout New Mexico during the period of African American segregation is not yet clearly understood.

Deep South

Discrimination based upon skin color permeated every aspect of the lives of Black New Mexicans for several generations beginning with the arrival of the first African Americans to the region. A prevailing notion that segregation manifested itself exclusively within New Mexico's school system is not borne out by the evidence. Jim Crow in New Mexico retained most of the characteristics of Jim Crow in the Deep South. Indeed, Jim Crow in New Mexico was largely brought to and fostered by white Southerners who relocated to New Mexico, primarily in the Southeastern part of the state and the larger cities. In addition to bringing their belongings, their aspirations, their talents, and their families, many of these Southern newcomers also brought their racial biases, social prejudices, and feelings of White superiority with them as

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Source: Cary, John H., Julius Weinberg, and Thomas L. Hartshorne (eds.) *Volume II: The Social Fabric: American Life from the Civil War to the Present*, (Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, Sixth Edition), p 182.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Klan Says It's on Border Patrol, But Signs Not Immediately Evident," *Alamogordo Daily News*, 26 October 1977, p. 15.

well. "The Western tradition has always held that 'a man's a man.' Southern dogma, as everyone knows, insists on the superiority of some breeds of men over others."⁶²

Eugenia "Geni" Lassiter Hehr Flores, a long-time educator and Portales resident, arrived in New Mexico after several years in the Virgin Islands as a child, and in Louisiana as a teen and young adult. Throughout her life, Geni's time in the Virgin Islands as a White minority made her feel familiar with, and comfortable around, people with Black skin. Her efforts in Louisiana's junior high and high schools to push back against ubiquitous racist comments, the casual use of the "N" word, demeaning stories, and ugly jokes caused her classmates to physically rough her up and to call her a "Nigger Lover." The adults within earshot, including teachers and administrators, did not defend her. She learned that a Jim Crow South was a dangerous territory for Black people, and for empathetic White people as well.

When she was three years old in Virginia, her mother handed her a Confederate flag and instructed her to hold it high above her head while joining the parade behind the drum and bugle corp. She did so, proudly. Later, she moved with her mother and new step-father, a National Park Service employee, from Virginia's Shenandoah National Park to the Virgin Islands National Park. During her three years there, she was immersed in a culture that was 80% Black. When she was 7 years old, her family was transferred from the Virgin Islands to New Jersey:

Standing in front of the house my parents were interested in buying, the real estate agent said, 'You need to know that a Black family lives in the house behind this one. I will reduce the price if you will take it.'

Geni remembers that she questioned her mother about the comment, but doesn't remember the response. She knew even as a child, though, that her mother's Southern Confederacy views had softened through living on the islands. What she witnessed firsthand in Louisiana continues to shape her worldview, including her relationships with people of color. It is no accident she has served as a cultural liaison of one sort or another her entire professional life in southeastern New Mexico.

It is important to understand the knowledge that she and thousands of others brought with them to the Southwest from the Deep South. Flores first encountered separate drinking fountains and bathrooms when the family was transferred to New Orleans. The "Whites Only!" drinking fountains were refrigerated, she remembers, while the "Colored" fountains were porcelain, with no cooling system. They were stained from not being cleaned. Even as a young girl, she noted that many public buildings had three bathrooms: "White Men," "White Women," and "Colored." During a visit to the dentist, she and her mother passed the "Colored" Waiting Room on their way to the White Waiting Room. The Black clients were seated on metal

⁶² Rosenfeld, Albert. "New Mexico's Fading Color Line: Albuquerque Shows the Way," in *Commentary Magazine*, Volume 20 (1955) edited by Nathan Abrams (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), p. 155.

chairs in a long, dark hall, one pole lamp in the corner, with no receptionist. The White waiting room was “well lit, large, with pictures on the wall, plush couches and chairs, magazines, and the receptionist’s area.” Noting the contrast, Geni told her mom that she was going to invite a Black man and his daughter to come with them to the White waiting room, because that is where the receptionist was.

Her mother grabbed her and whispered sternly:

NO! You cannot do that. You don’t understand how this is much bigger than you are. White people would hurt us.

Flores has vivid memories of adults and children dressed in sheets, strolling to neighborhood KKK meetings. Years later, Geni experienced her most memorable and upsetting collision with racism during a return trip to visit a boyfriend near Lafayette, LA. While attending a housewarming barbeque at a sprawling new house on a large lot, situated nearby was a small wooden shack, in need of major roof and porch repairs. Comments were made regarding the “dirty Niggers” down the road. The host of the party startled Geni by suddenly jumping away from the kitchen window and running outside.

Several of the little children from the small home down the way were playing along the bayou that ran behind both properties. Indignant at the perceived intrusion, the host screamed:

You ugly little Nigger monkeys, get off of my property now! You take your fuckin’ little Nigger asses home now! If I ever catch you on my property again, I will get my gun and shoot you and your momma too!

Flores remembers that the kids ran away in terror. She has never forgotten the faces of those little children, not having any idea what they had done to deserve such hatred. When the men at the party retrieved their guns and decided to pay a visit to the house next door, Geni insisted that she and the boyfriend leave “NOW!”

The fact that her boyfriend was bewildered at her reaction ended that relationship then and there. Flores never knew what else may have happened that day, but as she recalled the poisonous situation decades later, she knew that “there was no protection for the Black family, from police, from neighbors, from anybody.”

Many transplants from Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, Oklahoma, and other long-time Jim Crow states were comfortable with the strict segregation between the majority White population and minorities, and they sought to impose these same restrictions within their new communities in New Mexico. Many others, such as Geni Flores, who brought these same experiences from the Deep South, strove to stamp Jim Crow out. Dr. C. Pardue Bunch, for example, retired after 40 years of serving Artesia as a general medical practitioner. Based upon his family history, his

experiences growing up in the South, and a stint in Japan, he strove to promote racial equality in his personal, religious, and professional realms:

My mother's father owned slaves; my grandfather was in the Civil War, and I'm just that far away from it – 121 years ago... I played with Negro boys when I was a kid at home.

As a young man he convinced a conservative church congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina, to bring together a dozen Black students and twenty or so White students to get together for some committee meetings on Christian work and “to make a beginning.” Bunch brought this reconciliatory worldview with him to Artesia beginning in 1944.⁶³

Texas

White Americans seeking cheap land—and at times evading debt in the United States—began moving to the Spanish (and, later, Mexican) territory of Texas during the first half of the 19th century. Though the Mexican government opposed slavery, Americans brought slaves with them as they settled the frontier and established cotton farms and cattle ranches. By 1825, slaves accounted for nearly 25 percent of the Texas settlers. By 1860, fifteen years after it became part of the Union, that number had risen to over 30 percent—that year's census reported 182,566 Texas slaves. As an increasingly significant new slave state, Texas joined the Confederacy in 1861. Though the Civil War was mostly fought back East, many White Texans took up arms to fight alongside their Confederate brethren.⁶⁴

Civil War skirmishes were also fought in the Southwest, including the Battle of Picacho Pass, south of Phoenix. Once the Confederacy's eastern ports were blockaded, Southern military leaders viewed the Southwest as a gateway to Pacific Ocean ports and lucrative gold mines. In 1861, a Texas legislator named John R. Baylor led 300 Confederate troops into the New Mexico territory. “This was the first invasion of the Union – two years before Gettysburg.”⁶⁵ The Confederate version of manifest destiny to expand their empire of slavery took form under General Henry Hopkins Sibley, who captured Albuquerque and Santa Fe.⁶⁶ Finally repulsed in northern New Mexico, more than 350 combatants from both sides were killed in the Battle of

⁶³ Oral history. C. Pardue Bunch (Artesia). *UNM Medical Center Library Oral History of Medicine Project*. 4 June 1984. Available on-line at: nmdigital.unm.edu/digital/collection/nmhhc/id/109.

⁶⁴ Nodjimbadem, Katie. “The Lesser-Known History of African-American Cowboys – One in Four Cowboys was Black. So Why Aren't They More Present in Popular Culture?” Available on-line at smithsonianmag.com (13 February 2017), p. 8.

⁶⁵ Nelson, Megan K. *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West*. (S. I. SCRIBNER, 2021). Review available on-line at Los Angeles Review of Books.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Glorieta Pass. After the war, despite their hardships and their ultimate defeat, Confederates from southern slave states returned to settle much of the Southwest.⁶⁷

East-central and southeastern New Mexico in particular have always shared deep cultural ties with west Texas. Texan cattlemen moved into the region in the late 1800s, and Texas oil companies dominated the region's economy during the first half of the twentieth century.⁶⁸

Racial unrest in the Deep South, Oklahoma, Texas, and elsewhere made front page news on almost a daily basis in the southeastern New Mexico newspapers. Although the original 1910 newspaper account was quite lengthy, and replete with lurid details, the following excerpt captures the gist of the violence and the author's sense of despair and general helplessness:

The bloody story of the clash between the whites and blacks at Slocum, over in East Texas, has appalled the country, used as we are to the accounts of race riots and bloodshed arising from the failure of different colors to admit that they are any such thing as brothers. In this particular shindy it is now plain that at least forty negroes were killed and six white men were mortally wounded... it leaves an ineradicable stain on the nation, and particularly on Texas. Mob violence is a terrible thing under any and all circumstances, and it is especially terrible under such condition as this, which leaves an impression of horror that will last for many a long year.⁶⁹

Just one week earlier, the newspaper's editor and general manager had written the following opinion piece:

Texas is a big state, almost an empire. Her territory extends from Louisiana [on] the east to New Mexico on the west, and from Oklahoma and Kansas on the north to Mexico and the Gulf on the South. Her altitude is from sea level to 5,000 feet high. But as big as Texas is, we are sorry that life seems to have so little value in that great state. Near Palestine recently ten negroes were killed, and it was reported that men were hunting and killing negroes, not because of any crime committed, but because they were negroes. This is not a very good advertisement for the 'Lone Star' state.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Snow, Anita. "Phoenix Race Relations Tinged by Southwest's Segregated Past," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, 1 August 2019. Available on-line at phillytrib.com/news/across_america/phoenix-race-relations-tinged-by-southwests-segregated-past/article_dcf4bc64-2a55-5022-b154-d4d79b68f6a7.

⁶⁸ Central New Mexico Community College. "African American Rights," available on-line at mytext.cnm.edu/lesson/african-american-rights (2021).

⁶⁹ "The War in Texas," *Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 13 August 1910, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Editorial, J. W. Campbell, Editor – Manager, *Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 6 August 1910, p. 4.

The fact that these stories from Texas, Oklahoma, and beyond made daily front page news along New Mexico's eastern border reinforces the notion that the region's readership maintained strong ties with their racially-tumultuous homelands.

Southern New Mexico as 'Little Texas'

Clovis and Hobbs are situated very close to the Texas border. "Both are trading centers for many of the ranches of west Texas," and Clovis served as the school center for children from near-by rural areas across the NM-TX border.⁷¹ Even though Hobbs is located in New Mexico, "it is more Texan and southern in its characteristics."⁷² It is said locally that most of the Hobbs residents have come from other oil areas of Texas and Oklahoma. The older residents trace their ancestors to Southern states.⁷³

Arriving in Clovis, "the metropolis of the plains country," a visiting Roy, NM newspaper columnist was "...impressed by the large number of motor vehicles displaying license plates from the Lone Star state. In one business block "the tally of parked cars showed a count of 24 Texas tags as against 17 for New Mexico."⁷⁴ While cruising to the east and west, and to the north and south parts of town, nowhere:

did I see more than a half dozen or so Spanish-Americans. They were in all probability merely passing through. But boy, oh, boy, the colored people they have. That gave further impression that the strip in which Clovis is located does rightfully belong to Texas.⁷⁵

A sign described in a 1916 *Clovis News* filler set the tone for the times. Just across the New Mexico border, in Terry County, TX a pamphlet published by the local Judge set forth the following descriptors: "No Saloons, No Negroes, No Mexicans, and D –n Few White People."⁷⁶ In the Clovis schools, "there has been no effort to hire Spanish American or Negro counselors." According to a Spanish American Clovis resident:

The reason we don't have any more Spanish teachers over here, I believe is because Clovis and Curry County have been known

⁷¹ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 198.

⁷² Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 22.

⁷³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 199.

⁷⁴ "Getting Acquainted," *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 15 October 1934, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ "Exposition to Continue," *The Clovis News*, 21 January 1916, p. 6.

as Little Texas. It has always been a discriminatory area; it is a sick area. The teachers don't want to come teach here.⁷⁷

Informed citizens within the community said that Roswell was typical -- in its attitudes toward minority groups -- of towns further to the east which are considered to be Southern. "Many of the 'old timers' came from neighboring states in the South."⁷⁸ Knowledgeable persons in Carlsbad said that most of the residents traced their ancestry to Southern states, particularly Texas and Oklahoma. "Members of the Spanish-American community claimed that this regional origin was responsible for the segregation and discrimination found in the town."⁷⁹ In Alamogordo, most of the Anglo-Americans were "southern in origin, and held to their traditional attitudes toward other races and ethnic groups. Language, church, and family ties held the Spanish-Americans in a separate group."⁸⁰ Tukumcari, north and slightly west of Clovis near the Texas border tended to share the same Southern sentiments.

A 1910 *Tukumcari Times* editorial opined that segregated schools were accepted by everyone, and that the system would never change:

The negroes themselves are perfectly satisfied with the conditions. The sensible ones would resent the enactment into law of a 'mixed school' provision, and have no sympathy for the spoiled coons of the metropolis who are seeking to get out of their place. Even if the political buncombers did succeed in getting a provision to seat negro children in the white schools, it would not have any weight on this side of the mountains.⁸¹

Discussions that same year regarding the possibility of statehood for New Mexico provided another slant on the issue of whether or not to integrate the schools. "The coming of statehood has its embarrassments," wrote the *Tukumcari Times* editor:

Presumptively the school laws of New Mexico have never made any distinction between the races. At the same time there has been no Negro pupils in the White schools in these parts, and there will not be any, constitution or no constitution.⁸²

⁷⁷ United States Commission on Civil Rights, New Mexico Advisory Committee, *The Civil Rights Status of Minority Groups in Clovis, New Mexico: A Summary of a Meeting of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights*. May 1969), p. 22.

⁷⁸ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ "The Magnificent Prize Was Won by Progress Editor – The Tenderfoot Breaks into a Funny Strain...The Convention and Negro Schools," *The Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times*, 5 November 1910, p. 2.

⁸² Ibid.

In this same editorial, the editor takes a swipe at those arguing for integration: The settlement may not be in accordance with the views “of the Albuquerque brand of negroes,” he wrote, “but it will be in accordance with the common sense and the warrant of experience which does not include mixed schools in its range of vision.”⁸³

Some observers, while acknowledging the influx of Southern ways upon New Mexico norms, attribute the limited range of racial discrimination in New Mexico to the presence of numerous Puebloan cultures; and Comanche, Ute, Navajo, Apache, and Latinx influences:

The meanest of the Far Western states in this respect is Nevada, derisively dubbed the ‘Mississippi of the West’ by Negroes. Discrimination is desultory, but disagreeable, in Utah, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho and easy to find in Arizona. New Mexico is spotty because of its large Indian and Mexican population and because it borders Texas on the East.⁸⁴

The only communities in New Mexico that took the option offered by the permissive nature of the state law to maintain segregated schools were located in the southeastern section of the state, near Texas, and the Mexican border. The area has been called “little Texas,” partly in recognition of the prevalence here of “‘Southern’ attitudes and patterns of behavior in race relations.”⁸⁵ Journalist and commentator Albert Rosenfeld described the steady movement of racial prejudice from the South into New Mexico this way:

Carlsbad, Artesia and Hobbs segregated their Negroes in the schools and in housing areas, and openly discriminated against them in public places. But the East Side of New Mexico was, after all, ‘Little Texas,’ and the rest of the state was not too disturbed about its folkways. Not, at least, until the *tejanos* began creeping northward and westward, infecting even Albuquerque, the liberal, metropolitan heart of New Mexico. Then old hands began to grow alarmed. Next it would be Santa Fe and Taos.⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Miller, Loren. “The Negro Voter in the Far West,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 26, No. 3, The Negro Voter in the South (Summer, 1957). Available on-line at jstor.org/stable/2293409.

⁸⁵ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR (jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁸⁶ Rosenfeld, Albert. “New Mexico’s Fading Color Line: Albuquerque Shows the Way,” Abrams, Nathan, ed. *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59: “A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion,”* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1955).

A *tejano*, literally, means Texan. According to Rosenfeld, the word began to carry distasteful overtones during the Civil War when a contingent of Texans invaded New Mexico with the Confederate forces at a time when Ash Upson, editor of the *Albuquerque Review* was writing passionate anti-slavery editorials. Today, claims Rosenfeld, “the term *tejano* refers to any prejudiced person – usually a Southerner, although a man from Connecticut or Dakotas may rate the epithet.”⁸⁷

Historian Leon Metz reminds us that Latinx residents and visitors were also discriminated against, “especially in southeastern New Mexico.” Many businesses hung signs in their windows, reading, “No Dogs, Negroes or Mexicans.” Hispano high school basketball players remember being barred from restaurants, although their fellow White players often refused to eat at such establishments unless their Latinx friends could eat there, too.⁸⁸

Remembering her brief stopover in Amarillo, TX -- a 1.5-hour drive due east from Tucumcari -- author Mary Ann Froede remembers the following: “I was pretty shocked to find that all the restrooms and water fountains at the department stores were segregated” with “WHITES ONLY” signage. “I had never seen anything like that before,” remembered the native Californian, “This was early in the ‘60s!” Froede distinctly remembers leaving a Jim Crow South further and further behind as she and her family traveled away from the Texas border.⁸⁹

“In predominately Anglo-Saxon southeastern New Mexico” a survey published in a 1955 *New York Times* article observed, “even Spanish-speaking White people and Indians from other parts of New Mexico are subject to considerable discrimination.”⁹⁰

Southerners “are horrified that the Negroes should want the same educational opportunities they and their children enjoy, and the idea of fair wages and equal business opportunities is completely abhorrent to them...” wrote Orren Beaty in a 1946 *Las Cruces Sun News* editorial:

By ‘them’ we naturally don’t mean all Southerners, or even a majority of them, perhaps, but it is a very active, very loud minority that feels this way. And there doesn’t seem to be much chance for a change in the situation.⁹¹

This same editorialist continued:

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Melzer, Richard. “Many Fought for Their Dreams,” *First Person*. Available on-line at news-bulletin.com/opinion/columns/many-fought-for-their-dreams/article_0e641f28-19c4-11e9-8023-a3958c0e7f1c (17 January 2019).

⁸⁹ Froede, Mary Ann. (April 2012) *Where the Hell is Tucumcari?* Author House, E-book, p. 68.

⁹⁰ Hill, Gladwin. “Survey Shows Decline in Racial Bias in Far West,” *New York Times*, 29 May 1955, p. 19.

⁹¹ Beaty, Orren. Editorial. “Chaparral,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 28 July 1946, p. 1.

Southerners complain that others are always bringing up the race issue – that they and the Negroes get along fine, until some outsider causes trouble. But the first thing they'll ask you, once conversation is started is: 'What do you think about the nigger problem?'⁹²

West Coast Magazine commentator Arthur Hinton predicted as early as 1910 that there “may be a very serious race problem introduced” into New Mexico by virtue of the “coming of large numbers of people from the eastern states.”⁹³ It was around this same time that the northeastern part of New Mexico was brought into direct railroad connection with the rest of the territory, with the completion of the Rock Island, El Paso and Northeastern, and the Santa Fe Central railroads, followed by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe's Belen cut-off.⁹⁴

It is clear that parts of New Mexico, notably those counties adjoining the Texas border, for a long time shared and practiced accepted Southern prejudices. As the railroads and newly-paved roadways made most of the state accessible, these practices began to spread. A combination of factors kept the dissemination of Jim Crow at bay. Resistance came in many forms, from the influence of scientists and military personnel arriving from diverse backgrounds, from tourists and residents not interested in discriminating against other human beings, and from Native Americans and Latinx populations engaged in their own struggles with Anglos. Over time, local residents formed social welfare associations and alliances, or joined local chapters of statewide and national groups in order to improve the quality of life for the Black community, and ultimately all citizens. Certain White individuals were responsible for working with Black civic and religious leaders to end school segregation and other inequities. The students at the University of New Mexico (Albuquerque) also played a critical role in advocating for the city's non-discrimination ordinance and other acts of civil disobedience in defiance against a rising tide of bigotry.

Brief Background: Segregated Schooling

Although in 1850 a public-school law was defeated by a popular vote of 4,981 to 351,⁹⁵ in 1898 Congress passed the Fergusson Act providing for the foundation of a public school system in the Territory of New Mexico. On 20 June 1910, Congress passed an Enabling Act, signed by President William Howard Taft. It provided for the calling of a constitutional convention in New Mexico in preparation for being admitted to the nation as a state. The document that the

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Hinton, Arthur R., “New Mexico – A New State,” in *The West Coast Magazine* edited by John S. McGroarty (Las Angeles: Grafton Publishing Company, 1910), p. 178.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 180.

⁹⁵ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. “The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History.” The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI) p. 27; Walter, Paul A. F. “*First Meeting of the New Mexico Educational Association*,” *New Mexico Historical Review*, II (January, 1927).

convention body drafted was ratified by voters early the following year, and on 6 January 1912, New Mexico became the forty-seventh state in the Union.⁹⁶

The 1910 Constitution of the State of New Mexico was reprinted verbatim in the 3 December 1910 issue of *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*. Excerpts from Article XII regarding the philosophy behind the State's educational system, and how oversight was to be provided, are included here:

Section 1. --- A uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all the children of school age in the state shall be established and maintained.

Section 5. --- Every child of school age and of sufficient physical and mental ability shall be required to attend a public or other school during such period and for such time as may be prescribed by law.

Section 6. --- A state board of education is hereby created, to consist of seven members. It shall have the control, management and direction of all public schools, under such regulation as may be provided by law. The governor and the state superintendent of public instruction shall be ex-officio members of said board and the remaining five members shall be appointed by the governor, by and with the consent of the senate; and shall include the head of some state educational institution, a county superintendent of schools, and one other person actually connected with educational work. The legislature may provide for district or other school officers, subordinate to said board.

Section 10. --- Children of Spanish descent in the state of New Mexico shall never be denied the right and privilege of admission and attendance in the public schools or at other public educational institutions of the state, and they shall never be classed in separate schools, and shall forever enjoy perfect equality with other children in all public schools and education institutions of the state, and the legislature shall provide penalties for the violations of this section.

Regarding Section 10, no mention was made of any other ethnic groups, including Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, or other cultural minorities. No mention was made regarding students who might require special educational, mental, or physical health care.⁹⁷ The inclusion of all students regardless of race was not without controversy. Delegate Mabry introduced a resolution during the 1910 proceedings to separate Black children from the others. Although unsuccessful at first, this maneuver was applauded by a *Tucumcari News* editorialist:

⁹⁶ New Mexico Museum of Art. "History: People, Places, and Politics – A Multicultural Society," available on-line at nmartmuseum.org/nmhistory/people-places-and-politics/a-multicultural-society/history-a-multicultural-society (2010); Smith, Charles E. (2011). *The New Mexico State Constitution*, New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

⁹⁷ *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 3 December 1910, p. 2.

There had been an effort to have the constitution plainly say that should be no distinction between the races, but this was a little too much for Delegate Mabry, who seems to have a pretty accurate understanding of the feeling of the people on this side of the mountains.⁹⁸

File No. 32, crafted by Delegate Mabry, and titled, "Pertaining to the Establishment of Separate Schools for White and Negro Children," was read for the first time, ordered translated into Spanish, printed, and was then referred to the Committee on Education.⁹⁹ Section 12 recommended that "any school district may by a vote of two-thirds of the legal voters of such district, provide for a separate school for children of African descent, but such school shall be maintained as other public schools of the state."¹⁰⁰ Although the resolution failed in 1910, it was taken up again more than a decade later, when the ethnic composition of the legislators was a majority Anglo for the first time in the Territory's history.

All public schools in New Mexico are supported primarily by the State Maintenance Fund, distributed on the basis of need to each county. Local funds complete the school budget. Each municipal school system operates using a five-member Board of Education, elected for staggered terms. Cities may opt to have an advisory committee appointed by the Board. The Superintendent of schools is appointed by the Board of Education.¹⁰¹

A state law passed in 1923 and amended in 1925 allowed municipal or county boards of education to establish segregated schools when it was "for the best advantage and interest of the school that separate rooms be provided for the teaching of its pupils of African descent."¹⁰² The amended law made a provision for the optional establishment of separate school rooms for pupils of African descent and decreed that the rooms so provided be as "well-kept and teaching therein as efficient as that provided [in] others."¹⁰³ Although there was apparently much back and forth, the final vote was 41 to 1, with a Mr. Casados voting against separate schools:

After a long squabble a provision to segregate negro children from Caucasian, where separate rooms are provided for them,

⁹⁸ "The Magnificent Prize Was Won by Progress Editor – The Tenderfoot Breaks into a Funny Strain...The Convention and Negro Schools," *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 5 November 1910, p. 2.

⁹⁹ "Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the Proposed State of New Mexico Held at Santa Fe, New Mexico," between 3 October 1910 and 21 November 1910 (Albuquerque: Press of the Morning Journal, 1910).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR (jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

¹⁰² Romo, Rene. "Tracing a Difficult Path," *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

¹⁰³ "New Mexico's Segregated Schools," sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee.

was restored to the code after having first been stricken out. This, however, was amended to require the consent of the state school superintendent and to assure them as good teachers and facilities as those for the Caucasian children.¹⁰⁴

Eventually there were nine such schools in New Mexico, located in Artesia, Alamogordo, Carlsbad, Clovis, Hobbs, Las Cruces, Roswell, Tucumcari, and Vado. Although African American segregation pervaded a much broader area, these nine cities plus Albuquerque are the focus of the current study.

Segregation impacted not only the African American population (which comprised about three percent of New Mexico's total population in the period between 1950 and 1970) but also *nuevomexicanos* and the children of Mexican immigrants—especially in the southeastern quadrant of the state known as 'Little Texas.'¹⁰⁵ Native American students attended schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and thus remained segregated. Towns such as Clovis, Hobbs, Carlsbad, Artesia, Roswell, and Las Cruces maintained segregated elementary and high schools into the early 1950s.¹⁰⁶

A brief look nationally shows that until 1954, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia (13 states total) required that Blacks and Whites be educated separately. In addition to these 'Southern' states, Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia also mandated racial segregation. In Arizona, Kansas, New Mexico, and Wyoming, segregated schools were optional, although there is no record of segregation ever being practiced in Wyoming.¹⁰⁷

Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Tennessee took the situation a step further, forbidding mixed-race education, even in private institutions. Delaware directed the establishment of schools for children called "Moors" or "Indians." Native American children in New York entered public schools from their reservations in September 1954. In Mississippi, 'White' meant 'Caucasian,' and 'Colored' meant anyone non-White. In Oklahoma, 'Colored' meant 'of African descent' and 'White' meant all others.¹⁰⁸

Although each state, including New Mexico, stipulated that separate schools for Black and Whites maintain the same high standards, this goal was not achieved. "There's never been a

¹⁰⁴ "School Code and Stage Line Bills Passed – Beauty Parlor Measure Also Gets Through the Lower House; Introduction of Bills Cut Off with Total of 243," *The Albuquerque Herald*, 7 March 1925, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Morgan, Brandon, Ph. D. *The History of New Mexico*. Available online at <https://mytext.cnm.edu/lesson/civil-rights-movements>. (Albuquerque: Central New Mexico Community College, 2021).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Sutherland, Arthur E. "Segregation by Race in Public Schools Retrospect and Prospect," *Law and Contemporary Problems* (Winter, 1955) Vol. 20 No. 1 (Durham: Duke University School of Law), p. 169.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

moment in the history of this country where Black people who have been isolated from White people have gotten the same resources," investigative journalist Hannah-Jones declares. "They often don't have the same level of instruction. They often don't have strong principals. They often don't have the same technology."¹⁰⁹

The students were at a disadvantage scholastically and athletically. Before integration, the Black schools were members of a Segregated Schools League in New Mexico. They played an abbreviated schedule brought about by tight budgets and the limited number of segregated prep schools in New Mexico and Texas.¹¹⁰ Black athletes lacked proper equipment, had access only to substandard fields and facilities, and were shut out from the most rigorous and prestigious competitions.

In 1947, the Legislature of the State of New Mexico appropriated \$35,000 for a survey of the schools in New Mexico to provide recommendations for improvements. The Peabody College of Nashville, TN was hired to make the survey. The fieldwork was conducted and the results were published. However, the report made no reference to (or recommendations for) the improvement of New Mexico's segregated schools.

The Albuquerque chapter of the NAACP and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee protested the findings:

Because this report, no doubt, will be used as a reference for future legislation for the schools, it is felt that of necessity some position must be taken [in regard to] these forgotten and sub-standard schools. It had been hoped that through this survey these schools might be discovered and their shameful condition be disclosed to the public. They were not. Therefore, a group of interested citizens has undertaken to try to discover and report some of the most obvious ills of this separate system.¹¹¹

These concerned groups subsequently sponsored their own study. They presented several of the most "obvious wrongs" inherent in the segregated school system, but by their own admission "shied away" from using the reports they gleaned from the parents, fearing that their "tales of woe" would be considered to be "beyond comprehension." They erred on the

¹⁰⁹ Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "How the Systemic Segregation of Schools is Maintained by 'Individual Choices'" on National Public Radio's *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross. Originally broadcasted 16 January 2017. Link to original interview available on-line at npr.org/2017/10/13/557558468/how-the-systemic-segregation-of-schools-is-maintained-by-individual-choices.

¹¹⁰ Moffett, Ben. "On Martin Luther King's Birthday, Remembering the End of School Segregation in Hobbs and New Mexico, 1954," 21 January 2014. Available on-line at nmsportsblog.com/2014/01/21/martin-luther-king-day-post.

¹¹¹ "New Mexico's Segregated Schools," sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949). Please note: A search to find Marjorie Wightman's photographs has so far been unsuccessful. The photos were apparently submitted separately from the report narrative.

side of being “very conservative in the presentation of bad facts.” On the whole, they commended the teachers for persevering despite tremendous obstacles. However, they concluded their report by thanking Marjorie Wightman for her photographs that documented “deplorable conditions.”¹¹² The report concluded that nearly “1,000 New Mexico children are now attending segregated schools. We are maintaining a ‘second school system’ that is giving us ‘second rate’ results!”¹¹³ They continued:

Can we afford ‘second rate’ results in our segregated educational system? The children who attend segregated schools will not cease to be a problem when they graduate. Their material needs will become greater with families to support and they will lean heavily on society unless we can adequately equip them now. Are children who can only attend classes on a half day basis because of overcrowded conditions learn to care for themselves?¹¹⁴

The authors of the study, which was sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch, and the Albuquerque Civil Right Commission, then asked rhetorically: “Can we be proud of our state which houses the most modern scientific laboratories in the world yet fails to provide some high school students with any sort of science program? Can we in the absence of any competitive athletic program in some of the smaller segregated schools ever teach our children the vital lessons of sportsmanship and competition? Will the decrepit library facilities of our segregated schools ever excite the students to read to take a conscientious interest and responsibility for their civic affairs?”¹¹⁵

They posited the following rationale for their efforts:

We have prepared this report because we believe that the failure of the Peabody Survey to mention the segregation issue could only result in an unrealistic approach to our educational dilemmas.¹¹⁶

They concluded their findings unequivocally: “In the interest of sound economical government, and in the interest of a fully participating population,” they wrote, “it is our earnest conviction that segregated schools must be abolished.”¹¹⁷

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ “New Mexico’s Segregated Schools,” sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne added his voice to the chorus of Protestant and Catholic churchmen calling for an end to segregation in New Mexico's public schools. In an address to the Catholic Daughters of America, he appealed to the collective conscience of his listeners:

As American citizens we can neither be content with smug assurance that social disturbances such as race discrimination will right themselves without effort on our part. Nor can we allow either the racial idiosyncrasies of a Hitler or the class-consciousness of a Stalin to have any play in our minds and hearts.¹¹⁸

He reminded the crowd that "All Negro children who wish, have a place in the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese."¹¹⁹ Rev. Kenneth M. Keeler, pastor of Santa Fe's First Presbyterian church, agreed by observing, "I do not see that the broad principles of democracy and equality give any [room] for the laws of segregation... nor do Holy Scriptures."¹²⁰ Rev. A. V. Lucero, pastor of Santa Fe's Spanish Presbyterian church, said those seeking de-segregation "should be commended, encouraged and supported by every right-thinking Christian."¹²¹ Rev. C. J. Kinsolving III, pastor of the Protestant Episcopal mission in Santa Fe and chairman of the department of Christian Social Relations also endorsed the integration efforts, including the state's pending legislation: "Segregation," he declared, "serves only to perpetuate the existence of an underprivileged minority and such a minority by its very nature becomes a constant threat to the welfare of the majority."¹²² The evening's presentations made front page news in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*.

Despite mounting pressure, a 1953 *New York Times* article announced that the New Mexico Senate eradicated a move to ban racial segregation in New Mexico public schools by a 16-14 vote. The journalist remarked upon the racial contours of the Senators themselves:

The sixteen Senators opposing the measure were all 'Anglos' while every Senator of Spanish American ancestry favored the move. The bill was killed through the adoption of an amendment after a bitter floor debate.¹²³

Opponents of the measure said that racial segregation in schools was gradually being abolished by the communities themselves, and that a law "to force fast action could only lead to trouble."¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ "Archbishop Denounces Segregation in Schools," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 28 February 1949, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ "New Mexico Kills Ban on Bias," *New York Times*, 18 February 1953, p. 6.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Most church groups, some Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs), and the ever-vigilant NAACP labored behind the scenes to instigate positive change at the community level. An 8 July 1954 *Roswell Daily Record* article heralded the NAACP's initiative to end segregation in New Mexico's schools by the following month. The article quoted Hobart LaGrone, NAACP state president extensively:

He said he has sent for legal petition forms which will be distributed to parents in the five school districts. The parents will petition their boards to end segregation by September. At the same time, the NAACP will offer to help school boards in resolving any problems arising from the de-segregation. LaGrone said that if the petitions fail to get action by September, the cases will be taken to court.¹²⁵

The targeted campaign was aimed squarely at Artesia, Carlsbad, Roswell, Clovis and Las Cruces. The *Albuquerque Journal* observed in 1954 that the state's communities faced with the problem of ending segregation "have made considerable progress in solving it" although there "have been cases where an athletic team with a Negro Member was not welcomed in some East Side cities."¹²⁶ Finally, in the months leading up to the *Brown v. Board* decision, and within the following year, all of New Mexico's Black students were mainstreamed back into integrated public schools.

It is worth repeating that there was never a state-level mandate for the racial separation of students. All segregation policies were formulated at the municipal level based upon a statewide recommendation. Extricating themselves from the decision decades later took some doing. Historians have noted that although nearly all of the towns integrated their school systems prior to the *Brown v. Board* decision, the rationale for desegregation often had more to do with economics than a quest for equality. Carlsbad, for example, integrated its high school in the summer of 1951 to avoid the cost of updating the all-Black high school in order to bring it into accreditation compliance.¹²⁷

"Can the taxpayers afford to maintain this dual educational system?" asked one report:

Our taxes have created a new school system which is housed for the most part in tarpaper and board barracks hauled away from flooded areas or abandoned army camps... It is now time to make a major policy decision. Do we wish to ask the taxpayers

¹²⁵ "NAACP Sets Date to End Segregation in N. M. Schools," *Roswell Daily Record*, 8 July 1954, p. 15; Associated Press, "Three N. M. Cities Taking Negroes in Public Schools," *Albuquerque Journal*, 9 July 1954, p. 33.

¹²⁶ Clovis, Hobbs Will Feel Ruling on Segregation," *Albuquerque Journal*, 18 May 1954, p. 10.

Capitalization original.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

for the funds to replace board and tarpaper with brick and steel?¹²⁸

As segregation came to a close, the May 1954 *New York Times* article noted that the State Department of Education did not keep track of Black and White students separately, presumably because the numbers were so low. At that time, there were five elementary and two high schools “for Negroes only.” Elsewhere in the state, Black students were permitted to attend their school of choice. As another piece of evidence suggesting that cost was one of the main concerns in hastening integration, the article also noted that New Mexico “spent \$2,900,000 on bus transportation to carry 4,200 children to non-Negro schools and 110 to segregated schools.”¹²⁹ Purely from a financial standpoint, spending lots of money to transport Black students past White schools, and White students past Black schools, began to stick in taxpayers’ craws.

For a quick perspective regarding statewide population statistics, there were 8,408 Black residents in 1950 (1.2% of the state’s total population).¹³⁰ In 1970, the census counted 19,000 Black New Mexicans. In 1980, there were some 24,000 Blacks, making up 1.8% of the state’s population. In 1999, approximately 45,000 residents (nearly 3% of the total population) were Black.¹³¹ As the distant third-largest minority, at no time during the periods of segregation, desegregation, and the quest for civil rights did African Americans in New Mexico ever exceed more than 3 percent of the state’s population.¹³² Despite a sparse and dispersed population, these figures make the collective achievements of the NAACP and other concerned groups and individuals all the more meaningful.

Regarding the larger issue of civil rights, school integration was just a single first step toward equality. Communities throughout New Mexico continued to exist in a very real state of racial and economic segregation well into the late 1960s and early 1970s:

Brown v. Board happens, and the way that we're taught it or the myth about it is, that immediately our nation repented and went into an integrated future together. That's not what happened. There was massive resistance, and we don't see real

¹²⁸ “New Mexico’s Segregated Schools,” sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949).

¹²⁹ “4 States Permit Separate Schools: Kansas, Arizona, New Mexico and Wyoming Provide Local Option on Segregation,” *New York Times*, 18 May 1954, p. 23.

¹³⁰ Miller, Loren. “The Negro Voter in the Far West,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 26, No. 3, The Negro Voter in the South (Summer, 1957), p. 262. Available on-line at jstor.org/stable/2293409.

¹³¹ Smallwood, Scott. “Blacks Don’t Let Small Numbers Hold Them Back,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 19 September 1999. Available on-line at abqjournal.com/2000/nm/who/34who09-19-99.

¹³² Cooper, George M. “The Modern Civil Rights Movement in New Mexico, 1955 - 1975,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 201.

desegregation occurring in this country until 1964, and really most rapidly from 1968 on.¹³³

Civil rights advocacy ended legally-sanctioned segregation in schools, in restaurants, at other public facilities, and transportation venues across the state. Despite the gains, however, traditionally-sanctioned segregation and unspoken bias continued. Institutionalized discrimination, inherent in accepted social conventions and daily practices, affected everything from access to bank loans to equitable salaries. "In many ways, the struggle for equal rights for all continues."¹³⁴

¹³³ Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "How the Systemic Segregation of Schools is Maintained by 'Individual Choices'" on National Public Radio's *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross. Originally broadcasted 16 January 2017. Link to original interview available on-line at npr.org/2017/10/13/557558468/how-the-systemic-segregation-of-schools-is-maintained-by-individual-choices.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

SELECTED IMAGES NEW MEXICO



Figure 2. Cowboy Addison Jones

Artist's Conception of Addison Jones, by Lyle Tucker of Roswell

Source: Lee, Allen L. *Addison Jones (c1845 – 1926)*. Available on-line at blackpast.org/African-american-history/jones-addison-ca-1845-1926 (17 January 2007).



Figure 3. Santa Fe Laundress

“Our Laundress”

Photograph of an African American woman hanging laundry on racks outdoors (1897)

Acequia Madre House (Santa Fe, NM)

Source: Acequia Madre House Archive, Box 1402/Folder 1. Identifier: 1402.01.052



Figure 4. Cowboy George McJunkin

Source: Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. "Black in Santa Fe," *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.



Figure 5. James Coody Johnson

(1864 – 1927)

James Coody Johnson was Black and Native American, of African and Creek heritage. He was a ranch hand throughout the Southwest, a politician, entrepreneur, and a leading voice for the full inclusion of African Americans in the larger society.

Source: Zellar, Cary. "James Coody Johnson (1864 – 1927)," 30 January 2007. Available on-line at blackpast.org/African-american-history/johnson-james-coody-1864-1927.



Figure 6. Jim Crow

Thomas Rice playing Jim Crow in black face, New York City (1833)

Source: Waggoner, Cassandra. "Jim Crow/Jump Jim Crow," 20 November 2007. Available on-line at blackpast.org/African-american-history/jim-crow.

JUNETEENTH

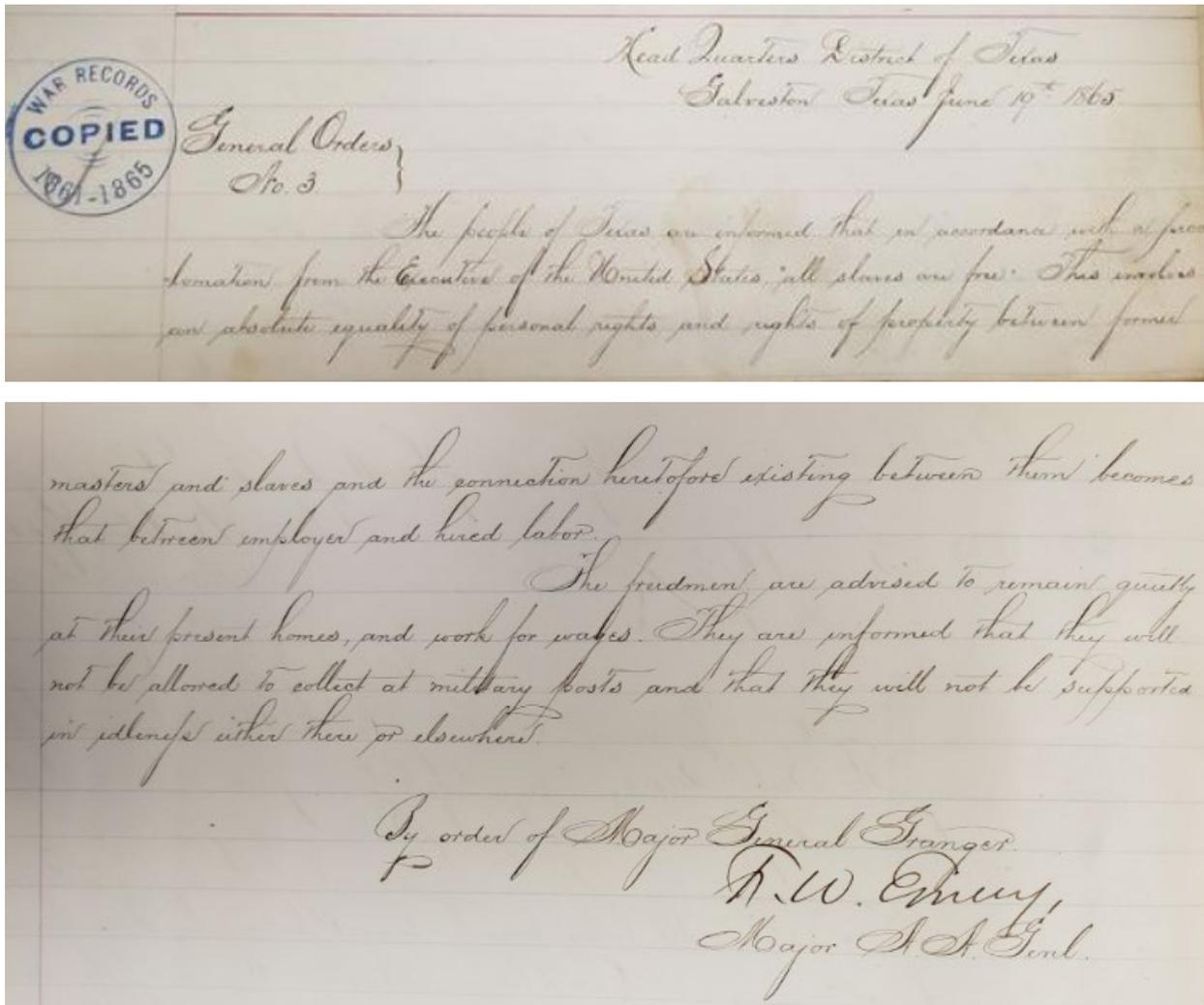
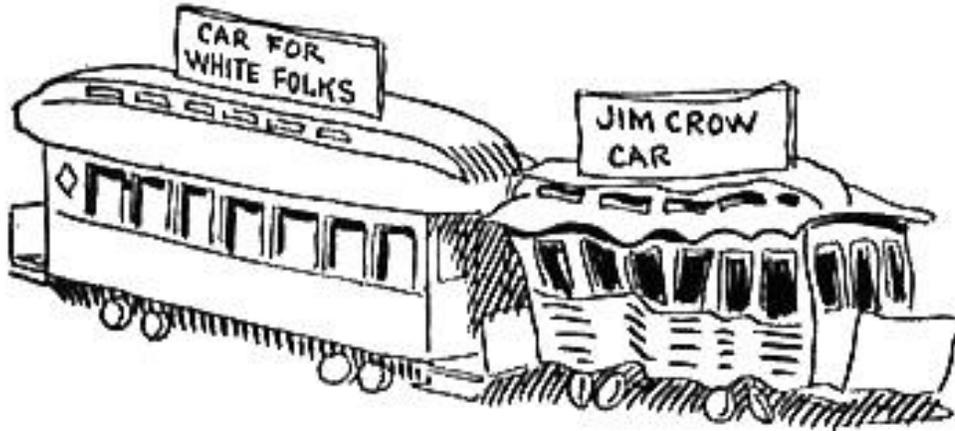


Figure 7. Order issued 19 June 1865 (Galveston, TX)

This order, issued in Galveston on 19 June 1865, by U. S. Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger, informed the people of Texas that all enslaved people were now free:

“The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.”



**“Equal Rights
Before the Law.”**

The “Jim Crow” Street Car.

THE WAY IT WORKS IN RICHMOND.

<p>WHITE MAN DISCHARGED.</p> <p>Forgave Him for Jim Crow Offence— Justice Crutchfield Discharges Aged White Man Who Did not Know of New Law.</p> <p>[Richmond, Va., News Leader.] Judge Crutchfield to-day discharged J. D. W. Churchill, an aged white man arrested yesterday by a street car con- ductor for re-fusing to change his seat. Mr. Churchill did not know the rules about the changing of seats in order to keep the races apart. Captain Gaigon, for the Virginia Passenger and Power Company, asked that the case be drop- ped.</p>	<p>COLORED WOMAN FINED TEN DOLLARS.</p> <p>Actress' Maid Under Arrest—Mar- Marble's Negro Servant Declined to Move When Conductor Ord- ered Her.</p> <p>[Richmond, Va., News Leader.] The magistrate's court-room at the Henrico county court-house to-day too on an air theatrical when the case of Addie Ayres, a young Negro woman charged with refusing to move who ordered to do so by a conductor of street-car, came up before Magistrate T. J. ... Manager McKee was there; John Dunne was there, and a goodly throng</p>
---	---

Figure 8. Illustration 'Jim Crow' Streetcar

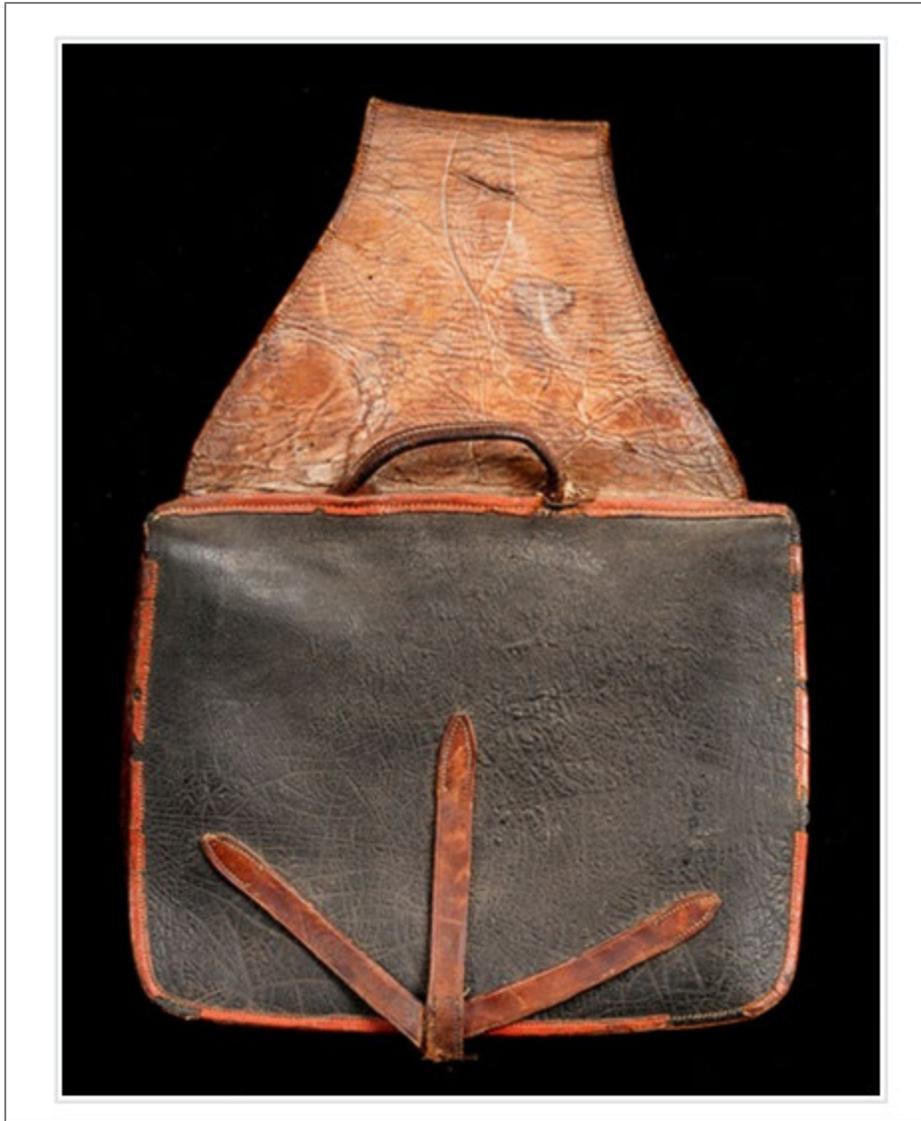


Figure 9. Segregated U.S. Postal mailbag

This mailbag with separate mail compartments labeled “white” and “colored” was not required by federal policy, but was procured by the carrier to satisfy either his own preferences or those of his customers.

Q. Did New Mexico postal carriers use such a mailbag?

Source: “Freedom Just Around the Corner: Black America from Civil War to Civil Rights,” in *Smithsonian*, available on-line at postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/freedom-just-around-the-corner.

The very Business Opportunity for which YOU have been looking may possibly be here on this page.

HELP WANTED



AGENTS SOMETHING NEW

Selling the newly patented **BRANDT CIGAR LIGHTER**. Is operated with one hand—gives an instantaneous light every time the button is pressed. No electricity, no battery, no wires, non-explosive. Strikes a light without the aid of matches. Lights your pipe, cigar, cigarette, gas jet, whenever and wherever it is wanted. Works with one hand and never fails. Something new. Big demand. Everyone wants one. Write quick for wholesale terms and prices.
R. V. BRANDT LIGHTER CO.
42 Hudson Street New York City

\$50 TO \$100 A MONTH

I LU
WANT ACTIVE MAN EACH LOCALITY
16 to 60 years. Introduce us to friends.
Grand world-wide Society. Pays largest
sick, injury, death benefits for small-
est cost. Helpful, inspiring, PROFIT-
ABLE! Made thousands happy and
prosperous. Why not YOU? Write
Quick for big Cash-Bonus offer.
I-L-U 238, COVINGTON, KY.

AGENTS.—Big money made selling our new line. Can sell one in every home. We guarantee. Write to-day.

WILLIAMS-CROSBY COMPANY
2730 Wabash Avenue Chicago, Ill.

JUST THINK OF IT
Gordon Safety Razors made to retail for 25c. Shaves as smoothly as some of the high-priced razors. Splendid seller. Will last a lifetime. Sample, 10c.

GORDON COMPANY
Northwestern Building Chicago, Ill.

RELIABLE, LIVE, RESPONSIBLE MEN

who can sell real estate can **MAKE MORE** than \$200 PER MONTH acting as AGENTS for the sale of our properties in MUSKOGEE and TAFT, OKLAHOMA. The real coming country where there are opportunities and openings for all. Write us to-day, giving your age and experience, and we will offer you a FINE PROPOSITION WHICH WILL MAKE YOU MONEY. Address

REEVES REALTY CO.
Department C
217 Flynn-Ames Bldg. Muskogee, Okla.

AGENTS—Big money. Johnson-Flynn fight and other copyrighted Negro pictures. Portraits. Pillow Tops. Catalogue FREE. 30 days' credit.

PEOPLES PORTRAIT CO.
Station U, Chicago, Ill.

Mention THE CRISIS.

TYPEWRITERS



Remingtons, Densmores, Jewetts, \$11.50 each; Franklins, Postals, Hammonds, \$9 each. Bargains in Underwoods, Smiths and all others. All guaranteed. Supplies.

Standard Typewriter Exchange
23B Park Row, New York

PRESIDENTS NEGRO REPUBLIC

in colors and a short history of Liberia. 16 x 20. Ready to hang on the walls; only 50c. prepaid; in gold frames \$1.25. Everybody wants one. Write **NEGRO PRESS**, Box 126; Gainesville, Fla., U. S. A. 1,000 agents wanted.

Folding BATH TUB



Costs little, no plumbing, requires little water. Weight 15 pounds, and folds into small roll. Full length bath, far better than tin tub. Lasts for years. Write for special agents offer and description. Enclose Mrs. Co., 111 Vance St., Toledo, O. Mfrs. Turkish Bath Cabinets.

REGALIA



A Race Enterprise
Manufacturing Badges, Banners and Supplies for all Fraternal and Church Societies. Catalogue upon request.

CENTRAL REGALIA CO.
Jos. L. Jones, Pres.
N. E. Cor. 8th and Plum Sts.
Cincinnati, Ohio

BOKARA DIAMONDS. Agents, everyone to wear and sell our famous Bokara diamonds. Write for sample offer and catalogue free.

NORTHWESTERN JEWELRY COMPANY
Dept. 24
141 Summerdale Ave. Chicago, Ill.

WANTED

500 Negro families (farmers preferred) to settle on FREE Government Lands in Chaves County, New Mexico. Blackdom is a Negro colony. Fertile soil, ideal climate. No "Jim Crow" Laws. For information write

JAS. HAROLD COLEMAN
Blackdom, New Mexico

Figure 10. Blackdom advertisement

"WANTED: 500 Negro families (farmers preferred) to settle on FREE Government Lands in Chaves County, New Mexico. Blackdom is a Negro colony. Fertile soil, ideal climate. No 'Jim Crow' Laws."

Source: *The Crisis* magazine Volume 5, Number 5 (March 1913), p. 252.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SEGREGATION BY STATE (MAY 1954)



Figure 11. Public School Segregation by State, May 1954

Source: "Public School Segregation by State, May 1954," Maps.com (1999) Available on-line at ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unm/detail.action?docID=3329888.

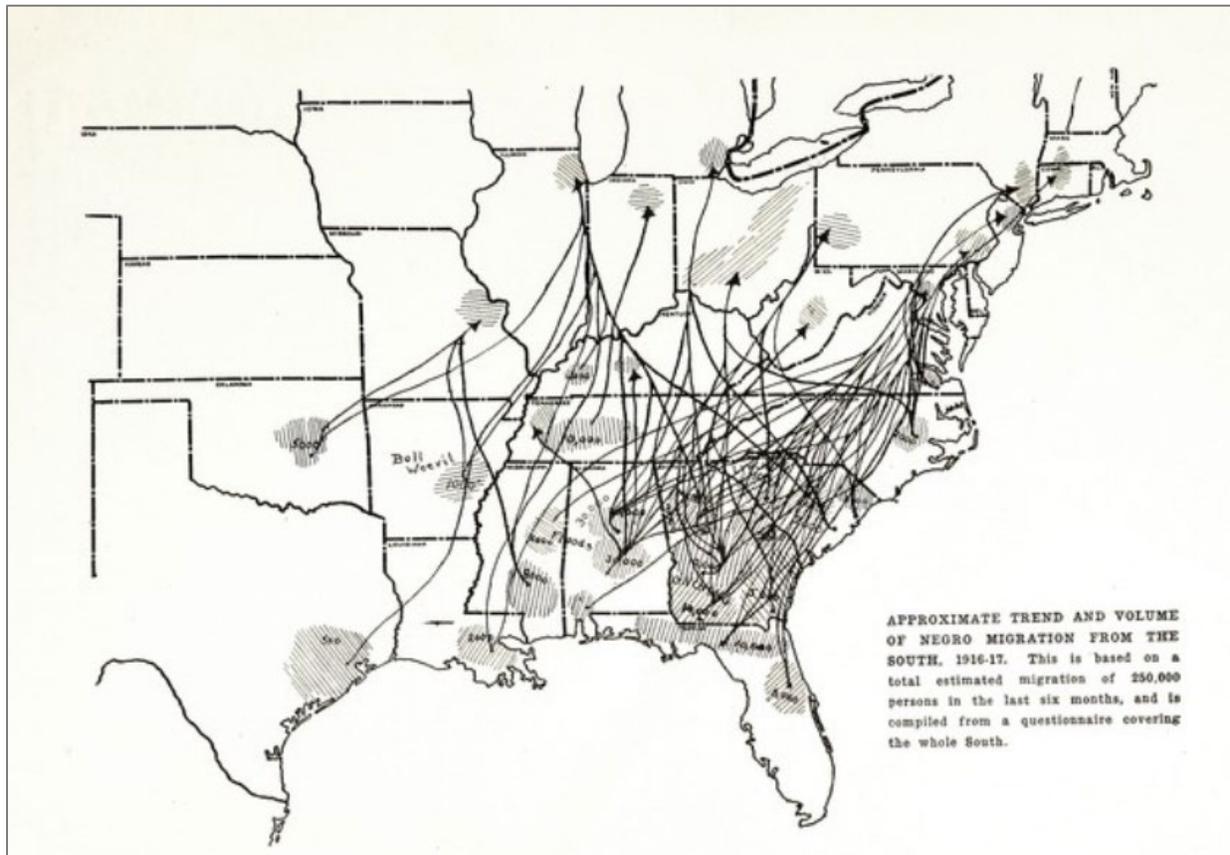


Figure 12. Map showing Black Migration from the Deep South

**APPROXIMATE TREND AND VOLUME OF NEGRO MIGRATION FROM THE SOUTH
1916-17**

“This is based on a total estimated migration of 250,000 persons in the last six months, and is compiled from a questionnaire covering the whole South”

NEGRO PROPRIETORSHIP—SALES OF EACH GROUP OF STORES

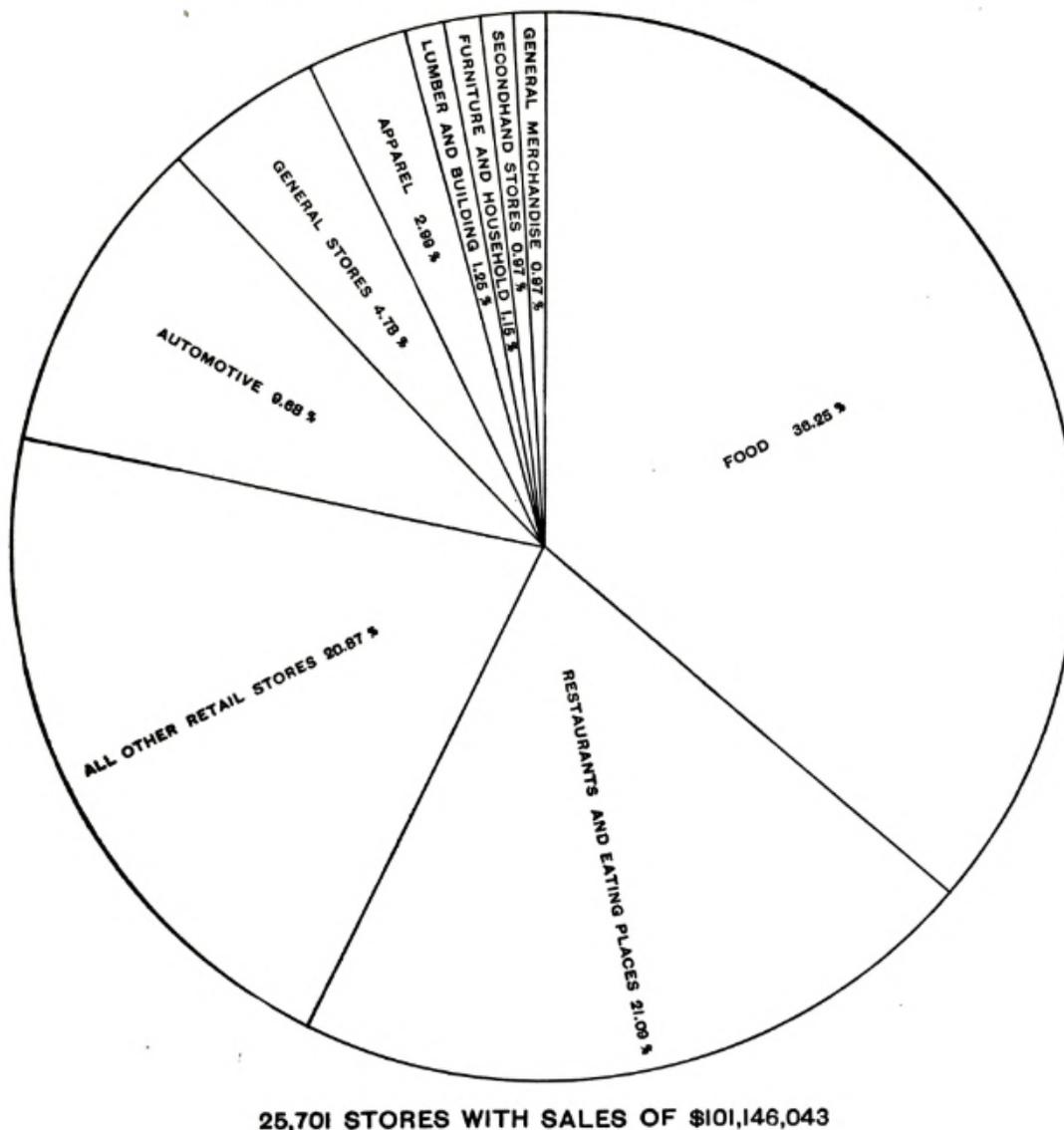


Figure 13. 'Negro' proprietorship nationwide

Source: "Negroes in the United States, 1920-32: Retail Business," U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), p. 7. Available on-line at hdl.net/2027/hvd.hn4b4j.

RETAIL BUSINESS

11

TABLE 9.—STORES OPERATED BY NEGRO PROPRIETORS, BY SECTIONS, DIVISIONS, AND STATES: 1929
POPULATION, NUMBER OF STORES, PERSONNEL, PAY ROLL, STOCKS, AND SALES

[An (x) indicates that the amount must be withheld to avoid disclosure of individual operations, but it is included in the totals]

DIVISION OR STATE	Negro population ¹	Number of stores	Proprietors and firm members (not on pay roll)	Number of employees (full time)	Total pay roll (including part time)	Stocks on hand, end of year (at cost)	NET SALES				
							Amount	Percent distribution	Per capita of Negro population	Average per store	
United States.....	11,891,143	25,701	28,243	12,561	\$5,328,306	\$10,657,000	\$101,146,043	100.00	\$8.51	\$3,935	
The North.....	2,406,219	5,475	7,081	4,371	3,760,864	4,025,100	40,335,307	39.88	16.74	6,229	
The South.....	9,361,577	18,864	20,753	7,762	4,333,477	6,335,200	57,036,307	56.39	6.09	3,024	
The West.....	120,347	362	409	428	433,965	296,700	3,774,339	3.73	31.36	10,426	
MOUNTAIN:											
Montana.....	1,256	6	(x)	7	(x)	6,036	5,730	49,497	.05	30.41	8,250
Idaho.....	998	2	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
Wyoming.....	1,250	3	(x)	3	4	4,678	3,250	24,176	.02	19.34	8,059
Colorado.....	11,828	41	(x)	49	44	39,827	20,100	335,893	.33	28.40	8,193
New Mexico.....	2,850	1	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
Arizona.....	10,749	8	(x)	9	11	7,754	670	34,283	.03	3.19	4,285
Utah.....	1,108	3	(x)	6	(x)	2,951	14,500	83,945	.08	75.76	16,789
Nevada.....	516	2	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)

Figure 14. Black-owned stores Mountain region

Source: "Negroes in the United States, 1920-32: Retail Business," U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), p. 11. Available on-line at hdl.net/2027/hvd.hn4b4j.

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1917), p. 64.



Figure 15. Nine African Americans with bicycles

Date: 1880-1920

Source: Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico. William A. Keleher Collection. Resource ID: 000-742-0263.tif.

Available on-line at rmoa.unm.edu/docviewer.php?docId=nmupict000-742.xml

Here Is Something Unique In Entertainment
 A STAGE SHOW AND FEATURE BOTH WITH
COLORED PEOPLE ALL STAR CASTS—
MIDNIGHT SHOW
 TONIGHT AT 11:30 P. M.

KiMo
 SHOWING FOR THIS
 One Performance Only

NOTICE
 The entire balcony will be reserved
 for colored people—30c
 MAIN FLOOR—40c
 Tickets now on sale
 at the Box Office

Figure 16. Kimo Theatre (1939)

“A STAGE SHOW AND FEATURE BOTH *WITH COLORED PEOPLE* [and] *ALL STAR CASTS*
 —... The entire balcony will be reserved for colored people —50 cents”

Source: *Albuquerque Journal* 25 October 1939 p. 12. Emphasis added.



In only five Southern cities have colored people any public library facilities. Louisville, Ky., has a flourishing colored branch library, and this is a picture of the Reading Room.

Figure 17. Public library Louisville, KY

“In only five Southern cities have colored people any public library facilities.”

Additional research is required to understand the status of New Mexico’s public library system. In smaller towns, school libraries served as community libraries. Segregated school libraries were substandard.

Source: Vol 1 No 4 Feb 1911 *The Crisis* magazine, p. 31.

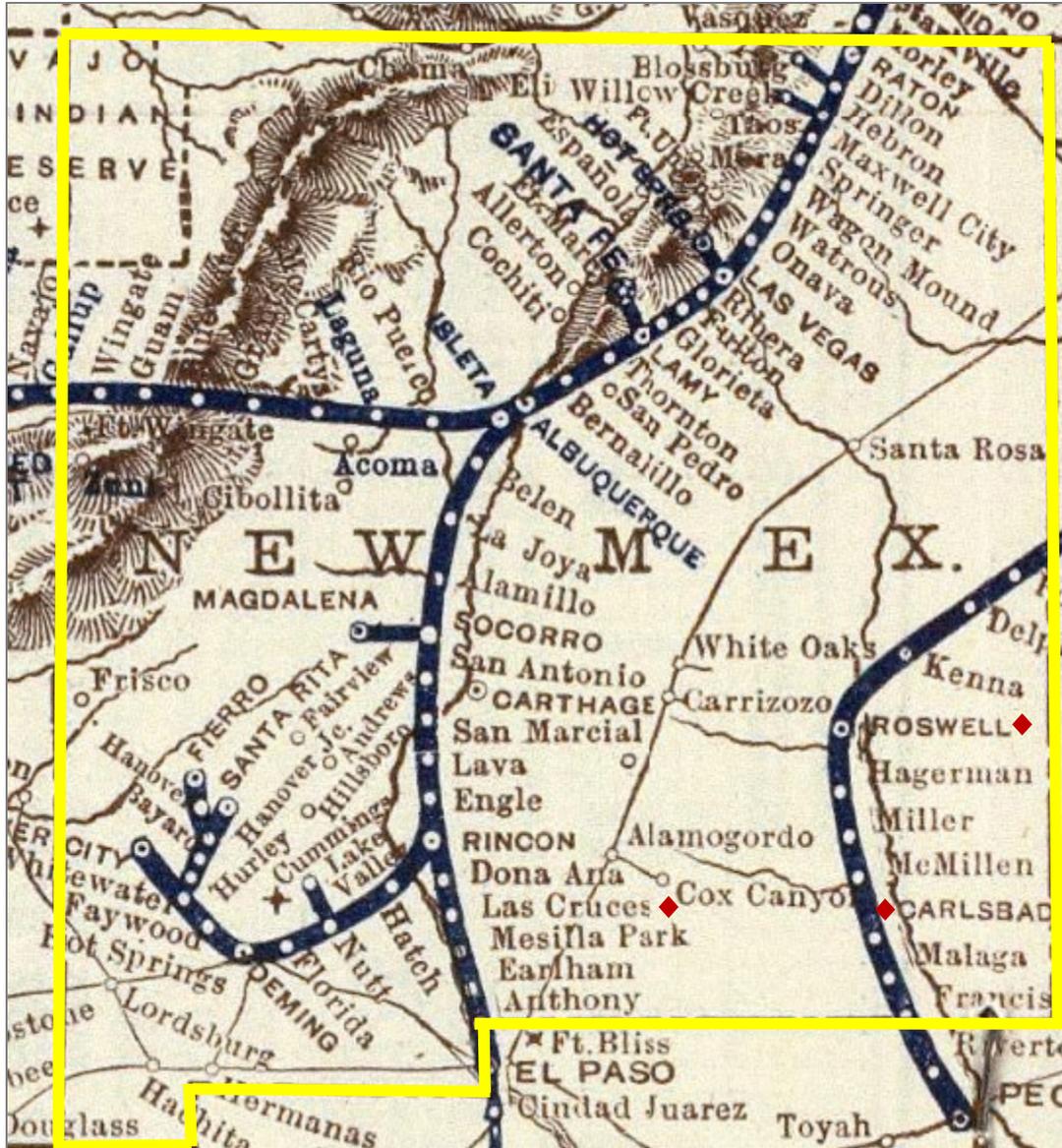


Figure 18. The Santa Fe railroad in New Mexico

Railroads brought Black porters and workers to Roswell, Carlsbad, Las Cruces, and other cities throughout New Mexico.

Source: Available on-line at davidrumsey.com.



Figure 19. Tribute to Tuskegee airmen

‘Chief’ Anderson was a self-taught Pennsylvania pilot who served as an instructor at the Tuskegee Army Air Field. His nickname stemmed from his title—Chief Civilian Flight Instructor.

In celebration of the life and legacy of New Mexico’s own Tuskegee Airmen, James Flowers (Las Cruces), James Williams (Las Cruces), and John Allen (Rio Rancho) and the host of other Tuskegee Airmen who overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of World War II, paving the way for full integration of the U.S. military

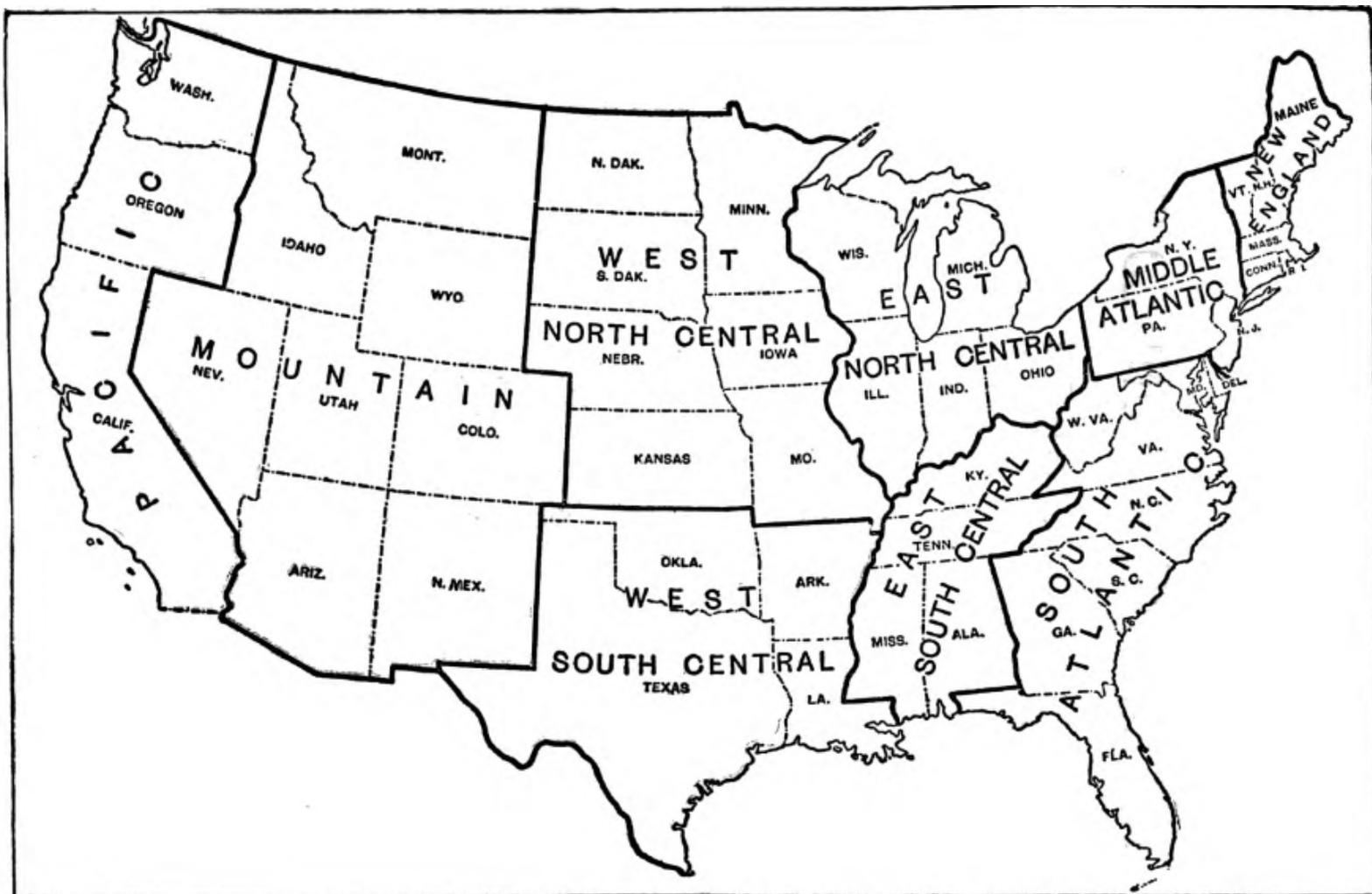


Figure 20. Geographic divisions demarcated by the U. S. Census Bureau

New Mexico as part of the Mountain Region

Source: Hall, Charles E., Specialist in Negro Statistics. "Negroes in the United States: 1920-32," Prepared under the supervision of Z. R. Pettet, Chief Statistician for Agriculture. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 11.



Figure 21. Jim Crow signage

“White’s [sic] Only No Spanish or Mexicans.”

Similar signs once dotted numerous restaurants and other public accommodations throughout the Southwest.

Image source: From the Russell Lee Photography Collection, courtesy of The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, the University of Texas at Austin.

Questionnaire Survey

Question	Response	Number of replies	Percent of replies
1. What is your practice in regard to serving Negroes?	a. They are treated exactly as are our other customers	50	25%
	b. We serve them on the same basis as everyone else but prefer not to have them as customers	29	14%
	c. We give them a limited type of service (special seating, separate rooms, restriction to certain hours, etc.)	5	2%
	d. We do not serve them	71	36%
	e. We have no consistent practice, sometimes we serve them, sometimes not	12	6%
	No information given	32	16%
2. If you do not serve Negroes, is the only reason a feeling that you might lose business if you did?	Afraid of losing business	86	43%
	Other reasons, not specified	28	14%
	No information given	85	42%
3. Would you favor or oppose a city ordinance requiring all public business establishments to serve Negroes on the same basis as they do other people?	In favor	66	33%
	Opposed	110	55%
	No information	23	12%

Figure 22. Racial discrimination committee report findings (Albuquerque)

Among the findings, the Committee determined that discrimination in places of public accommodation was rare “except as regarding members of the ‘Negro’ race,” that discrimination against Blacks was widespread, and that discriminatory practices were increasing as Albuquerque expanded.

Source: “Report of the Committee on Racial Discrimination in Albuquerque,” p. 2-3. Report on file with the Albuquerque City Clerk (email: cityclerk@cabq.gov). Note: Approximately 20% of the business owners contacted responded to the survey.

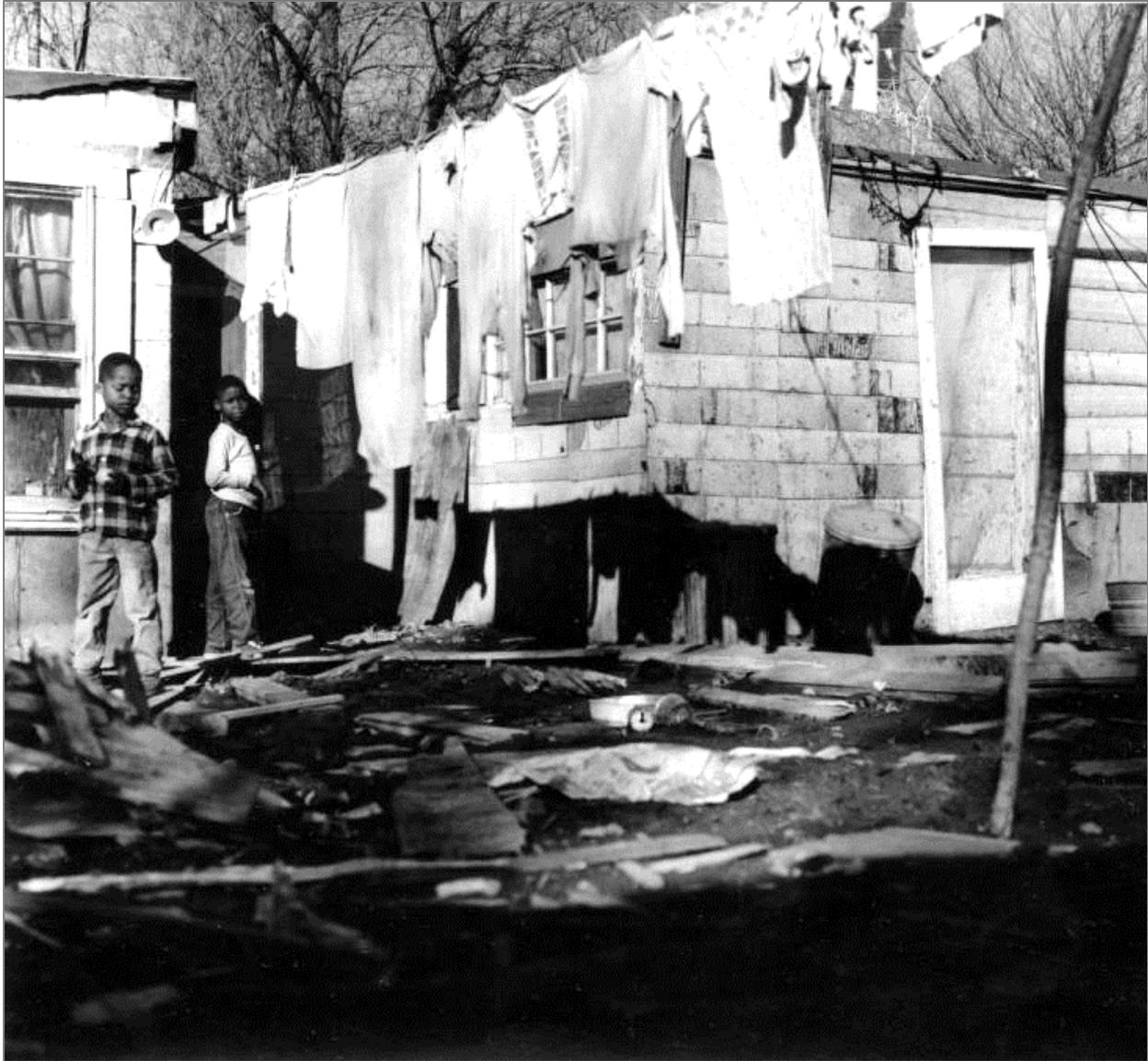


Figure 23. "Boys Under Laundry Line"

Photographer: Albert W. Vogel

Museum caption: "Two African American boys in ramshackle neighborhood. Photographs in this collection show the extremely impoverished living conditions of Hispanic Americans and African Americans living in the area of Albuquerque, N.M. known as Barelvas and in the town of Los Lunas. Material collected for Vogel's 1967 publication *Barelvas, Arenal, and Los Lunas* (a photographic essay on poverty in New Mexico)."

Source: Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico c1880-1960.



Figure 24. May 1919 *The Crisis* magazine cover

“The American Negro’s Record in the Great World War:
Loyalty, Valor, Achievement”

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 18 Number 1 (May 1919), Cover.



Figure 25. *Lustige Blätter* (Berlin) political cartoon

"... It's very simple, Bill:
in war-time you must rush ahead; now you stay in the rear."

From *Lustige Blätter* (Berlin)
Also copied in *Le Rire* (Paris)

Source: *The Crisis* magazine Volume 19 Number 3 (January 1920), p. 143.

Why I Am a Ku Klux Klansman

By ONE WHO BELONGS



WHEN I LOOK beyond the seas and behold a beast in the likeness of a man sitting on throne, claiming to be God, the father of all mankind, issuing forth the decree that "thou shalt have no other God before me," and claims to hold in one hand the key to heaven and in the other the latchkey to hell, claiming absolute dominion, both temporal and spiritual, over the entire human race, who trades and traffics in human souls, prostituting and commercializing the Christian religion, and when I see this demon sitting on his self-constituted judgment seat claiming the power to save or to damn men's souls, and demanding a fee for the confessions and remission of their sins before him, I am glad to be klansman.

And when I look back into the past centuries and see the finger prints of his bloody hands besmirching the pages of history with the blood of untold millions of tortured and murdered Christian martyrs, and when I see this satanic monster today holding in his hands the destinies of the world I am proud that I am a klansman.

And when I see today in that noble, patriotic and fair land of Ireland, the land of our forefathers, the henchmen and executioners of this infamous bully, stalking throughout the land, spreading death and destruction, and bathing its highways and byways in the blood and tears of men and women who dare to worship God according to their own interpretation of His word, setting fire to their houses and shooting down the women and children like rats as they flee for safety, I cannot be anything but a klansman.

And when I see this prince of hell and archangel of the devil stretch forth that bloody hand to the shores of America, clutching at the throat of this fair land of ours to strangle out the life of our free institutions and destroy our blood bought liberty and Christian civilization, it makes me crazy to be a klansman.

And when he issues the edict that all our public schools shall be banished and that our children shall be educated in his parochial schools and bow down and worship him as the only true and living God, and when his black robed lecherous and beastly servants tell us that our mothers

and wives are concubines and our children are bastards unless our marriage vows are administered by them, and when I see erected in the midst of this free and liberty loving South a college whose purpose is to educate and train 1,000 negro Catholic priests whose business it will be to scatter their hellish propaganda throughout that race and further educate the negro in rapine and murder, I say, I always will be a klansman.

And when I see this beast raising, training and mobilizing an army of knights who have taken the most dastardly and murderous oath that mortal man ever subscribed to, and when I see them beginning their bloody work by planting machine guns in the streets of our border cities, and covering the house-tops with Mexicans from across the border, armed with high power guns to prevent a peaceful parade of native born American citizens in their own country, every drop of blood in my veins becomes klanish.

When I see 90 percent of the daily press owned, controlled and intimidated by the same influence, and when I see public halls, parks and auditoriums closed by this influence against the privilege of free speech as guaranteed us in the Constitution of the United States; and when I see 15 percent Catholic population of this country holding 85 percent of the public offices, I think it is time for all native born, white, Gentile Protestant Americans to be klansmen.

And when I see them gathering up Bibles in our rural communities and constructing thereof huge bonfires within four miles of the court house of my own county and replacing them with their own anti-Christian literature, I can't see how any self-respecting American who believes in the tenets of the Christian religion can be otherwise than a klansman.

And now in conclusion, I want to say that the line is being definitely drawn and every man will sooner or later have to get on one side or the other. I want to say the man who lines up with the klan and stays hitched, may the God of the universe bless him. But I want to say to the man who prefers to stay on the other side and serve the purposes of the big papa across the sea, may the great God of the universe pity and help him, for we can't.

Figure 26. Why I Am a Ku Klux Klansman

Source: Archivo Fernando Torreblanca – Fondo Plutarco Elias Calles. Available online at econtent.unm.edu/digital/collection/fapecft/id/8482/rec/1. FAPECFT Identifier 339.

A Statement of the Circulation of THE CRISIS, a monthly magazine, published at 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City

Average monthly circulation, 1914	31,450	By States (U. S.)	
JANUARY 1915	28,198	Alabama	558
FEBRUARY 1915	27,201	Arizona	166
MARCH 1915	28,661	Arkansas	725
APRIL 1915	33,921	California	579
		Colorado	254
		Connecticut	409
		Delaware	172
		District of Columbia	997
		Florida	799
		Georgia	903
		Idaho	6
		Illinois	3,388
		Indiana	1,134
		Iowa	517
		Kansas	665
		Kentucky	363
		Louisiana	1,121
		Maine	8
		Maryland	645
		Massachusetts	1,152
		Michigan	345
		Minnesota	387
		Mississippi	453
		Missouri	1,188
		Montana	116
		Nebraska	140
		Nevada	15
		New Hampshire	9
		New Jersey	1,160
		New Mexico	100
		New York	2,382
		North Carolina	587
		North Dakota	21
		Ohio	2,745
		Oklahoma	866
		Oregon	70
		Pennsylvania	3,361
		Rhode Island	223
		South Carolina	718
		South Dakota	7
		Tennessee	511
		Texas	1,344
		Utah	117
		Vermont	3
		Virginia	844
		Washington	284
		West Virginia	341
		Wisconsin	118
		Wyoming	23

Issue of April, 1915 (in detail)	
By geographic divisions (U. S.)	
New England States	1,804
Middle Atlantic States	6,903
East North Central States	7,730
West North Central States	2,925
South Atlantic States	6,006
East South Central States	1,885
West South Central States	4,056
Mountain States	797
Pacific States	933
	<hr/>
	33,039
Foreign*	882
	<hr/>
Total	33,921
By agents and news stands	26,269
Subscribers	7,652

Incorporated places in the United States	
Less than 1,000 population and miscellaneous	1,901
1,000 to 5,000	1,893
5,000 to 10,000	2,478
10,000 to 20,000	2,737
20,000 to 30,000	3,332
30,000 to 40,000	1,776
40,000 to 50,000	1,429
50,000 to 75,000	2,655
75,000 to 100,000	1,402
100,000 to 200,000	2,406
200,000 to 500,000	3,404
500,000 and over	7,889

A. G. DILL, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 12th day of May, 1915

EDWARD J. BREDEN,
Notary Public, Kings Co., No. 101.
Notary Public, N. Y. Co., No. 113.

*Including 263 to insular and territorial U. S.

Figure 27. The Crisis magazine circulation 1915

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 10, Number 2 (June 1915), p. 97.



Figure 28. *The Crisis* magazine "American Logic" political cartoon

(Left) "THIS MAN is not responsible for THIS MAN even if they do belong to the same race."

(Right) "THIS MAN is responsible for all that THIS MAN does because they belong to the same race."

New Mexico subscribers in 1915 to the NAACP's *The Crisis* magazine numbered 100 families.

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 6 Number 2 (June 1913), p. 80.

Alabama	443
Alaska	36
Arizona	201
Arkansas	1207
California	1681
Canal Zone	1112
Colorado	471
Connecticut	722
Delaware	229
District of Columbia	1333
Florida	1105
Georgia	1924
Hawaiian Ter.	556
Idaho	31
Illinois	2848
Indiana	894
Iowa	335
Kansas	1159
Kentucky	760
Louisiana	1308
Maine	34
Maryland	997
Massachusetts	1990
Michigan	962
Minnesota	407
Mississippi	522
Missouri	1625
Montana	160
Nebraska	234
Nevada	17
New Hampshire	10
New Jersey	2223
New Mexico	253
New York	3751
North Carolina	1912
North Dakota	17
Ohio	2828
Oklahoma	800
Oregon	131
Pennsylvania	5750
Rhode Island	209
South Carolina	1664
South Dakota	7
Tennessee	965
Texas	2277
Utah	74
Vermont	7
Virginia	3567
Washington	342
West Virginia	955
Wisconsin	76
Wyoming	46
Philippine Is.	49
Porto Rico	22
Virgin Islands	212
Foreign	748

54,000 Copies of THE CRISIS, including a second edition of 6,000, for December have gone to states, territories and foreign countries, as shown in the margins of this page.

CIRCULATION FIGURES ARE GROWING

The World War is the opportunity of the Darker Races and The CRISIS should be read by millions.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Show your CRISIS to friends and ask them to give you One Dollar for a year's subscription.
2. Write to us for agent's terms.
3. Recommend to us live, wide-awake agents, who will devote a portion or all of their time canvassing for subscriptions or selling single copies. They can earn from \$2 to \$5 per day.
4. Organize a CRISIS club of five or more *new* yearly subscribers and get your own subscription free.
5. Ask your Church, Society or Club to help us put The CRISIS in the hands of the Negro soldiers. We will explain details if you write us.

The CRISIS, a monthly magazine, is the organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. As such it fights for our rights without compromise. Constructive as well as critical, beautiful in picture and make-up, written in the King's English, it is a succinct and accurate Record of the Darker Races.

Address: The CRISIS
70 Fifth Avenue New York City

Mention THE CRISIS

Figure 29. The Crisis magazine circulation figures 1918

By 1918, New Mexico subscribers numbered 253.

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 15 Number 5 (January 1918), p. 146.

Chaiwaina Zuni Kachina



“The Zunis have passed down an oral account related to Esteban as the inspiration behind a *kachina*—a small doll used in Zuni ceremonies. According to [one] account, Esteban was killed due to a ceremonial misunderstanding. Others stories say he was killed because he arrogantly demanded women and turquoise. Regardless, he is still depicted as *Chaiwaina*—a warrior bejeweled, his flesh midnight black, his hair wooly, simultaneously depicting the dread and awe of a first encounter.”

Figure 30. Images of Chaiwaina

Narrative source: Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. “Black in Santa Fe,” *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe. Images available on-line using search term “Chaiwaina.”

National Association for the ... Advancement of Colored People.

LYNCHINGS IN THE UNITED STATES

TABULATED figures as to lynching in the United States begin with 1885. From January 1, 1885, to January 1, 1922, 4,015 persons are known to have been lynched, as follows:

1885	181	1904	86
1886	133	1905	65
1887	123	1906	68
1888	142	1907	62
1889	175	1908	100
1890	91	1909	89
1891	194	1910	90
1892	226	1911	71
1893	153	1912	64
1894	182	1913	48
1895	178	1914	54
1896	125	1915	96
1897	162	1916	58
1898	127	1917	50
1899	109	1918	67
1900	101	1919	83
1901	135	1920	65
1902	94	1921	64
1903	104		
		Total.....	4,015

Georgia	429	Nebraska	18
Mississippi	405	Maryland	17
Texas	354	Washington	17
Louisiana	326	New Mexico	13
Alabama	292	South Dakota	13
Arkansas	231	Ohio	13
Florida	201	Idaho	11
Tennessee	199	Arizona	8
Kentucky	171	Iowa	8
South Carolina	128	Minnesota	7
Oklahoma	99	Alaska	4
Missouri	85	Michigan	4
Virginia	80	Nevada	4
North Carolina	63	Oregon	4
Wyoming	34	Pennsylvania	4
West Virginia	32	Wisconsin	4
California	29	New York	3
Illinois	24	North Dakota	2
Kansas	24	Delaware	1
Montana	23	Maine	1
Colorado	20	New Jersey	1
Indiana	19	State unknown	11

Total3,436

The following states have had no lynchings: Utah, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut and the District of Columbia.

Figure 31. Thirteen lynchings in New Mexico

“National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: LYNCHINGS IN THE UNITED STATES”

“New Mexico 13”

Note:

Some research suggests that this number may include those of Mexican descent as well as African Americans

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 4 Number 12 (February 1922), p. 165.



(Magazine centerfold)

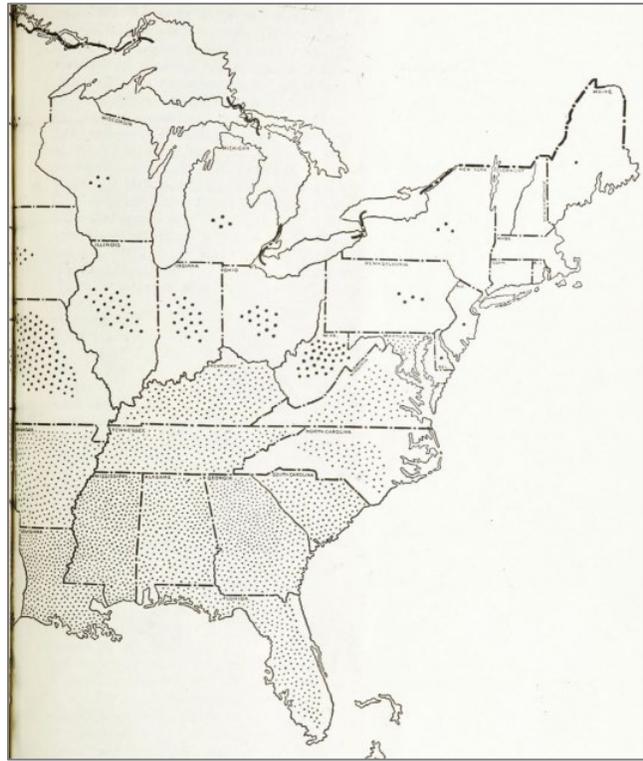


Figure 32. A lynching map of the United States

“A Lynching Map of the United States of America”

“Each dot on this map represents one of the 3,436 lynchings which took place in the United States between 1889 and 1921 for a total of 32 years. The dots are all in the states where the lynchings occurred, but naturally they could not be placed in the exact localities within the state boundaries.”

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 12 Number 4 (February 1922), pp. 168-169.

AGENTS WANTED

In Every Locality

TO SELL

BLACK SWAN RECORDS

The only genuine Records made
by colored Musicians and Singers
by a colored Corporation.

Agents already handling Hair
Goods, Toilet Articles, News-
papers or other articles can make
good money with Black Swan
Records.

Write for terms and prices

PACE PHONOGRAPH CORP.

2289 SEVENTH AVE.

NEW YORK, N. Y.

Figure 33. Black Swan record label agents wanted

“The only Genuine records made by colored Musicians and Singers...”

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 24 Number 3 (September 1922), p. 236.



Figure 34. Class photograph Albuquerque's Third Ward

This photograph shows a class of students, including African Americans, in Albuquerque's Third Ward during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Blacks in Albuquerque were welcome to attend neighborhood public schools, but were segregated within the school by being seated in the rear of the classrooms. Black high school students had separate yearbooks, and separate proms. Black graduates were lined up at the rear of the line during the commencement ceremonies.

Courtesy of Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico

Available on-line at mytext.cnm.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018//04/ch15-im17_integrated_classroom.png.

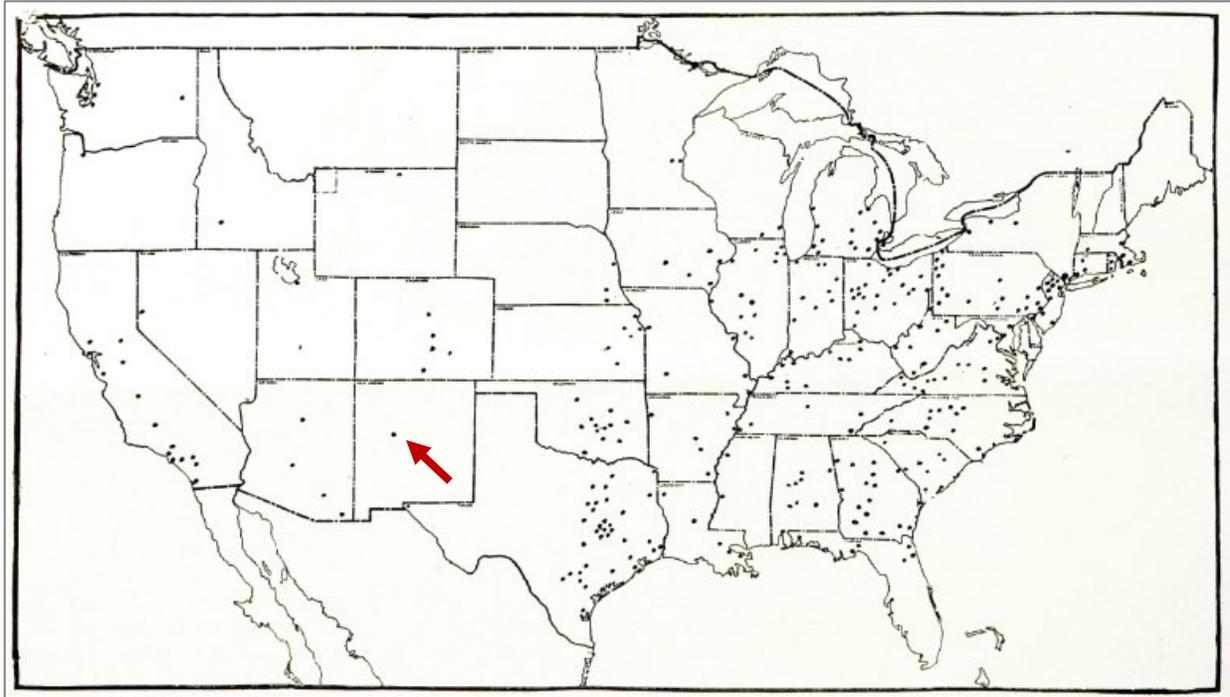


Figure 35. Branches of the NAACP 1 January 1920

NAACP Branch (Albuquerque, NM)

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 19 Number 5 (1920), p. 246.



Figure 36. Five generations of the Parsons family

“Five Generations of the Parsons Family at Santa Fe, New Mexico... Mrs. Mary C. Parsons, of the First Generation Died This Year at the Age of 88.”

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 23 Number 2 (December 1922), p. 84.

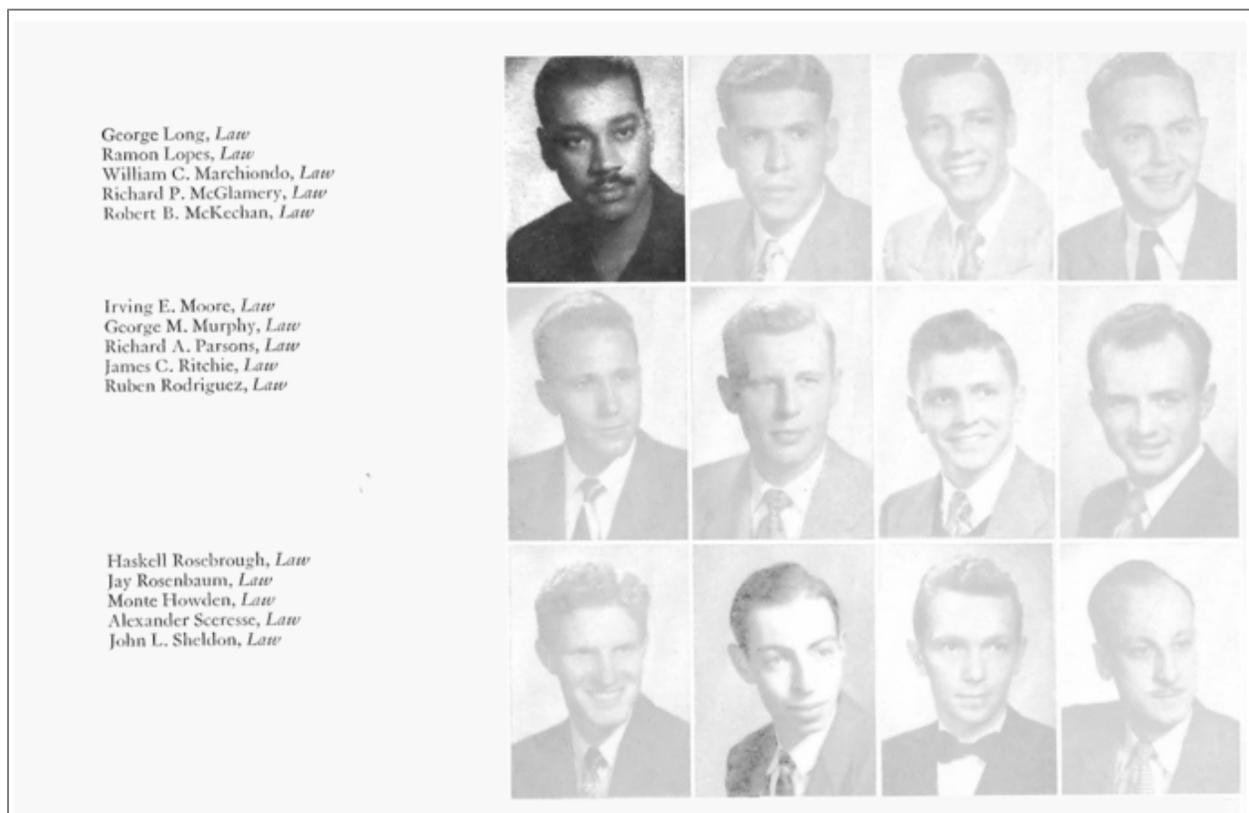


Figure 37. UNM student activist George Long

UNM student and civil rights activist George Long published his account of being denied service at a local restaurant the NAACP's *The Crisis* magazine (Fall 1953). His quest, and the strong student support he received, garnered national attention.

Source: Central New Mexico Community College. "African American Rights," available on-line at mytext.cnm.edu/lesson/african-american-rights (2021).



Figure 38. *The Crisis* magazine political cartoon

"Disturbing the Peace, Your Honor"

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 17 Number 3 (January 1919), p. 134.

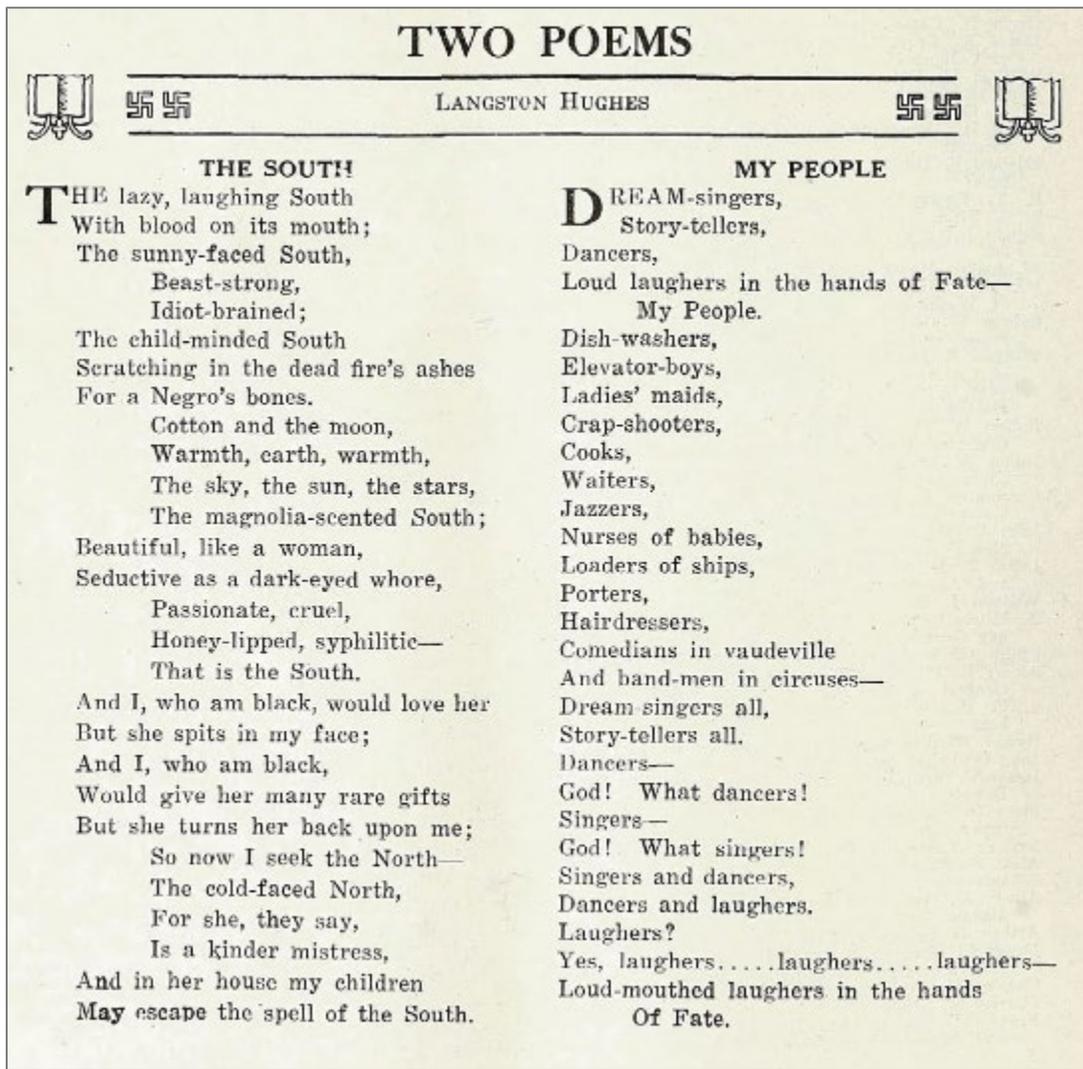


Figure 39. Two poems by Langston Hughes

"TWO POEMS"

By Langston Hughes

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 24 Number 2 (June 1922), p. 72.

Suggestions for Additional Research Statewide

Research the archives to more clearly understand the statewide presence and influences of the Ku Klux Klan and other vigilante groups

Has the history of the New Mexico NAACP been written? A Las Cruces builder was given a tribute by the NAACP for being the first to construct homes for Black families in the late 1950s. A tally of all NAACP awards and tributes should provide fascinating documentation of existing conditions and efforts toward equality during the period of Jim Crow.

What statewide alliances existed during the period of Jim Crow to better the lives of New Mexico's African American citizens?

What type of statewide readership did the Black presses (*Black Dispatch*, *The Crisis* magazine, *Jet*, *Ebony*, etc.) enjoy in New Mexico during the period of Jim Crow segregation?

How did the content in the *Black Dispatch* or *The Crisis* magazine compare and contrast with local news coverage? The political cartoons?

What were the behind-the-scenes negotiations prior to passage of the bill that allowed local school boards to racially segregate the schools in 1925?

Do oral histories or other documentation exist regarding the generation of Black families who were transitional between relative freedom and equality in the opening decades of the 1900s, and the imposition of Jim Crow with the influx of unsympathetic Southerners during the 1920s?

ALAMOGORDO



Figure 40. Map highlighting the city of AlamoGordo

ALAMOGORDO

Alamogordo was founded in 1898 as a railroad company town by William Hawkins, and brothers John and Charles Eddy. While the three wished to capitalize in the moment on the benefits of connecting El Paso with Santa Rosa by rail, their long-term goal was to establish a community in the American Southwest that could endure and prosper.¹

Hawkins and the Eddy brothers provided all the necessities for a permanent community: railroad shops, company housing, parks, churches, and amenities including hotels. They also allowed for the construction of a single saloon at the center of town. “Here, in what is officially known as Block 50, Lots 1-4, and under the watchful eye of the entire community, one could legally purchase a drink.”² To prevent additional sales of spirits, the deed to every lot of land sold in Alamogordo would include “an ironclad restriction to the sale and production of alcohol, be it recreational or medicinal, with the clear exception of Block 50, Lots 1-4.”³

The designed community included wide thoroughfares and tree-lined irrigation canals. John Eddy named the new city ‘Alamogordo’ after a grove of fat cottonwoods he remembered from the Pecos River area. The east-west streets were given numerical designations, while north-south streets were named after states. The present-day White Sands Boulevard was originally called Pennsylvania Avenue.⁴

From its beginning, Alamogordo was a mixture of Hispanics, Native Americans, European Americans, Asians, and African Americans, some of whom were retired Buffalo Soldiers. In 1899, the town boasted three Chinese laundries.⁵

As late as 1947, Alamogordo remained a small town of approximately 3,500 people who depended on ranching, a lumber mill, and a railroad tie factory for their livelihoods. With the reopening of a military base south of town, it began to grow rapidly, including the acceleration of home- building to accommodate the permanent personnel at the base. In 1954, the population was estimated to be approximately 12,000 persons, of whom about two-thirds were Anglo, some 30 per cent Hispanic, and 3 per cent African American.⁶ During the period between

¹ Weller, Jeffrey A., *Alamogordo Daily News* guest columnist, available on-line at alamogordonews.com/story/news/local/community/2017/10/07/new-beginnings-amongst-sage/743524001.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Brief history available on-line at ci.alamogordo.nm.us/356/History-of-Alamogordo.

⁵ Eidenbach, Peter L. *Alamogordo*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub, 2010).

⁶ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*,

1940 and 1956 the city increased from a population of 3,950 to 15,145, due largely to the presence of the Holloman Air Development Center, now Holloman Air Force Base.⁷

Alamogordo's strategic location adjacent to Holloman, and near White Sands Missile Range and Proving Ground, as well as its proximity to White Sands National Monument, Cloudcroft, the Lincoln National Forest, Carlsbad Caverns and other tourist attractions – and the development of new industries -- continue to provide opportunities for visitation and growth.

Alamogordo Businesses

In 1956, employment at the Holloman Air Development Center (approximately 6,000) was almost double that of all the other employment opportunities in Alamogordo and Otero County. The second largest employer was the Prestridge Lumber Company, with workers numbering approximately 200. The Alamogordo School District employed some 190 personnel. Additional employers in construction, manufacturing, transportation, trade, finance, and service industries were considerably smaller. Agricultural employment in the county averaged an estimated 350, including full-time farm operators. Unemployment was deemed "minor."¹ None of the statistics in the 1956 Master Plan related to African Americans. Curiously, Black residents were not tallied in either the population or employment counts, and indeed were never mentioned in the otherwise comprehensive economic development and land utilization assessment prepared by the Stanford Research Institute.

It is not yet known which of these businesses operating in 1944-45 were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks:

Hillburn's, Hollomon Brothers, The Fair, Bulk Milk, Sprouse Reitz Company, C. N. Chappell, The Men's Store, Brunnell's Department Store, Alamo Steam Laundry, Southwest Lumber Company, Fulton Robinson – Alamo Ice and Coal Company, and the Hendrix – McKinley Motor Company.² It is worth noting that the Sprouse-Reitz store advertised in *Ebony Magazine* and other periodicals catering to a predominantly Black readership. It is not known whether or not Black patrons were allowed to shop at the Alamogordo location.

University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁷ Stanford Research Institute (SRI). *The Economic Development and Land Utilization of Alamogordo, New Mexico: A Master Plan*. Prepared for the Chamber of Commerce. (Menlo Park, CA: 1956).

¹ Ibid., p. 25.

² National Archives Catalog, U. S. National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Identifier: 83222904 (Date 1944 – 1945).

Sprouse-Reitz Grocery Store

A 1941 newspaper trumpeted the formal opening of the enlarged Sprouse Reitz store on New York Avenue at the location of the old Safeway. At that time, the 'self-service' shopping mode was deemed revolutionary. "Sprouse-Reitz began its experimenting with this type of merchandising in 1940, and the system is being installed as rapidly as the stores can be remodeled and adapted." The shopping experience was touted as an exciting departure from relying on a store clerk for purchases:

Customers entering the store are provided with a basket and encouraged to 'browse' through the entire store, seeking their needs and suggestions from the open counter displays. All purchases are checked out and packages wrapped at the cashier's desk. At this desk, the customer's sweet tooth is tantalized with a rich display of candies, gums, etc. ... The greatest amount of the Sprouse-Reitz stock here is of a variety nature, selling for 5 cents and 10 cents per article; however, articles of greater value, including hosiery and dresses, are also stocked.³

By 1956, the city's service trade establishments numbered some 106. Included were 24 hotels and motels, 28 personal service firms such as barber shops and dry cleaners, 12 business service establishments, 13 repair outlets, 21 professional services, and 4 amusement enterprises. There were three theatres including at least one outdoor theater.⁴

Additional research will be needed to determine how Alamogordo businesses dovetailed with the African American experience in Alamogordo. It is not known which businesses catered to a Black clientele or discriminated against them, which may have been minority-owned, and which provided employment.

Service Jobs

Although this remains to be verified by primary research, there are secondary references to the fact that the Eddy brothers established Alamogordo as a racially segregated railroad town. As such, there was a certain part of town where Blacks were allowed to live, and job opportunities were limited to labor and services. Most worked in menial labor associated with the railroad, or in service jobs such as porters, bootblacks (shoe shiners) or maids, and several worked as butlers or personal drivers. Captain Vostburg, for example, had "his faithful negro hostler,

³ "Sprouse-Reitz Formal Opening Saturday," *Alamogordo News*, 11 September 1941, p. 1.

⁴ Stanford Research Institute (SRI). *The Economic Development and Land Utilization of Alamogordo, New Mexico: A Master Plan*. Prepared for the Chamber of Commerce. (Menlo Park, CA: 1956), p. 35.

Louis.”⁵ The following classified ad, posted in 1900 boasts that a Porter and a Bootblack are always in attendance at a “Gentleman’s Resort” owned by T. F. Forrester:

T. F. Forrester... The only first-class Barber Shop and Bath Rooms in the city. Shop Across from the Post Office: Hot and Cold-Water Baths, Porcelain-Lined Tubs. Two Barbers -- *Porter and Bootblack always in attendance.* Gentlemen’s Resort.⁶

The new (12’ x 50’) brick barber shop was completed earlier that year, and was described as having a “swell appearance both inside and outside.”⁷ Two “elegant revolving oak chairs” were officiated by Tom and “another barber as good as he is.” Two rooms containing porcelain-lined bath tubs also enticed prospective clients.⁸

Railroad Workers

The following year, in 1902, complaints had reached headquarters that the “colored porters are growing impudent and want to be ‘tipped’ on every occasion.” Rumors circulated that the railroads planned to replace the “colored porters” with White men, “the same as was in vogue three or four years ago.”⁹ In 1903, a survey for the new Vernon-Roswell-El Paso line was made between Vernon, TX and Alamogordo, NM, a distance of about three hundred miles.¹⁰

Discrimination, Persecutions, and Prejudice

There is evidence to suggest that tensions between Anglos and non-White minorities flared frequently. On one occasion in 1902, a man named Henry Pfaff requested that “all the colored people come down from Cloudcroft” and stay in Alamogordo for a week to avoid further inter-racial unrest.¹ What caused the disquietude was not disclosed.

⁵ “Wanted,” *Alamogordo News*, 25 May 1907, p. 8.

⁶ Advertisement. *Alamogordo News*, 23 August 1900, p. 4. Emphasis original.

⁷ “Affairs of Interest Here at Home,” *Alamogordo News*, 10 May 1900, p. 8.

⁸ “Prosperity in General. Opening Coal Mines, Stone Quarries and Manufactories That Have Long Been Idle – Activity in the Great Car Works – Superintendent Greig More Than Ever Impressed with the Future of Otero County – Alamogordo as a Great Manufacturing Center – A New Building,” *Alamogordo News*, 5 April 1900, p. 5.

⁹ “City News Notes,” *Alamogordo News*, 8 March 1902, p. 8.

¹⁰ “New Southwestern Road: Survey Being Made for Line from Vernon, [Texas] to Alamogordo, N. M.,” Special to *The New York Times*, *New York Times*, 11 June 1903, p. 1.

¹ “Cutting Affray,” *Alamogordo News*, 12 July 1902, p. 9.

Neighborhoods

Designed by Easterners, the original plan lacked the central plaza characteristic of New Mexico's older Hispano towns. Alamogordo was laid out with a "preplanned ethnic neighborhood, known as Chihuahuita, between First and Third Streets and Railroad to Texas Avenues."² Alamogordo was platted in 1898, followed by the Chihuahua addition in 1900.³ The town of Chihuahua became a part of Alamogordo when it was incorporated in 1912.⁴

Although the Supreme Court justices ruled unanimously in 1948 that 'Jim Crow' real estate agreements "cannot be enforced by any court or police power and need not be observed,"⁵ towns such as Alamogordo, Hobbs, Roswell, and others nevertheless kept in place covenants and deed restrictions meant to segregate residential neighborhoods. The practice was falsely justified and reinforced by a perverse professional code:

Real estate dealers who subscribe to the Realtor's Code of Ethics are pledged not to sell or rent property to members of any race or nationality whose presence would be detrimental to property values.⁶

Written covenants in many of Albuquerque's subdivisions, for example, overtly prohibited Black residents.⁷ In theory, the Court's decision dismantled 'Whites only' covenants. In practice, however, housing segregation in southeast New Mexico and urban areas including Albuquerque continued well into the 1970s.

One Chihuahuita resident recalled that "the children were all mixed together" in the neighborhood. They associated with one another and played together. He continues:

We thought blacks went to Corinth because they were supposed to and wanted to; we thought the Mexicans went to Dudley School because they were supposed to and wanted to and Anglo children went where they did for the same reason.⁸

² Ibid.

³ Eidenbach, Peter L. *Alamogordo*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub, 2010).

⁴ Harwell, June. *It Was the Right Thing to Do*. (Alamogordo: Self-published, 2018) p. 15.

⁵ "Court Outlaws 'Jim Crow' Actions," *Alamogordo News*, 6 May 1948, p. 1.

⁶ "Report of the Committee on Racial Discrimination in Albuquerque," p. 3. The committee was appointed by City Council on 21 November 1950, and began working on 23 February 1951. The typewritten findings were presented to the Albuquerque City Commissioners by Dr. Sherman Smith, Committee Chair, on 6 November 1951. Report on file with the Albuquerque City Clerk.

⁷ Central New Mexico Community College. "African American Rights," available on-line at mytext.cnm.edu/lesson/african-american-rights (2021).

⁸ Harwell, June. *It Was the Right Thing to Do*. (Alamogordo: Self-published, 2018) p. 17.

Prior to Alamogordo's population surge in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were equal numbers of Spanish-American and Anglo-American residents. The Spanish-Americans were for the most part laborers who were still very close to their original home in Mexico "in habits and in their social values."⁹ The Spanish-American children went to a separate school. Researchers Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan documented in 1954 that the "Negroes" came to work on the railroad or in the railroad shops.¹⁰

Tenth Street, running east to west, marked the dividing line between the Anglo-American and the minority neighborhoods. The Spanish-Americans lived in the southern half, along with a small Negro population, and the Anglo-Americans resided in the northern half. According to Williams and Ryan, this segregation was 'voluntary' within each group, "in that the Spanish culture and the culture of the Anglo-Americans had little in common."¹¹ Ruth Coughlin told June Harwell that "Anglos could live south of Tenth if they chose, but Mexicans could not live north of it."¹²

Early newspaper accounts are replete with references to cultural differences within the Alamogordo population, and the fact that neighborhoods were ethnically segregated:

Victoriano Hernandez one of the Mexicans who is employed on the grading gang out of this town met with rough usage one night this week... True to the Mexican custom he refuses to divulge any of the secrets as to who gave him his wounds or why... It is suspected that there was a little rough house *down in that part of town* the night before.¹³

Apparently early in the 20th-century, the neighborhood was referred to as 'Little Chihuahua City' or *Chihuahuita*, referring to the Mexican roots of most of the inhabitants. Later, as Black arrivals moved in, there are references throughout the 1950s to the "colored section." One advertisement, for example, referred to a "large house with two baths in nice location of colored section."¹⁴

⁹Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams).13.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Rough House in Chihuahuita," *Alamogordo News*, 23 January 1909, p. 2. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ "Investment Realty," Classified advertisement. *Alamogordo News*, 26 October 1959, p. 14.

The “N” Word

The frequency with which the “N” word shows up in print, particularly in the opening decades of the 20th-century, is jarring to a contemporary reader. The word was used in reference to children, adults, to objects, as a verb, in adages, and to describe activities. Air guns, 22-caliber rifles, and the like were casually called “Nigger-shooters.” In an article headlined “How We Teach Our Children,” an *Alamogordo News* editor admonished parents to abide by the rules while repeatedly using a racial slur in print:

We all know it is a violation of the law to shoot those things within the town’s limits. How many of us allow our boys to have ‘Nigger-shooters’? These 22-caliber rifles, air guns, and ‘nigger-shooters’ are responsible for many a street light, window, and wind shield being smashed.¹⁵

Even nearby topographical features were not immune. A Mescalero named Kit-i-chin was killed in “Nigger Ed” Canyon by an early Anglo pioneer who was selected to be on the ‘fugitive’ manhunt. Kit-i-chin’s body was brought to Alamogordo.¹⁶ In a back-handed compliment, a regular columnist who called himself the “Hombre Viejo” chided Anglos for complaining about not having work, but then passing off the jobs of house cleaning, or chopping firewood, or window washing to “Nigger William.”¹⁷

Ku Klux Klan

Despite the frequent use of the “N” word in the press, “Whites Only” notices, and articles that were generally demeaning or disrespectful to minorities, there did seem to be a tacit limit to the harshness of the prejudicial language and treatment. One *Alamogordo News* editor even appears to rebuke the Ku Klux Klan (albeit mildly) by ridiculing their wardrobe:

The Ku Klux Klan got off to a bad start in our community. The meetin’ was raided by a bunch of housewives who stripped ‘em of the hard-to-get sheets. Plans fer the next meetin’ has been postponed until they can either find out who took ‘em er [else] they is able to buy some more.¹⁸

In the opening decade of the 20th-century, Thomas Dixon Jr. wrote a trilogy that romantized and glorified the Ku Klux Klan. *The Leopard’s Spots*, *The Clansman*, and *The Traitor* presented

¹⁵ “How We Teach Our Children,” *Alamogordo News*, 8 January 1925, p. 3A.

¹⁶ “Pioneer’s Passing Recalls Hunt for Mescalero Fugitive in 1907,” *Alamogordo News*, 31 August 1958, p. 21A.

¹⁷ “Comments by Hombre Viejo,” *Alamogordo News*, 6 February 1909, p. 14.

¹⁸ “Cuckoo Comments by Robert H. Dahd,” *Alamogordo News*, 20 June 1946, p. 4.

the Klan heroically. *The Clansman* was twice adapted, once by its author as a play (*The Clansman* – 1905) and a decade later by D. W. Griffith in the 1915 movie *The Birth of a Nation*. Dixon wrote the books in support of racial segregation, depicting Blacks as violent racists and Klansmen as saviours denying ‘Negro’ rule.¹⁹ The *Clansman* play and the *Birth of a Nation* movie were advertised sporadically in the Alamogordo newspapers over the years. There are more than a dozen references to *The Birth of a Nation* and Alamogordo between 1915 and 1970, including articles and notices of individuals traveling to attend the movie presentation in El Paso.²⁰

Alliances and Organizations/Inspirations

Religious, social, fraternal, and civic organizations encouraged members to better the lives of all citizens of Alamogordo, particularly those marginalized by the majority population. Additional research into the activities of these alliances is warranted:

Mt. Olive Baptist State Association

In July 1929, the 19th Annual Session of the Mt. Olive Baptist State Association, “an organization of the colored Baptist Churches of New Mexico,” convened at the local Corinth Baptist church at 4th and Penn. Ave.¹

NM Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs

In June 1946, the New Mexico Federation on Colored Women’s Clubs met at their 8th Annual session, also convened at the Corinth Baptist Church in Alamogordo. Highlights of the session included discussions on “race relations” and the causes of child delinquency. Officers elected were Mrs. Louise Sampson, Vice-President (Alamogordo) and Mrs. Christopher, Chaplain (Roswell).²

Sports: Little League Baseball

¹⁹ Available on-line at en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?_The_Clansman:_A_Historical_Romance_of_the_Ku_Klux_Klan&oldid=1020136723.

²⁰ Search term results, newspaperarchives.com; “30 Years Ago, Otero County News,” *Alamogordo Daily News*, 4 April 1946, p. 2.

¹ “Colored Baptists of N. M. Holding Their 19th Annual Session Here This Week,” *Alamogordo News*, 25 July 1929, p. 1.

² “Meeting of New Mexico Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs,” *Alamogordo News*, 20 June 1946, p. 1.

By the time the schools were integrated, most of the local Little League baseball teams were already open to all players regardless of skin color. Even so, certain individuals resisted inclusivity. The sponsor of one team, for example, “made sure that the Negro lad on one team did not appear more than once, although he was considered to be one of the best players.”³

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

By 1954, researchers Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan found some evidence of “ethnic cooperation” in the operation of the local Parent Teacher Associations:

There were three PTA branches, one for all elementary schools, one for the secondary schools, and one for the air base. Participation in the PTA’s appeared to be as great for the two minority groups as for the Anglo-Americans.

G. I. Forum

The G.I. Forum was also organized without regard to race or color and was very active in civic affairs. The United Services Organization was open to all servicemen and a favorite spot for them in town.⁴

Girl Scouts

Although it varied by locale and was influenced by the personalities of the organizers, parents, and leaders, scouting in Alamogordo does appear to have been non-discriminatory:

Miss Mary White, Roswell, a member of the National Advisory Committee of the Girl Scouts, and field executive for the ‘Cactus’ region, consisting of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma, was in Alamogordo Monday and Tuesday for the purpose of organizing two troops of girl scouts... The Girl Scouts organization is open to all races and creeds, to all girls from ten to 18 years of age.⁵

The first troop was organized in April 1912. Twenty years later, there were more than 300,000 Girl Scouts in the United States alone, with troops in 48 countries.

³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Two Girl Scout Troops Organized at Alamogordo,” *Alamogordo News*, 7 April 1932, p. 7.

Masonry and Prince Hall Masonry

The following excerpt presents a brief and opinionated synopsis of the basic difference between Prince Hall Masonry, and Scottish Rite Masons. Additional research into the Masons and other fraternal organizations as they relate to people of color should prove fruitful:

Prince Hall Masonry goes back to the year 1775 when 15 men of color were made Freemasons by British colonial soldiers. The Prince Hall fraternity has since grown parallel with the so-called Regular (Caucasian) Freemasonry in the United States through periods of slavery, segregation, and racial tension to become the predominant Black fraternal organization in the nation. Who are the Scottish Rite Masons? The so called "Scottish Rite" Masons are a group of Afro-Americans practicing a brand of Masonry that is not recognized as legitimate by Prince Hall Freemasons anywhere in the world. They are a spurious body that constituted itself outside the body of recognized Masons as an independent order.⁶

The Grand Lodge of New Mexico was the fifteenth state Grand Lodge to formally and fully recognize its sister Prince Hall Grand Lodge. On November 16, 1996, an agreement referred to as the "Compact" was signed by Omer E. Horn, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New Mexico, and Harold H. Bendaw, Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of New Mexico. The Compact extended "full and complete fraternal recognition" between the two Grand Lodges, and extended "to the respective members of each, all of the rights of a Master Mason."⁷

In 1956, a jurisdictional fight between two rival Black Masonic Lodges was taken under advisement by the State Supreme Court. The contenders were the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, and

⁶ Williams, John B. "Masonic Education Series: Unrecognized Masons," available on-line at thephylaxis.org/williams/4-letter.php. For additional information: Grimshaw, William H., *Official History of Freemasonry* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969) and Muraskin, William A., *Middle Class Blacks in a White Society: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America* (London: University of California Press, 1975).

⁷ Bessel, Paul M. "Masonic Recognition Issues – PHA Chart," available on-line at bessel.org/masrec/phachart. *Compact Between Most Worshipful Grand Lodge Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New Mexico, Inc. and Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New Mexico, Inc.*, archived at the Grand Lodge of New Mexico. Address: M. W. Prince Hall Grand Lodge F & AM of the State of New Mexico, Inc., 525 San Pedro Drive NE, Albuquerque, NM 87108-7638.

the Most Worshipful King Solomon Grand Lodge. Many felt that “existence of two rival lodges” led only to “confusion and unfair competition.”⁸

Elks

With 153 members by 1955, the Alamogordo Elks Lodge was founded 25 April 1953.⁹ Additional research will be required to fully understand the role of the Alamogordo Elks in the Black experience.

Knights of Pythias

The Knights of Pythias is a fraternal benevolent association founded in 1864 by Justus H. Rathbone in Washington, D.C. It began as a secret society for government clerks but soon expanded its membership. The association provided membership services such as insurance, burial services, and other social welfare benefits. The Knights of Pythias took “Friendship, Charity, and Benevolence” as their motto and their mission. Despite their stated mission to “promote universal peace and harmony between men,”¹⁰ Black men were excluded. The Colored Pythians came into being by 1869 as a parallel organization after the original Knights refused to admit African American members.

NAACP

In 1978, the state convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) approved two resolutions, one to investigate the reason behind the high percentage of Blacks not passing the state bar exam, and another to look into the employment practices of the state’s educational institutions. Gerda G. Steele, director of education for the national office of the NAACP, observed that, “Blacks are the smallest minority in New Mexico, and we have to work harder to get equal opportunities. The strategies employed are slightly different; but if Blacks lose out, all minorities will lose too.”¹¹

Although critical to a meaningful understanding of the African American experience in New Mexico, in-depth research into these and other alliances and organizations has yet to be undertaken.

⁸ “Jurisdictional Fight Between Two Rival Masonic Lodges is to be Studied by Supreme Court,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 3 December 1956, p. 5.

⁹ Emerson Brownie, “Here is Story of 16 Elks Lodges in New Mexico: Lordsburg Lodge is First with Full Information,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 12 May 1955, p. 2.

¹⁰ Available on-line at uncommonwealth.virginiamemory.com/blog/2015/12/16/a-knight-unlike-any-other.

¹¹ “NAACP Would Probe Bar Exams, School Hirings,” *Alamogordo Daily News*, 29 October 1978, p. 1.

Buildings, Structures, and Landscapes

A comprehensive survey of buildings, structures, landscapes and other sites venerated by Alamogordo's Black community remains to be conducted. In the meantime, this list is meant to document what little is known to date, and to inspire similar future research.

Alamogordo Army Air Field United Services Organization (USO)

Mr. E. C. Nicodemus, YMCA Associate Regional Supervisor visited the Alamogordo United Services Organization (USO) Club in May 1944. He also stopped by the recently-renovated "Colored USO." Mr. Nicodemus highly commended the Council and the USO for "carrying out a well-rounded program for servicemen and their families."¹²

National Register Sites

The following lists of National Register sites and Works Projects Administration (WPA) projects should serve as a guide for future research. Each building and site must be individually researched to fully understand its relationships with the Alamogordo community at large, and with Black citizens specifically. The original National Register nomination forms and WPA site descriptors will probably need to be revised to incorporate any new findings as they relate to the Black experience during New Mexico's period of segregation.

National Register of Historic Places Sites

US Post Office--Alamogordo
Alamogordo Woman's Club
Lee, Oliver, Dog Canyon Ranch
Fairchild Archeological Site
White Sands National Monument Historic District
Administration Building
Auditorium and Recreation Building
Central Receiving Building
Infirmary Building
Jackson House

Works Projects Administration (WPA) Sites

Alamogordo Women's Club Building
Former Post Office
White Sands National Monument Historic District
Healthcare and Hospitals

¹² Source: "Associate Regional Supervisor Visits USO," *Alamogordo News*, 15 May 1944, p. 1.

Soon after Alamogordo was created, boosters touted the “magical climate” to attract those seeking “health, pleasure, and comfort.” Attracting wealth to the community was a primary inspiration:

People who hunt health, pleasure and comfort are people with money. Poor people have to remain at their homes. Money will bring the people here and our climate will keep them as ours – no doubt about that... our mile-long park, with its lakes and beds of lilies and roses, a solid shade for a mile, is by far the loveliest spot in the whole Southwest... Monied men are coming – coming because they are being invited by the hand of nature through the healing powers of our magical climate.¹³

The connections between health and comfort seekers, the national tuberculosis epidemic, Alamogordo’s Fraternal Sanitorium, Black residents, and Black newcomers have yet to be explored.

Baptist National Convention

A number of Baptist National Convention officials who attended a July 1929 session in Alamogordo were identified by name and race. Mrs. Layton, President of the Women’s Auxiliary of the Baptist National Convention, was given special attention:

Rev. H. Watson, local pastor; Mrs. S. W. Layton, Philadelphia, (Colored); Dr. O. F. Dixan, moderator, Albuquerque; Dr. S. M. Smothers, pastor and evangelist of Central, N. M. and Dr. C. W. Stumph (White) corresponding secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention of New Mexico... Mrs. Layton, who has the distinction of being the only woman ever to represent the Negro in the World’s Baptist Alliance, and who has been sent abroad a number of times in the interest of foreign missions, will address the Assembly tonight.¹⁴

Owens Chapel and Grace A. M. E. Churches

William M. Banks, pastor of the Owens Chapel A. M. E. Church thanked the merchants and citizens of Alamogordo for their “loyal support in giving us finance to support our Christmas tree for all the colored children.”¹⁵ He thanked their lawyer, W. B. Cotton, for turning in more money than names on the list. The previous year, Pastor Banks and the Board of Trustees of the

¹³ “For Greater Alamogordo: With Eternal Sunshine as an Everlasting Asset the Town Rests Upon a Solid Foundation – Mr. Chas. B. Eddy’s Work – Mr. A. J. King to Return and Have Charge of the Town’s Upbringing,” *Alamogordo News*, 1905.

¹⁴ “Colored Baptists of N. M. Holding Their 19th Annual Session Here This Week,” *Alamogordo News*, 25 July 1929, p. 1.

¹⁵ “An Appreciation,” *Alamogordo News*, 2 January 1941, p. 1.

African American Methodist Episcopal Church thanked Mr. Louis Carr for donating 500 feet of lumber for the construction of the chapel.¹⁶ Benefit suppers were common, often served in the basement of the Grace M. E. Church. The menu included chicken pie, peas and carrots, cream potatoes, hot biscuits, vegetable salad, apple pie, coffee and tea for 50 cents per plate. Mrs. Stella Cofield, Mrs. Sarah Watson, Mrs. W. P. Patterson, Mrs. P. Harris and Mrs. William Banks served on the Benefit Committee.¹⁷

Corinth Baptist Church

The Corinth Baptist Church was built in 1924 at the corner of Fourth and Pennsylvania after members had been meeting in the homes of members for many years.¹⁸ In the mid-1950s, a schism within the Corinth Baptist Church congregation led to the questionable expulsion of a dozen or so members.¹⁹

Pentecostal Jesus Name Church

In 1952, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Willis arrived from Roswell and with the help of their sons and a few members built the Pentecostal Jesus Name Church at 1701 Tenth Street. The Church was dedicated on 30 May 1954. There were 12 members in the new Church, and seven in the Sunday school.²⁰

Additional research will need to be undertaken for the following predominantly Black churches in Alamogordo:

Christian Joy Center 1502 10th Street
Holy Temple Church of God in Christ 200 Virginia Avenue
Owen Chapel A.M.E 423 Delaware Avenue
Corinth Baptist Church 400 Delaware Avenue
New Hope Full Gospel Baptist Church 800 9th Street
New Zion Baptist Church 308 Maryland Ave

Prisoner of War (POW) Camp

8th Service Command Camp at Alamogordo. National Archives ID 899477.

¹⁶ "Card of Thanks," *Alamogordo News*, 15 February 1940, p. 4.

¹⁷ "Backward 20 Years Ago," *Alamogordo News*, 31 July 1960, p. 4.

¹⁸ "Corinth Baptist Church, Penn. Ave., and 4th St.," *Alamogordo News*, 19 August 1954, p. 35.

¹⁹ "Court Airing Indicated for Church Schism," *Alamogordo News*, 3 April 1957, p. 1; "Court Airing Indicated for Church Schism," *Alamogordo News*, 3 April 1957, p. 1.

²⁰ "Pentecostal Jesus Name, 1701 Tenth Street," *Alamogordo News*, 19 August 1954, p. 35.

Q. Is there an historical connection between the 8th Service Command Camp and the Black experience?

Prince Hall Lodge (Black Masons)

Prince Hall Grand Lodge of New Mexico
311 Delaware Avenue
Alamogordo, NM 88310

Segregated Public Spaces

Plaza Café and Service Station

Front-page news announced the opening of the Plaza Café and the Plaza Service Station on 1 April 1938: “The new, luxurious café building, recently completed, is being furnished by Howard Beacham, who will operate under the name, ‘Plaza Café,’ succeeding ‘Howard’s Café.’” Howard Beacham was a well-known figure around the region. Elected Otero County sheriff in 1921, his heavy-handed enforcement of the new restrictions prohibiting the production and sale of alcohol during Prohibition led to an unsuccessful bid for re-election. Instead, he was hired by the government to serve as a Prohibition Agent, enforcing the federal alcohol ban in Lincoln, Eddy, Lea, Chaves and Otero counties. Beacham’s Café and Service Station offered 24-hour service. The entire “Gordon & Shelton block,” including the Plaza Bar, Service Station, and Café, were described as being built in the “Spanish style,” with protruding *vigas* (hand-hewn logs) and an “invisible roof.” Although built in a “Spanish style,” Spanish-speakers were denied entry.¹ Christine Godby’s daughter conveyed the following painful remembrance to librarian and author June Harwell.

After sitting down at the Plaza Café, the waitress came and said,

‘Sorry, we can’t serve her. She’s Mexican and we don’t serve Mexicans.’ My friends couldn’t believe it. They tried to change the waitress’s mind but she was adamant. My angry friends said, ‘Let’s get the hell out of here.’ That hurt! I should have known.²

¹ “Plaza Café and Station Open Friday,” *Alamogordo News*, 31 March 1938, p. 1; Weiler, Jeffrey A., “The Tale of a Cursed Gun and Beacham’s Leadfoot,” *Alamogordo Daily News* (7 August 2018). Available online at alamogordonews.com/story/news/local/community/2018/08/07.

² Harwell, June. *It Was the Right Thing to Do*. (Alamogordo: Self-published, 2018) p. 57.

African Americans were not allowed to enter through the front door. Instead, Blacks were served in a former storage room accessed through a rear alleyway entrance.³

The cheerleaders and pep squad traveled to out-of-town games on school buses and ate in restaurants after the games. Some of the towns still did not allow Black persons in establishments such as restaurants:

There was a Black girl in the pep squad who was excluded and so she packed her meal and ate on the bus. Virginia Chaves and several of the other girls, a mixture of Anglo and Mexican, in a gesture of support and solidarity started packing their food and remaining on the bus to eat with her.⁴

Although such gestures of friendship could not erase the sting of racism, similar acts of kindness were long-remembered by the recipients.

Municipal Swimming Pool

During the decades when private and public accommodations were segregated, Ted Gaskins shared the following recollections with interviewers from National Public Radio (NPR):

During my early childhood days in Alamogordo, New Mexico, in the early-to-mid 1950s, my grandparents owned and operated the local municipal swimming pool. This was before filtering systems were required and the pool therefore had to be treated with chlorine and other chemicals to maintain the cleanliness of the water. It was also drained once a week and refilled with fresh water. The sign on the outside of the pool read: Hours 10am to 6pm Tuesday— Sat. Colored: Sunday from 1pm-5pm. After 5pm on Sunday, my grandfather would drain the pool (125,000 gal.) and on Monday everyone would grab buckets of liquid chlorine and scrub the entire pool.

I asked my grandfather why we did this, and he said that the colored people were unclean and this would kill any bacteria that they would bring in. I also would ask my grandmother if I could go swimming on Sunday, and she would always tell me no, because that was the time when the "colored folks" could swim and I wasn't allowed to swim with them. This went on till 1957 and at that time the state required the new filtering system and my grandparents closed the pool because of the

³ "Plaza Café and Station Open Friday," *Alamogordo News*, 31 March 1938, p. 1; Weiler, Jeffrey A., "The Tale of a Cursed Gun and Beacham's Leadfoot," *Alamogordo Daily News* (7 August 2018). Available online at alamogordonews.com/story/news/local/community/2018/08/07.

⁴ Harwell, June. *It Was the Right Thing to Do*. (Alamogordo: Self-published, 2018) p. 51.

cost of the new equipment. This was an accepted practice during my early childhood.⁵

-- Ted Gaskins (Las Cruces, NM)

Racism manifests itself in many ugly ways, in this case, in the irrational belief that people with dark skin are unclean. Even those who embraced integration in other public spheres recoiled at the idea of the shared use of wading pools, swimming pools, or even beaches. "Many Whites – segregationists or not – believed that Blacks carried diseases that could be spread in shared waters." They also thought that "such close contact... would lead to interracial sex and marriage."⁶ For many Whites, integrated pools represented an intolerable level of intimacy.

Schools

Press announcements addressed each school separately. The school for Whites was referred to as the "American" school, with J. D. Pepper at the helm, "the Mexican school: Rora Brown, principal; and the Negro school: Mrs. Mary A. Williams, teacher."⁷ Similar articles kept the public updated on special events, student excursions, and the condition of the buildings themselves:

The American public school building has been remod[ele]d and repainted... The Mexican school building was touched up inside so as to give it a neat, cheerful appearance... The negro school is to be held in the M. E. church, colored.⁸

A segregated black school was constructed at Fourth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue and later moved to Fourth Street and Delaware Avenue. During the 1920s, Alamogordo's "Colored School,"⁹ provided regular reports to the local newspaper. Around 1947, the school superintendent distributed the Latinx students among the various elementary schools, eliminating separate schools for that group. Community leaders "credited him with reducing the... formerly sharp line which divided the town."¹⁰ However, a separate school for Black children grades 1 through 12 remained intact. The State Board of Education criticized the segregated school for not meeting the qualifications for accreditation, mainly because three

⁵ Ted Gaskins, 'Municipal Swimming Pool,' *Segregation and Public Places*, American Public Media (2005). Available on-line at americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/public.

⁶ Pavero, Allison. *Civil Rights and Wrongs: Recreational Segregation in Lancaster, Pennsylvania*, American Studies Honors Thesis, Spring 2006. Available on-line at digital.fandm.edu.

⁷ "Public Schools of Alamogordo," *Alamogordo News*, 9 September 1905, p. 2.

⁸ "Public Schools of Alamogordo," *Alamogordo News*, 9 September 1905, p. 2.

⁹ "Notes from the Delaware Avenue Colored School," *Alamogordo News*, 27 August 1922, p. 1.

¹⁰ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13.

teachers (at most) were expected to teach all twelve grades. Even before 1947, the local school board understood that something had to be done to equalize the standards. Because of the small enrollment, it seemed evident that providing equality would mean desegregation.¹¹ The first four Black students were admitted to the high school in 1949.¹²

Three Delaware School students received their eighth-grade diplomas in 1950. Head teacher L. E. Pigford presented the class, and Alamogordo School Superintendent W. Bernie Caton delivered the commencement address. The chorus sang “the Negro National Anthem,”¹³ and two of the graduates sang ‘Whispering Hope.’ In 1951, the Delaware Avenue school students, again under the direction of head teacher Mr. Pigford, presented a radio broadcast celebrating “Negro History Week” that aired over the local station KALG. The theme for the program was Eminent Negroes in World Affairs. Closing the program was a patriotic hymn, ‘God Bless America’ sung by the entire 28-voice ensemble.¹⁴

The doctrine of education being *separate but equal* was rarely so. There may have been exceptions, but for the most part textbooks were outdated or damaged, and building facilities were inferior. In Alamogordo, they did not have science equipment and there were no school sports teams.¹⁵ Soon after President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 on 26 July 1948 forbidding discrimination against military personnel on the basis of race, Holloman Air Force Base officials began putting pressure on the Alamogordo School Board to desegregate Alamogordo schools. “They wanted the children of black soldiers stationed at Holloman to have access to fully integrated schools.”¹⁶

In the early 1950s, the condition of Alamogordo’s segregated Black school drew the attention of Thurgood Marshall. As a man who dedicated his life to achieving public justice, Marshall is perhaps best known as being the first African American justice on the Supreme Court, where he served from 1967 to 1991. As an attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), he successfully reshaped American society by winning legal battles over racial discrimination. A prolific letter writer, Marshall “would sit down at the typewriter and just pound out a letter. He also wrote them on a yellow legal pad, in blue ink.”¹⁷ He wrote letters to influential personalities of the day, including presidents, politicians, and generals, and he responded to everyone who reached out to him. Prior to the implementation of school integration, he also wrote to the New Mexico Department of Education:

It seems that the one school for Negroes in Alamogordo is taught by one teacher who teaches grades from the first grade through the junior high

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Eidenbach, Peter L. *Alamogordo*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub, 2010).

¹³ “3 Get Diplomas at Delaware,” *Alamogordo News*, 18 May 1950, p. 1.

¹⁴ “Delaware School to Broadcast,” *Alamogordo News*, 8 March 1951, p. 17.

¹⁵ Harwell, June. *It Was the Right Thing to Do*. (Alamogordo: Self-published, 2018) p. 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁷ Elmasry, Faiza. “Letters Provide Insight into Civil Rights Giant,” available on-line at voanews.com/usa/letters-provide-insight-civil-rights-giant (15 February 2011).

school. It's almost unbelievable that in this modern system of education one teacher can be expected to be proficient in teaching all grades from the first grade to the junior high school at the same time and in the same small building.

“The late George Abbott took pride that integration took place during his tenure as president of the Board. ‘It was the right thing to do,’ he recalled.”

In 1951, the high school students from the segregated school were moved into Alamogordo High School, and apparently, they were incorporated into the school activities without protests from the Anglo-American community.¹⁸ In August 1952, Superintendent Bernie Caton announced that Alamogordo, “for the first time since there has been a colony of colored people in the city, will have no segregated school.”¹⁹ He also released the following public statement:

The Delaware Avenue school which last year had a grade student body of some 23 colored children, has been converted to a duplex residence for use as quarters for the school's janitors, and the colored students will be assigned to classrooms according to their advancement in the grades, along with the other students. Lawrence Pigford, former instructor at the colored school, has been assigned to instructional duties in the new high school, and will hold classes in shop, drawing and mathematics.²⁰

He concluded his public statement by saying, “if the do-gooders will just let us alone, we will work out the problem ourselves without being forced.”²¹

Thus Civil rights activists including members of the NAACP, the NM State Board of Education, and an emphathetic school superintendent worked together to desegregate the Alamogordo schools three years before the 1954 Supreme Court decision to end the nation's untenable ‘separate but equal’ doctrine. The elementary students from the school for Blacks were transferred to the other elementary schools, and the former segregated school was retired as a classroom building.²² Superintendent Bernie Caton oversaw the school integration process. In another unprecedented maneuver, Caton also employed Mr. Pigford as a faculty member at the integrated school.²³ Lawrence Pigford came to Alamogordo from Hobbs where he was principal of Booker T. Washington Elementary School for eight years. “Reportedly of a pleasant, outgoing

¹⁸ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

¹⁹ “Alamo Colored School Closed,” *Alamogordo News*, 21 August 1952, p. 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ “Clovis, Hobbs Will Feel Ruling on Segregation,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 18 May 1954, p. 10.

nature,” the success of the transition to integration was largely attributed to him. He and his wife, Sarah, who was a registered nurse, lived at 323 Delaware Street.”²⁴ “Pigford,” Caton pointed out, “will be the only colored instructor in any unsegregated public school in New Mexico... He has certainly earned his opportunity to prove his ability in the classroom.”²⁵

Although he could counsel only about thirty students, over 200 requested Pigford as their counselor. Every informant deplored his untimely death and mentioned the fact that the high school annual that year was dedicated to him. One school official hazarded the guess that “there would be no objection to hiring another Negro teacher as this teacher had dispelled the myth that a Negro could not teach white children.”²⁶

Mr. Pigford’s appointment even received acclaim in a nationally-syndicated publication called *JET Magazine* geared primarily toward a Black readership: “School segregation was abolished in Alamogordo, New Mexico and a Negro teacher was assigned to teach in a white school for the first time in the state’s history.”²⁷ The *Alamogordo News* reported that these progressive steps “have not been resented even by those from the ‘deep south’ who have come to look upon Alamogordo as their home.”²⁸

Coach Rolla Buck is also credited with bringing about integration by actively recruiting Mexican American players and Blacks to his teams, thereby “overturning a long-standing tradition of non-participation”:

Those with Spanish surnames for many years were not invited or allowed to come out for football. It was simply the old tradition of discrimination that had held over... There was no big deal made of it at the time and many probably never noticed that there was a change.²⁹

Coach Buck invited all youngsters to play regardless of skin color, and they showed up. Without acknowledging the efforts of the NAACP, an *Alamogordo News* article titled “Goodbye To the Segregated School” praised two of the powers involved:

The Alamogordo Board of Education and Supt. W. Barnie Caton are to be congratulated in their great step forward in leading

²⁴ Harwell, June. *It Was the Right Thing to Do*. (Alamogordo: Self-published, 2018) p. 13.

²⁵ “Alamo Colored School Closed,” *Alamogordo News*, 21 August 1952, p. 1.

²⁶ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

²⁷ *JET Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 19 (Johnson Publishing Company: 4 September 1953). ISSN 0021-5996. The weekly source of African American political and entertainment news.

²⁸ “NM Likes ‘New Look’ Says Harper’s Writer,” *Alamogordo News*, 14 January 1954, p. 19.

²⁹ Harwell, June. *It Was the Right Thing to Do*. (Alamogordo: Self-published, 2018) p. 23.

the citizens into greater racial tolerance, by abolishing the segregated colored school and absorbing the student body and the single faculty member into the city system.³⁰

The article attempted to rationalize why New Mexico law left the decision of segregation up to local school boards by reflecting that the statute was “undoubtedly enacted in recognition of the attitudes on racial matters reflected in the state’s population,” surmizing that at that time “a colored primary student particularly, would have had a difficult time in our public schools. And a colored instructor probably would not have been obeyed.” The article further speculated that, “some parents may still hold a prejudice against the association of their children with children of color, but apparently the kids know nothing of this old Jim Crow philosophy.” The article concluded with the observation that “Alamogordo has pointed the way for other Southern and Southwestern New Mexico cities.”³¹

Hotels and Motels

While schools were desegregated before mandated to do so, private and public accommodations were much slower to integrate. Researchers Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan observed in 1954 that:

Hotels and motels will accept sports teams with bi-racial personnel, but apparently these are the only occasions on which Negroes have tried to get accommodations in town. Even though the restaurants do not, as a rule, display the sign reserving the right to refuse service, Negroes usually do not try to be served in them.³²

They further documented that the city’s swimming pool was segregated in the sense that there was a special day set aside for Blacks. They observed that the “movies make no distinction,” but that “other recreational activities on a commercial basis are still segregated.”³³

Negro Motorist Green Book Guide Sites

Q. Are or were there any Negro Motorist Green Book Guide safe havens in or near Alamogordo?

Sports

³⁰ “Goodbye To the Segregated School,” *Alamogordo News*, 21 August 1952, p. 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

³³ *Ibid.*

A preview of some upcoming ball games in 1906 demonstrates that from the town's beginnings the color lines were sharply drawn:

Then will come the game of base ball between the Indians and the colored team, and the colored team declares that they will not lose a single game. The program is to have at least two games... one with the Indian and colored teams and perhaps another with the colored and Mexican teams.³⁴

At a 3 May 1934 dedication ceremony at the nearby White Sands National Monument, an estimated 4,650 vehicles arrived in 776 vehicles maneuvering along the newly-opened sand dune roads. During the afternoon the crowd enjoyed a baseball game played by two all-Black teams, the Alamogordo Black Sox and the El Paso Monarchs. Fans donated a total of twelve dollars to be divided between the two squads.³⁵

Entertainment

The stately Alamogordo Hotel, Tenth St. and Delaware Ave was planned with the city, and was begun almost as soon as the town's first foundations were laid. The Hotel's grand opening was heralded when the town was only six months old, 9 January 1899.³⁶ Tenth Street, known as Alamogordo's Broadway, featured a double arch of trees leading to the hotel and a fashionable promenade.³⁷ The manager was a dapper cosmopolitan and experienced restaurateur, Col. J. F. Harvey, from El Paso. He and vivacious Mrs. Harvey soon centered social life of the new town at the hotel.³⁸ These were such affairs as entertaining Gov. Miguel Otero, staff and ladies, a huge reception for Charles B. Eddy by the Commercial Club, banquets by railroad officials for local and Eastern friends, El Paso Architects and Builders reception and dinner. There were concerts, musicals, card parties, and balls.³⁹ The Alamogordo was touted as a "first class hotel that compares in furnishings, cuisine, and service" with the best hotels in other similarly-sized cities.⁴⁰ Holiday dinners had their own special menus, such as the one for Thanksgiving 1905, printed on grey, 20-pound Diana bond with ox blood, a linen finish with deckled edges and tied

³⁴ "Base Ball News," *Alamogordo News*, 3 February 1906, p. 5.

³⁵ Welsh, Michael. *Dunes and Dreams: A History of White Sands National Monument*. Professional Paper No. 55. (Santa Fe: Division of History, Intermountain Cultural Resources Center, 1995), p. 38.

³⁶ "City's Social Life Began with Hotel Alamogordo – First Hotel Widely Known as Epitome of Style," *Alamogordo News*, 19 August 1954, p. 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

with a ribbon.⁴¹ Although not welcomed as guests, Joe Jackson, a well-known Black chef, and other people of color were employed at the Hotel.⁴²

Juneteenth Celebrations

In a racially charged description of a 1933 Juneteenth celebration that welcomed some 100 Black celebrants from Alamogordo and Las Cruces, the reporter interpreted the unusual incident this way:

When the barbecue was ready the colored people were confronted with a large horde of Mexican boys, bent on getting their share of 'free barbecue.' The colored people were so far outnumbered and outclassed as grub-hustlers that the only way any barbecue was saved was putting it into a box and transferring it to the pastor's home. Rev. Hanks said he never saw anything like that and he wished the White folks had told him what was likely to happen. The colored folks had a good time, anyway, he said.⁴³

White Sands National Monument

In 1934, White Sands National Monument Director Tom Charles engaged the nearby population of Alamogordo by planning a series of dinners and dances for the Anglo, Hispanic, and 'colored'" residents... The Black 'colony' in town had never been asked to join in a community-wide program...⁴⁴

Newspapers and Magazines

Alamogordo resident Charles Cromer recalls that his family subscribed to *Ebony*, *Jet*, and the *Chicago Defender* and "almost anything else Black"⁴⁵ to make up for shortcomings in the local press, and to view a wider world. Rev. Warren Robinson remembers that *Ebony*, *Jet*, and "Black newspapers from several different states"⁴⁶ graced his home while he was growing up.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Annual Meeting of Chamber of Commerce and Election," *Alamogordo News*, 12 December 1929, p. 1.

⁴³ "Colored Independence Day, Disastrous as Far as Barbecue Feature," *Alamogordo News*, 22 June 1933, p. 12.

⁴⁴ Welsh, Michael. "Dunes and Dreams: A History of White Sands National Monument." Professional Paper No. 55. (Santa Fe: Division of History, Intermountain Cultural Resources Center, 1995), p. 40.

⁴⁵ Personal communication, Charles Cromer (August 2021).

⁴⁶ Personal communication, Rev. Warren Robinson (August 2021).

Biographies

Research is currently underway for **Barnie Caton**, **Lawrence Pigford**, **Ray Douglas McDonald**, **Rev. A. W. Wills**, **Rev. Z. Z. Johnson**, **Lloyd Warren Newton**, and others.

Oral Histories

TBD

Living Histories

Rev. Warren Robinson

SELECTED IMAGES ALAMOGORDO, NM



Figure 41. Photograph of Tenth Street, Alamogordo

Deed restrictions barred Black residents from living north of Tenth Street, even after such arrangements were deemed illegal by the U. S. Supreme Court in the 1950s.

Source: Brief history available on-line at ci.alamogordo.nm.us/356/History-of-Alamogordo.



Figure 42. 1949-1950 Alamogordo High School Yearbook

First Year of School Integration

Source: Harwell, June. *It Was the Right Thing to Do*. (Alamogordo: Self-published, 2018) p. 12.



Figure 43. Five African Americans on horseback (Cloudcroft, NM)

These riders may have been working as lumberjacks for the New Mexico Tie and Timber Company (Alamogordo) when G. E. Miller photographed them in Cloudcroft c1905.

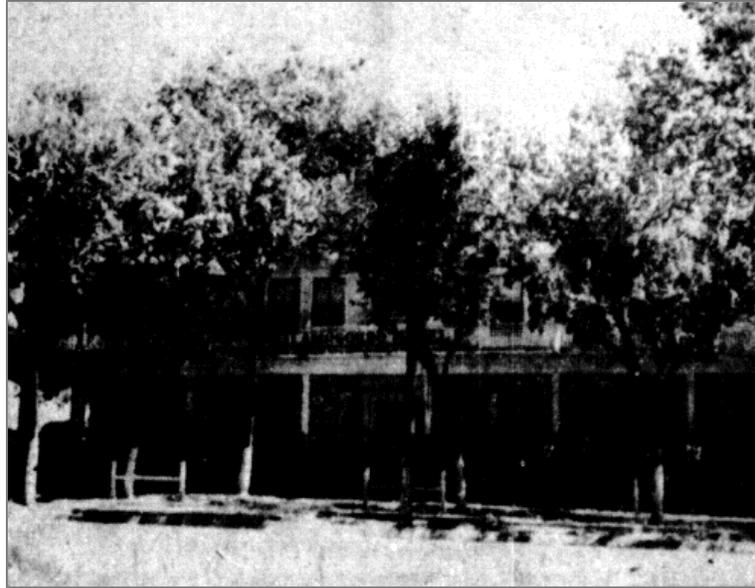
Source: Eidenbach, Peter L. *Alamogordo*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub, 2010).



Figure 44. Photograph of Alameda Park

This picture of Alameda Park in Alamogordo was found in a 1904 calendar that had been placed in the marble cornerstone of the building at 9th and New York Avenues in Alamogordo. The building was built in 1902 by the Knights of Pythias as a lodge hall upstairs and a retail space on the ground floor. A Colored Knights of Pythias was formed in Alamogordo, and remains active to this day.

Source: Hubbard Museum of the American West. Identifier: 2010.02.44.



Hotel Alamogordo Banquet Menu		
Saturday, May 23, 1899		
Olives		Pickles
	SOUP	
	Cream of Tomatoes	
	FISH	
	Boiled Salmon With Green Peas	
	ROASTS	
Beef, Pan Gravy		Turkey, New England Style
Mutton, Caper Sauce		Veal With Dressing
	ENTREES	
Fricasse Chicken		Spaghetti With Tomatoes
Banana Fritters		Raspberry Tryphosia
	SACRAMENTO PRODUCTS	
Boiled Potatoes	Asparagus	Fresh Peas
Radishes	Lettuce	Green Onions
	DESSERT	
Vanilla Ice Cream		Strawberry Shortcake
	FRUITS	
Nuts	Layer Rasins	
Coffee	Roquefort Cheese	Saratoga Flakes
	Coffee	Chocolate
	ALAMOGORDO PUNCH	

Figure 45. Hotel Alamogordo banquet menu

Photo of Hotel Alamogordo, n. d. and Hotel Alamogordo Banquet Menu, 23 May 1899. Source: "City's Social Life Began with Hotel Alamogordo – First Hotel Widely Known as Epitome of Style," *Alamogordo News*, 19 August 1954, p. 45.

Although not welcomed as guests, Black residents were employed at the hotel.



Figure 46. Coca-Cola advertisement

African Americans were absent from local advertising until the 1960s.

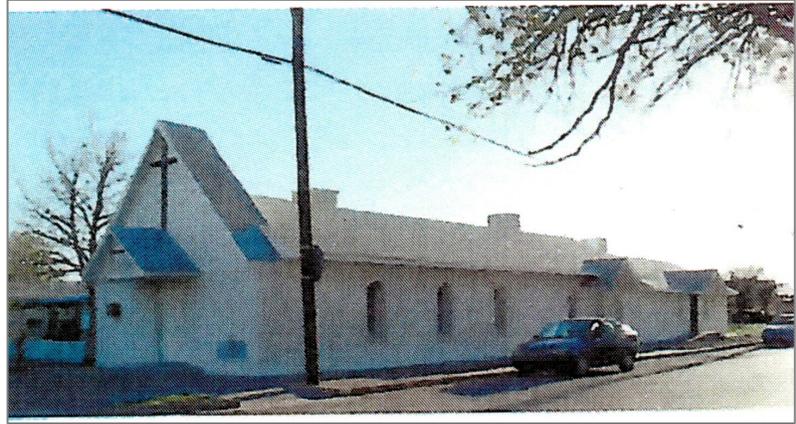
Source: "Thirst Asks Nothing More," Coca-Cola Advertisement
Alamogordo News, 7 September 1939.



Figure 47. Corinth Baptist church

Corinth (African American) Church

Source: "Court Airing Indicated for Church Schism,"
Alamogordo News, 3 April 1957, p. 1 (Staff photo, n. d.)



(Top left) George Washington Brown, founder Owens Chapel
(Top right) Owens Chapel, founded in 1932. Pastor: Warren Robinson.

(Bottom) Four generations of the George Washington Brown family. (L – R) Beulah Banks, Mable Green, Wendy Short, Rochelle Short, and Cathalina Brown (infant).

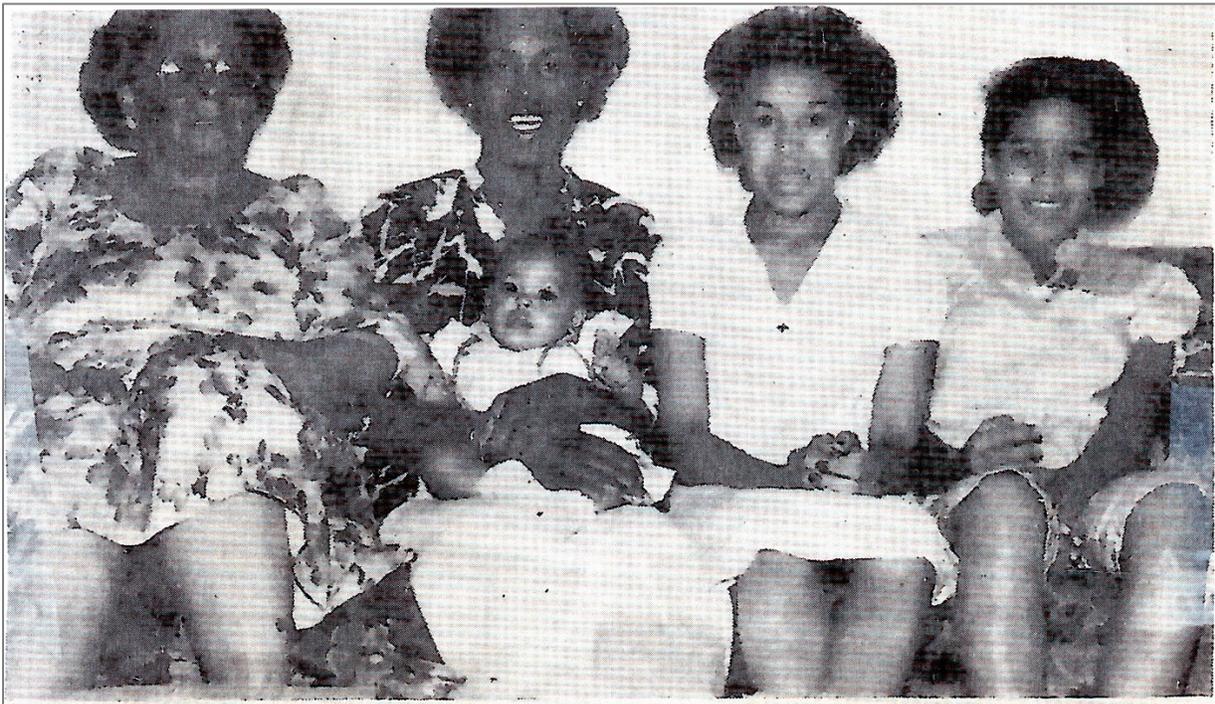


Figure 48. George Washington Brown and family, founding pastor, Owens Chapel

Source: Newspaper article courtesy of Pastor Warren Robinson.

Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. Quantity
5. Everything
8. Call to mind
12. Entrance
13. Part of Portuguese India
14. White ant
15. Completed
16. Destroy a great number
18. Radium symbol
20. Alarm whistle
21. Having rhythm
25. Obtain
28. Potential metal
29. Hindu cymbals
31. Gluts
32. Organs of speech
34. Exclamation to frighten
36. Gentlemen
37. Sea
39. Animal's foot
41. Fuegian Indian
42. Fire warden
44. Glandular organ
46. Author of "The Clansman"
48. Negative
49. Talked noisily
52. Lights out
56. Parent's sister
57. Preceding night
58. Departure

B	I	D	L	A	C	B	E	D	I	M
O	N	E	A	D	O	A	L	O	N	E
S	C	A	B	A	N	T	L	A	D	S
O	N	U	S	T	A	G	T	I	N	
O	N	T	E	R	R	I	E	R	S	E
I	T	S	W	O	O	R	E	A	P	
L	E	A	P	A	V	E	D	R	E	W
S	P	A	T	E	A	R	A	N	A	
A	T	S	H	O	R	T	E	N	S	S
M	A	P	E	R	S	T	O	L	A	
A	B	L	E	B	I	T	T	O	B	
S	L	O	P	E	A	I	M	A	L	E
S	E	P	I	A	L	E	E	M	E	T

Solution of Yesterday's Puzzle

DOWN

1. Crazy
2. Commotion
3. Transgression
4. Cubic meter
5. Put with
6. Reclines

7. Clear
8. Judge's chambers
9. Starvation
10. Loop and knot
11. Watch closely
17. Angers
19. Social insect
21. Hue
22. Seaport in Chile
23. Contingent
24. Flap
26. Fr. novelist
27. Attempt
30. Cut off
33. Northern constellation
35. Sturdy tree
38. Barber's call
40. Conquer
43. Paris played
45. Was overfond
47. Glacial snow
49. Dance step
50. Be sorry
51. Light moisture
53. Hewing tool
54. Fasten
55. Pigeon

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
12				13				14				
15				16				17				
			18	19		20						
21	22	23		24		25			26	27		
28			29	30		31						
32			33	34		35		36				
37			38	39		40		41				
42				43		44		45				
			46			47		48				
49	50	D	I	X	O	N	51		52	53	54	55
56				57				58				
59				60				61				

PAR TIME 10 MIN. AP Newsfeatures

Figure 49. Crossword puzzle featuring the author of 'The Clansman,' a trilogy celebrating the KKK

There was no escaping the daily drumbeat of degradation

Thomas Dixon Jr. wrote a trilogy that romantized and glorified the Ku Klux Klan. *The Leopard's Spots*, *The Clansman*, and the *The Traitor* presented the Klan heroically. *The Clansman* was twice adapted, once by its author as a play (*The Clansman* – 1905) and a decade later by D. W. Griffith in the 1915 movie *The Birth of a Nation*. Dixon wrote the books in support of racial segregation, depicting Blacks as violent racists and Klansmen as saviors denying 'Negro' rule. Source: "Crossword Puzzle, *Alamogordo Daily News*, 14 August 1958, p. 22.



Figure 50. Howard Beacham and his new 1938 Buick

Federal Prohibition Agent Harold Beacham and his new 1938 Buick. Beacham owned the segregated Plaza Café and Service Station. Photo courtesy of the Tularosa Basin Historical Museum.



Figure 51. Interior of the Plaza Cafe

The Plaza Café served Black patrons in a storeroom accessed through a rear alleyway entrance. Spanish speakers were refused service.

Negative Number: 163242

Date: c1915-1935

Collection: HP.1995.17 Emily Lovell Collection

Repository: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum (Santa Fe)



Figure 52. Fraternal City Sanatorium

It is not known whether the Fraternal City Sanatorium employed or welcomed all residents regardless of creed.

Source: Foster, Ralph Foster. Postcard. Library of Congress, Resource ID 02579. Digitized.



Figure 53. Postcard Fraternal City Sanitorium

Alamogordo Sanatorium for Tuberculosis

Repository: New Mexico State University Library, Rio Grande Historical Collection

Date: c1912

Identifier: Ms02231703

Collection: Thomas K. Todsén Photographs, Collection No. Ms 0223

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Also For

Old Mexico and California.

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of The

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furnished cheerfully on application to

E. F. J. McCarthy, Agent, Alamoqordo, N. M. V. R. Stiles, G. P. A., El Paso, T

Figure 54. New Pullman 'Broiler' cars

African Americans working as Pullman Porters made Alamoqordo their home.

Source: "The Mexican Central Railway system," *Alamoqordo News*, 6 April 1907.



Figure 55. Opening day Alamogordo swimming pool (1923)

Blacks residents were scheduled on separate swim days

Source: Brunell, Herb. Hubbard Museum of the American West. New Mexico Centennial Project.
ID: 2010.02.51.

**Pastor
E. Kirkland Swanson
And The Members of
Owen Chapel
A.M.E. Church
5th and Delaware
Welcome You**



Rev. C.M. (Angel) Swanson, Dr. E. Kirkland Swanson



Owen Chapel A.M.E. Church, located at 5th and Delaware, was organized in 1932. The Chapel's denominational affiliation is Methodist.

Youth activities include Sunday School, Y.P.D. and A.C.E. League. Every third Sunday is Youth Day and the youth is in full charge.

Adults participate in various activities throughout the week. Class and Teachers meet at 7 p.m. every Monday. The Missionary Society meets at 7 p.m. the first and third Tuesday of each month. A Bible Study is held at 7 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Choir rehearsal is held each Thursday at 7 p.m. and Usher Board meets at 7 p.m. the second and fourth Friday of each month.

Future plans include remodeling of the parsonage.

Pastor E. Kirkland Swanson, a veteran of thirty one years, was assigned as Pastor of Owen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church on September 30, 1979 by the Rt. Rev. H.H. Brookins of the Colorado Conference. Rev. Swanson came to Alamogordo on Oct. 7, 1979 and has become involved in various civic affairs.

Pastor Swanson previously pastored in the Fourth Episcopal District of the Illinois Annual Conference. He also pastored in Haverford, Pa. where he received a Doctor of Divinity Degree. In 1958 he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree and graduated sixth in a class of seventy from Temple University in Philadelphia on Susquehanna Street and Broad Street.

Pastor Swanson was transferred to the Fifth Episcopal District by the Rt. Rev. Joseph Gomez in 1966. At this time he met the Rev. C. M. (Angel) Johnson, whom he married in 1968. Rev. Angel Swanson's slogan, "a woman in town cutting the devils business down", describes her enthusiasm and determination well. She serves as assistant Pastor to her husband. They are a Ministry Team fighting sin and Satan throughout the world.

Dr. & Rev. E. Kirkland Swanson are happy to be in Alamogordo and to serve as Pastors of Owen Chapel A.M.E. Church. "The church where everybody is somebody, and Christ is Lord."

Figure 56. Owen A. M. E. church organized in 1932

Source: *Alamogordo Daily News*, 4 January 1980, p. 8.

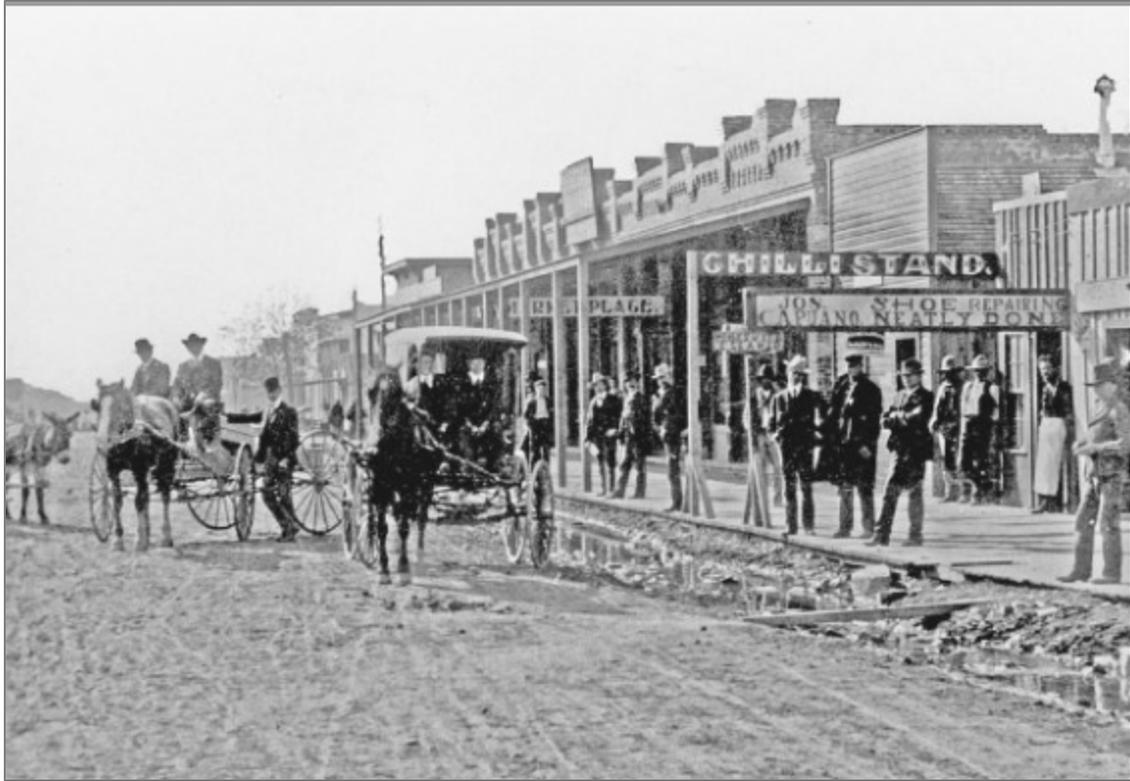


Figure 57. Pennsylvania Avenue (currently White Sands Boulevard) c1910

Pennsylvania Avenue (now White Sands Boulevard) c1910 near the intersection with Tenth Street. Tenth street was the designed cultural dividing line between the Anglo population (North) and the minority populations (South). Black residents were not permitted to live North of Tenth Street well into the 1960s.

Source: Eidenbach, Peter L. *Alamogordo*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub, 2010).

WANTED—Nice looking colored girl
18 to 20 years old to take care of
rooming house for colored people
and serve lunch, no drinking or
gambling. Write or wire John James,
Alamogordo, N. M. 16t3x

Figure 58. Classified advertisement

“WANTED – Nice looking colored girl...”

Source: “Classified advertisement,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 16 October 1930, p. 7.

Venerated Spaces Black Community Alamogordo

NAME	TYPE	LOCATION
Christian Joy	Church	1502 E. 10th
New Hope	Church	800 E. 9th
Holy Temple	Church	200 Virginia
New Zion	Church	308 Maryland
Corinth Baptist	Church and Segregated School	400 Delaware and Fourth
Owen Chapel	Church	423 Delaware
'Colored' USO Holloman AFB	United Services Organization	Verify location
Alameda Park	Juneteenth Celebrations	Verify location
Alameda Park	'Negro' Baseball League	Verify location
Tenth Street	Cultural Dividing Line	Black community South of 10th
Prince Hall Grand Lodge	'Colored' Masons	311 Delaware Avenue
Sprouse-Reitz	1940s Department Store	Verify relevance and location
Chihuahuita	Minority neighborhood	First, Third, Railroad & Texas St.
Plaza Café (currently a museum)	Segregated restaurant	White Sands Blvd.
Municipal Pool	Segregated recreation site	Verify location
Delaware School	Segregated school	Fourth St. and Delaware Ave.

Table 1. Venerated Spaces Black Community Alamogordo

SOUTHEAST TOWN CORE: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH INDICATES THAT THE CORE OF THE BLACK AMERICAN COMMUNITY WAS HISTORICALLY CENTERED IN THE VICINITY OF THE CORINTH BAPTIST CHURCH AT THE INTERSECTION OF 400 DELAWARE AND FOURTH STREETS. THERE ARE REFERENCES TO PEOPLE OF COLOR BEING DISALLOWED FROM LIVING NORTH OF TENTH STREET IN THE PAST. MOST EARLY BLACK SETTLERS WORKED AT THE NEARBY RAILROAD YARD.

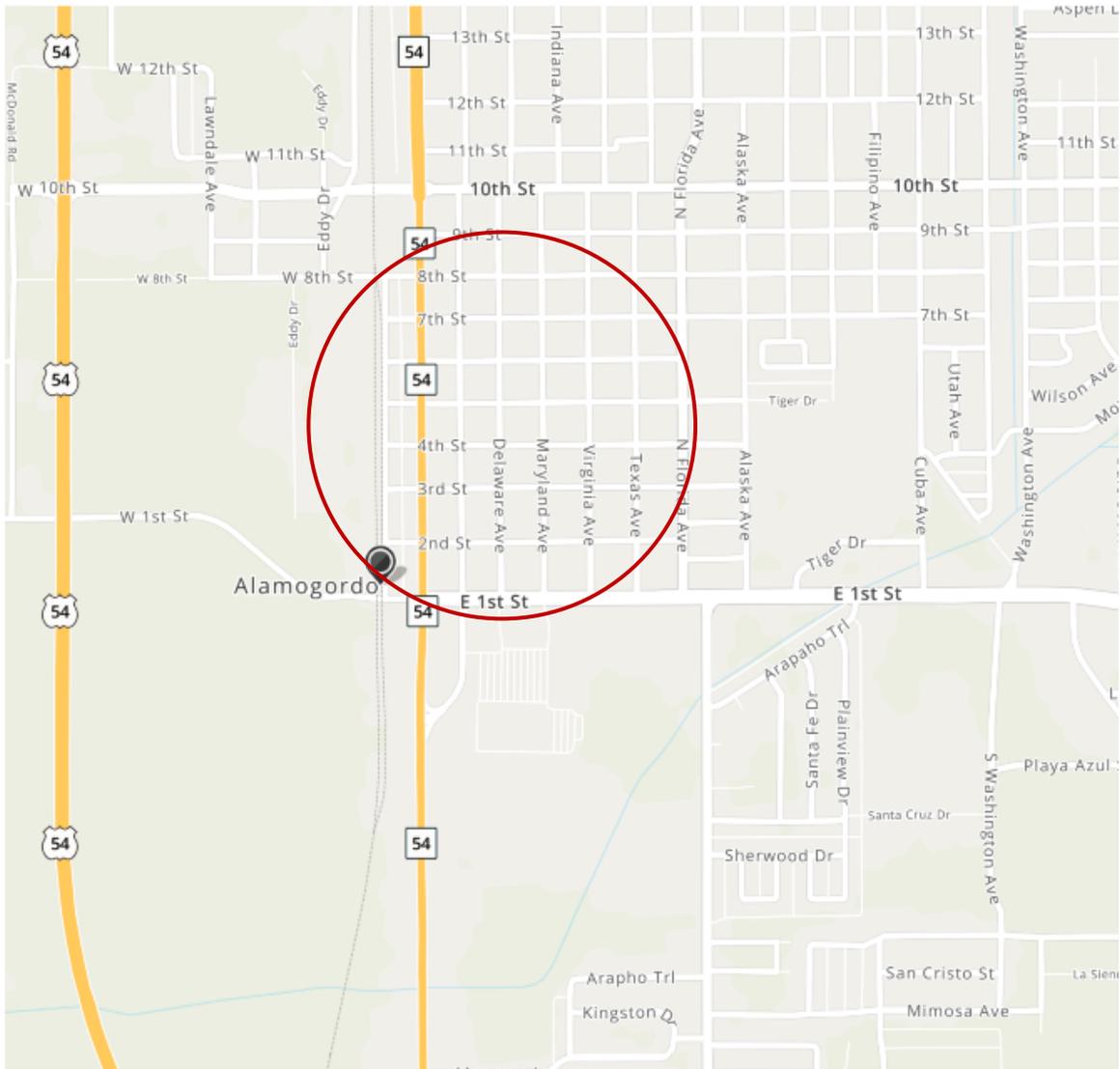


Figure 59. Map of historically Black neighborhood Alamogordo south of Tenth Street

Suggestions for Additional Research Alamogordo

Why and how did the Eddy brothers design Alamogordo as a segregated railroad town?

Which pre-World War II businesses were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks?

What boundaries (ex. streets, geographical features, railroad tracks) in addition to Tenth Street historically defined the Black community neighborhood?

Was there a known Ku Klux Klan presence?

In addition to the organizations and alliances already mentioned, what additional groups existed to instill racial equality and fair practices?

What role did the “Colored” USO play in the daily life of Black residents?

What are the relationships between the National Register sites and the Black experience?

What are the relationships between the Works Projects Administration (WPA) sites and the Black experience?

What are the historical connections between the national tuberculosis and influenza epidemics, health and comfort seekers, Alamogordo’s Fraternal Sanitorium and other health providers, Black residents, and Black newcomers?

How critical were the Black churches to the daily lives of Black residents? Were services and events inter-racial?

Were there any connections between the local 8TH Service Command World War II Prisoner of War Camp and the Black community?

Before state and federal civil rights legislation was passed, which White-owned dining and hotel establishments employed Blacks? Welcomed Blacks?

What is the history of the song commonly referred to at the time as the “Negro National Anthem”?

Which individuals, regardless of skin color, were largely credited with bringing about educational and social integration?

What were some of the successful civil rights strategies employed? A strong NAACP presence? Sit-ins? Boycotts? Demonstrations?

Were there any *Negro Motorist Green Book* sites in Alamogordo or the surrounding vicinity?

Where were the annual Juneteenth celebrations generally held and how was the Juneteenth tradition commemorated?

ARTESIA



Figure 60. Map highlighting Artesia, NM

ARTESIA

In an attempt to beckon future settlers, investors, and tourists, the Secretary of Artesia's "Commercial Club" characterized the nearby town of Hope in 1915 as having 800 inhabitants; the larger community, some 2,000 strong, was described as being "almost all Americans, a few Mexicans, and *one Negro...*".¹ Four years before, a local newspaper reporter introduced three Black newcomers to Artesia's residents, including Rev. J. B. Cochra, Rev. P. T. Ramsay from Roswell, and Mrs. Crist, "known over many states for her excellent evangelical work."² Continued the reporter,

We should encourage the coming of such people, and when they do come, they should be made welcome. They should be invited into our homes and made to feel that they are one of us and that we are pleased to have them as associates and friends. Artesia needs a little warming up socially.³

The City of Artesia is located on the flat, open plains of southeast New Mexico, six miles west of the Pecos River, alongside the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad route. The city is situated on top of a natural water belt where numerous artesian wells furnish water for irrigation. The artesian irrigation allowed for the development of a fertile farming area. From its earliest settlement, Artesia has also been a ranching area. The town was established on the site of a seasonal ranch camp near a desert oasis. At this location, natural springs along a wash called Eagle Draw formed a pond fringed with cottonwood trees. The camp later became a stagecoach stop, and railroad stop. The townsite was laid out in a grid pattern in 1903. Several adjoining subdivisions were added soon thereafter.⁴ By 1915, Artesia had 2,500 residents, 112 homes, 67 commercial buildings, and several schools and churches. Beginning in the 1920s, Artesia's economy and population were boosted by the operations of nearby oil and natural gas fields. In 1983, the City of Artesia had a population of about 14,000, with suburbs spreading beyond the original townsite.⁵

John Chisum (whose Chisum Trail followed the Goodnight-Loving Trail that had been blazed a year earlier) is said to have been the first to use the spot as a cow camp on his first drive up the Pecos River in 1866.⁶ The oasis acquired the name of Chisum Spring Camp. It was located about

¹ "Hope's Citizenship," *Artesia Pecos Valley News*, 30 December 1915, p. 6. Emphasis original.

² "New Residents," *Artesia Pecos Valley News*, 30 November 1911, p. 4.

³ Ibid.

⁴ This historic context adapted from: Swanson, Betsy. "Artificial Stone Houses of Artesia Thematic Group," National Register of Historic Places nomination form (September 1983). Efforts to locate the following article have thus far been unsuccessful: Knorr, Ruth B., "The Story of Artesia, Chisum Spring Camp, How It Grew," *The El Paso Times*, March 26, 1967, p. 1-E.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

40 miles south of Chisum's Jingle Bob Ranch Headquarters. The range land Chisum controlled stretched for about 200 miles across New Mexico to the Texas border. Between 1870 and 1881, Chisum was credited with having the largest holdings of cattle in the U. S., said to have been more than 100,000 in 1878. John Chisum's niece, Sallie Chisum, homesteaded at Chisum Spring Camp beginning in 1889, and her residency there initiated the settlement that eventually became the town of Artesia.⁷

It is not known yet which of these businesses operating between 1942 and 1946 were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks:

The Forum, Baldwin Store, Marie's (Mrs. Marie Fletcher), Toggery Shop, Roswell Milk, Livingston Court, Artesia Hotel, Sprouse-Reitz, the Hub Clothiers, Peoples Mercantile Company, Brown Mercantile Company, Cement Block (Walter Nugent), Union Supply Company, Malco Refineries, Inc., Tourist Court, NM Eastern Lumber Company, King's Rest Tourist Court, Camp Mac Tourist Court.⁸

Black Employment Opportunities

Job opportunities for African Americans in and around Artesia, never plentiful, became even more scarce depending upon who did the hiring. Menial labor in the form of road or railroad projects, for example, provided the most promising job prospects. However, not all companies hired Blacks:

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ National Archives Identifier: 83223313 Creator(s): Office of Price Administration. OPA Region VII. Price Department. Santa Fe (New Mexico) District Office 5/7/1942-12/1946.
Note: Once the Artesia libraries re-opened to the public, the following non-circulating library books will be consulted: *New Mexico Business Directory*, 1905-06 and 1915 editions, Gazetteer Publishing Co., Denver; Artesia Chamber of Commerce, *Artesia, New Mexico* (1934); First Presbyterian Church, *Golden Anniversary, 1903-1953: Fifty Years History, Memories, and Dreams Come True* (1953); Pritchard, Stu. *Eddy County: A Fond Look Back; Memories of Other Years* (Artesia: Valley Savings and Loan, 197-?). The following archival collections will be researched once the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions are lifted: Division of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment. (9/18/1949 - 12/23/1954) (Predecessor) Series: Final Grant Reports, 1951 – 1981 Record Group 207: General Records of the Department of Housing and Urban (Artesia); Oral History Interviews of the New Mexico Department of Transportation Oral History Mitigation Projects, 2011. OCLC 953488935; C. Pardue Bunch (1913 – 1985) Oral History 1984. New Mexico Health Historical Collection, UNM Health Sciences Library and Informatics Center. Oral history of a family practitioner, who practiced for forty years in Artesia, New Mexico; G. A. Feather Papers, 1866-1977. Family papers. OCLC Number: 60678077. NMSU RGHC; Interview with Owen C. Taylor, M. D., University of New Mexico Center Library, 1987. OCLC 894366785. Cardiologist in Artesia for 35 years; Traylor, Elmer Lee. *Santa Fe Railroad Depot at Artesia, NM*. Palace of the Governors Photo Archive (Santa Fe). 1925? OCLC Number: 881597627.

The task will be completed by Mr. Beale and Mr. Morris, who are experienced road builders. The negro laborers, about 25 in number, are being replaced by white men. When the remaining distance has been graveled and the roadbed rolled, this will be among the best highways in the state.¹

A shortage of farm labor in 1911 meant that half-picked cotton fields were subjected to an early cold snap followed by damaging high winds. A Carlsbad newspaper article (reprinted in the *Artesia Pecos*) observed that this was “a forcible reminder that this valley needs the class of people who will pick cotton, the negro and the Mexican. Good, honest, hard-working families of negroes” can “make a country rich,”² continued the author. He blasted the “class of whites who loaf around and squirt tobacco juice and rail against Mexicans and negroes” for creating “race prejudice,” and called such Whites “a damage,” and a “curse.” He reminded his readers that “no country can prosper that allows them to get a foothold.”³ Clearly, the article presumed that people of color would serve only as laborers. No mention is made of welcoming Blacks and Mexicans into professional careers. Even so, he concluded his opinion piece (entitled “The Pecos Valley Needs More Men,”) by observing:

When the people of Eddy County learn to protect their laborers and give every class even-handed justice, the cotton will not go to waste or the fruit or alfalfa spoil for lack of hands to care for it.⁴

Neighborhoods Artesia

Carver School was located in the “*negro section of town* on a small knoll.”¹

¹ “New Road Connecting Artesia and Hope is Nearing Completion,” *Carlsbad Current*, 9 December 1921, n. p.

² “The Pecos Valley Needs More Men,” *Carlsbad Current* article reprinted in the *Artesia Pecos Valley News* 23 November 1911, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

¹ “New Mexico’s Segregated Schools,” sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949). Emphasis added.

Discrimination, Persecution, and Prejudice

In a revealing news piece, the *Carlsbad Current* reported that the Black population of Artesia fled to nearby Blackdom after hearing some type of rumor at a meeting. While downplaying what must have been a very real fear to cause such a sudden departure from their homes, the reporter at the same time seems to blame the families for their confusion, characterizing the event as a simple misunderstanding of some sort:

It seems that the innocent use of the word 'rumor' in an article in the *News* a short time ago played a heavy part in the sudden exodus of the colored population of Artesia a few nights ago. They read the article and got all mixed up as to what 'rumor' might be, but it was a sense of the meeting that it must be something awful, so at the first noise after nightfall most of them decamped hurriedly in the direction of Blackdom. However, the matter was thoroughly threshed out at the negro settlement up in Chaves County and after their employers had made satisfactory explanations most of them returned to their jobs in Artesia, and life once more moves along in the old accustomed way.²

In tone and attitude, the news item demeans the residents for overreacting. The incident itself highlights how nearby Blackdom must have been regarded as a necessary safe haven.

Discrimination Sports

Famed baseball player Willie Stargell remembers what it was like traveling in a segregated New Mexico. Denied hotel entry, he and his Black teammates had no choice but to room and board in private residences, or camp on the bus:

Once on a road trip in Artesia, New Mexico, my three Negro teammates and I were scheduled to board at the home of a fishing bait handler, who used her house to raise her bait – worms, grubs, etc. Her house was the most deplorable of conditions. It had to be kept dark inside at all times for her bait to survive. Thus, every window was boarded shut. No ventilation entered the house anywhere. The air inside was stale and muggy. My teammates and I sat outside late each evening absorbing as much fresh air as possible, before finally surrendering to fatigue and entering the smelly bait house to sleep.³

² "Rumor Caused Trouble," *The Carlsbad Current*, 14 April 1916, p. 7.

³ Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), p. 63.

While their White colleagues enjoyed hotels with room-service accommodations or stayed in decent rooming houses that served meals, Stargell remembers that even eating decently was a challenge for him:

The food supply on the road was just as bad. Since we weren't permitted to eat in the dining room of any restaurants, we had to either eat in the kitchens of the restaurants or depend on our boarders to feed us. On long bus rides, the team often stopped somewhere to eat. Not permitted to enter the restaurants, we were left in the bus, awaiting whatever leftovers or food our Caucasian teammates would bring to us... After a while, I began to fend for myself... I consumed many a Spam and salami sandwich while in the Sophomore League.⁴

Experiencing extreme weight loss, he remembers his own mother barely recognizing him after returning home during a break.

Writes Stargell poignantly:

I used the Negro bathrooms and drank water from the filthy Negro drinking fountains. I sat at the back of the bus. I played the role... I saw the racial route as just another obstacle to be stepped over... I never allowed it to defeat me.⁵

Of course, Willie Stargell was not the only athlete to experience discrimination in New Mexico. In 1952, the Albuquerque Dukes had two players ready to become the first Black men to play on the team. Apparently, one could not handle the intense pressure. The Dukes released Joe Wiley for 'nervousness and lack of experience' just a week after the season began. The other Black player, Herbie Simpson, managed to bear the stress and became a star until injuries shortened his baseball career.⁶

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), p. 83.

⁶ Melzer, Richard. "Many Fought for Their Dreams," *First Person*. Available on-line at news-bulletin.com/opinion/columns/many-fought-for-their-dreams/article_0e641f28-19c4-11e9-8023-a3958c0e7f1c (17 January 2019).

Buildings, Structures, and Landscapes

Prisoner of War (POW) Internment Camp at Artesia

Internment Camp Enemy Prisoner of War Camp 8th Service Command National Archives
Identifier: 899487. [Additional research is warranted.]

National Register Sites

The following buildings and sites, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, will need to be researched for any associations with Artesia's Black experience. Each nomination will need to be revised accordingly:

Artesia Residential Historic District
John Accord House
Wille D. Atkeson House
William Baskin House
Edward R. Gesler House
Hodges-Runyan-Brainard House
Hodges-Sipple House
F. L. Lukins House
Mauldin-Hall House
Moore-Ward Cobblestone House
Dr. Robert M. Ross House
Robert and Sallie Chisum House
Abo Elementary School and Fallout Shelter

Works Projects Administration (WPA) Projects

Note: Evidently, Black workers helped construct WPA projects for the city, whether or not they were welcomed as visitors after the projects were complete. Hillcrest Swimming Pool was constructed in part using Black labor, for example, even though it was a segregated public space once completed. Additional research is warranted.

Artesia is home to several WPA construction projects including the Artesia City Park, the Artesia Gym, the Artesia Municipal Hospital, City Hall, and the McMillan Dam.⁷ Originally called the

⁷ "WPA Projects in Artesia," available on-line at livingnewdeal.org/projects/artesia-city-park-artesia-nm.

Artesia Memorial Hospital when it was built in 1939 using WPA/PWA funds, additions were made in the early 1940s and again during the mid-1960s.⁸

Construction of Artesia's City Hall building was also completed in 1939 as a Depression-era Works Progress Administration program project. It brought several City departments together under the same roof, including the City Clerk, City Manager, and the Public Library. The WPA Sewing Room was also accommodated, as well as an assembly room for public meetings. In later years, the Police and Fire departments were housed in City Hall along with a United States Navy recruiting office, the municipal courts, and the state meat inspector. The city outgrew the building in the early 1960s, and moved to its current location on Texas Avenue. The building has been under private ownership since then, and is utilized as office space.⁹ Extensive WPA work on the McMillan and Avalon dams alleviated perennial reservoir problems in the vicinity of Artesia including Carlsbad.¹⁰

Segregated Public Spaces

Woodlawn Cemetery

Artesia's Woodlawn Cemetery once featured separate burial areas for Anglo, Spanish, and Black residents. Additional research is warranted.

Schools

In 1949, Carver Elementary School hosted grades one through six in two classrooms for approximately 50 Black students. One teacher handled the first three grades (20 students). All students were allowed to attend the public Junior and High schools.¹

⁸ *Treasures on New Mexico Trails* available on-line at livingnewdeal.org/projects/artesia-municipal-hospital-artesia-nm.

⁹ "Artesia Walking Tour" available on-line at artesiachamber.com/explore/downtown-walking-tour.

¹⁰ Clark, Ira. "McMillan Dam," available on-line at livingnewdeal.org/projects/mcmillan-dam-artesia-nm.

¹ "New Mexico's Segregated Schools," sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949).

Entertainment

Blackdom's Booster's Club

By 1911, local news accounts touted the fact that Blackdom's citizenry and officials, imbibing "the spirit of the valley," had organized a Booster's club. Blackdom "is the negro town of the Pecos Valley," the newspaper reminded its readers, located east of Roswell and "composed entirely of colored people."¹ Francis Boyer served as the toastmaster during their first Thanksgiving banquet. Talks included, "Immigration," W. M. Young, "Our School," James Eubanks, "What We produce," Daniel G. Keys, "Real Estate," W. T. Williams, "Pumping and Windmills," Clinton Ragsdale, "Possibilities in Livestock," George Wilson, "Business Opportunities," G. W. Wilson, and "Homesteading," Monroe Collins.² Juxtaposed with scholarly lectures within the Black community was the ubiquitous presence of 'blackface' and minstrel shows at private all-White gatherings, fundraisers, school performances, and traveling carnival shows.

Jim Crow and Minstrel Shows

As previously discussed, the song *Jump Jim Crow* initiated a new form of popular music and theatrical performances in the United States that focused attention on the mockery of African Americans. This new genre was called the minstrel show. Jim Crow as entertainment spread rapidly across the United States in the years prior to the Civil War and eventually around the world. When the United States' special ambassador to Central America, John Lloyd Stephens, arrived in Merida on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula in 1841, a local brass band played *Jump Jim Crow* mistakenly thinking it was the national anthem of the United States. The popularity of *Jump Jim Crow* and the blackface form of entertainment also prompted many whites to derisively refer to Black males as Jim Crow.³

In 1915, sponsored by the Artesia Commercial Club, the Nigro & Stephenson's Carnival company performed in Artesia from 28 June to 3 July. They arrived in their own special fourteen-car train. The show consisted of a large Ferris wheel, "three-abreast merry-go-rounds, eight shows, twenty-five concessions, and an excellent band."⁴ The Carnival was billed as being "high-class," featuring "clean" and "interesting" shows.⁵

¹ "Negro's Thanksgiving," *Artesia Pecos Valley News*, 7 December 1911, p. 2.

² Ibid.

³ Waggoner, Cassandra. "Jim Crow/Jump Jim Crow," 20 November 2007. Available on-line at blackpast.org/African-american-history/jim-crow. See also: Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Dale Cockrell and Don B. Wilmet, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and their World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴ "Carnival Coming: Fourteen Car Show Will be Here June 28th to July 3rd – Celebrate the Fourth on the Third," *Artesia Pecos Valley News*, 27 May 1915, p. 4.

⁵ Ibid.

Popular also in Carlsbad and Roswell, the Carnival presented the following attractions:

a Wild West performance, Statue turning to life show, Circus side show, Animal pit show, Musical Comedy Company... the 'Giggler,' Snake show, having five hundred snakes from the Texas snake farm, and the original Bill Kersands Minstrel Shows, which has played all over the United States and Europe.⁶

The "negro minstrel show" and the Wild West performances were often touted as being the highlights. In 1915, Billy Kersands was said to be seventy-two years of age, "retaining all of the old time fun and comedy."⁷ It is not known whether Black residents were in attendance, or what their reactions to the performances were.

In 1916, the Eddy County Fair Committed endeavored to bring "Balloon Phillips," a "negro aeronaut" who had apparently created a sensation the previous season. A local reporter opined that Phillips, "on account of his color" had to be "exceptionally daring and spectacular" in order to win recognition.⁸

The Virginia Minstrels, "a troop of negro players," arrived in Artesia in 1915. Several of the actors were also associated with the Alabama Minstrels, including "the Peewees" and "the big darky who smoked half a dozen cigars at one time."⁹ Similar traveling performances became annual events, drawing large crowds from Artesia and the surrounding vicinity.

Centennial Celebration, Alfalfa Festivals

Additional research into local celebrations as they relate to Artesia's Black experience is warranted.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Carnival Making Good," *Artesia Pecos Valley News*, 24 June 1915, p. 3.

⁸ "Special Attraction for the Eddy County Fair," *The Carlsbad Current*, 8 September 1916, p. 1.

⁹ "Virginia Minstrels Coming," *Artesia Pecos Valley News*, 22 April 1915, p. 2.

Alliances, Organizations and Inspirations

Elks

The Carlsbad Lodge 1558 sponsored the first Artesia Lodge. Chartered on 17 July 1947, membership reached 255 by 1955.¹ Initially not welcomed by the Elks fraternity, Blacks formed their own chapters in some New Mexico locales. Nationally, the Elks formally accepted African American memberships beginning in 1971.

Prince Hall Masons

Also rejected by the Masons, African Americans instituted their own Prince Hall Masons organizations. The installation of re-elected officers of the Pilgrim Rest Chapter No. 11, OES of Prince Hall Grand Chapter, New Mexico Masonry Jurisdiction, was held Friday night in Artesia's Bethel Baptist dining room:

Officers for 1954, re-elected Tuesday night, were Rev. J. H. Horton, grand patron; Mrs. J. H. Horton, grand secretary; Mrs. M. Polk, worthy matron; Mrs. Flora Mosely, associate matron; Mrs. A. J. Brown, secretary; and Mrs. Willie Forrest, treasurer.²

Churches

Bethel Baptist Church, 609 N 7th Street, Artesia, NM 88210.

News Sources

The following is a list of known Black newspapers that have been digitized and are available online. This list is by no means exhaustive, and does not include magazines or journals:

The Black Dispatch
The Langston City Herald
The Muskogee Cimeter
The Muskogee Lantern
The Oklahoma Guide
The Oklahoma Safeguard
The Peoples Elevator

¹ Emerson Brownie, "Here is Story of 16 Elks Lodges in New Mexico: Lordsburg Lodge is First with Full Information," *Roswell Daily Record*, 12 May 1955, p. 2.

² "Installation," *Roswell Daily Record*, 20 December 1953, p. 13.

The Taborian Monitor
The Tulsa Star
The Weekly Progress
The Western World
The Wewoka and Lima Courier

Additional research is required to compare coverage between these newspapers and the local news presented in the nine study cities. A detailed comparison of topics discussed, the different ways in which the Black experience was presented, celebrated, ignored or ridiculed will offer fresh insights into decades of American race relations.

Civil Rights and Desegregation

Segregation was practiced in Artesia's schools in grades one through six. Segregation was never practiced at the junior or senior high schools. In July 1954, Artesia's city school board officially desegregated the elementary school. The board designated that the city's only "Negro school," Carver Elementary School, would henceforth be a part of the Roselawn School District, calling it the 'Roselawn Annex.' Roselawn was the all-White elementary school located in the same school zone as the Carver school.¹

The board also declared that two Black teachers, formerly with the Carver Elementary School, would be "assigned to the best advantage of the district." Local reporting documented that the discussions regarding desegregation lasted more than an hour, and that the President of the Artesia Negro Civic League, Mrs. Ruby Young, and two League members, Albert Young and the Rev. J. H. Horton, were in attendance.² The minister expressed confidence overall in current and future school board actions, however, he expressly requested that all children be allowed to "attend school in the particular district they lived," rather than bypassing certain schools.³

In a curious circumstance that may warrant further attention, the President of the Artesia Negro Civic League, Ruby Young, then proceeded to disclaim "any connection of the Artesia Negro Civic League with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."⁴ Young praised the work of the NAACP, but said "the people whom she represented had full confidence" that the "segregation problem would be handled in the manner they wanted it done."⁵ She said there was a representative of NAACP in Artesia, but that there was "no contact

¹ "Segregation End in Artesia Schools Presents Problems," *Roswell (New Mexico) Daily Record*, 15 July 1954, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

with her group.”⁶ Earlier in the summer, the NAACP President LaGrone had threatened to petition Artesia’s parents in order to hasten an end to segregation in the schools statewide. It may be that Artesia’s Negro Civic League felt that this tactic was too controversial, or perhaps they wanted the school board to act on its own without outside influence. Young concluded her remarks by stating that she was “extremely well pleased” with the actions of the board, and said, “It was just what we expected them to do.”⁷

Biographies Artesia IN PROGRESS

Biographies

Bernta Smith-Payne, Ruth Loomis Skeen, Chisum Family

Oral histories

Lucille Rowland Wolfe

Living histories

George Mullen, Geni Flores

⁶ “Segregation End in Artesia Schools Presents Problems,” *Roswell (New Mexico) Daily Record*, 15 July 1954, p. 2.

⁷ Ibid. For additional reporting on the school board’s de-segregation discussions, please see the following newspaper articles: The Associated Press (AP), “Three N. M. Cities Taking Negroes in Public Schools,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 9 July 1954, p. 33; “Seek Segregation End,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 11 July 1954, p. 7; “Negro Parents in Carlsbad to File Petition: To Seek ‘Full De-Segregation’ in School System,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 9 July 1954, p. 1; “Artesia School Board Plans Talk Monday on Segregation,” *Albuquerque Tribune*, 8 July 1954, p. 18; and “Artesia Schools End Segregation,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 14 July 1954, p. 19.

SELECTED IMAGES

ARTESIA, NM



Figure 61. Alfalfa Day

Alfalfa Day (Artesia, NM)

Repository: New Mexico State University Library, Rio Grande Historical Collections

Date: 1909 [verify]

Identifier: Ms02230217

Collection: Thomas K. Todsén Photographs, Collection No. Ms 0223



Figure 62. Alfalfa Festival parade

Street parade during Alfalfa Festival (Artesia, NM)

An analysis of the original lantern slide may reveal whether or not Artesia's Black residents participated in the Alfalfa Festival.

Repository: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum (Santa Fe)

Negative Number: 013721

Lantern Slide Number: LS.0078

Date: 1914 [verify]

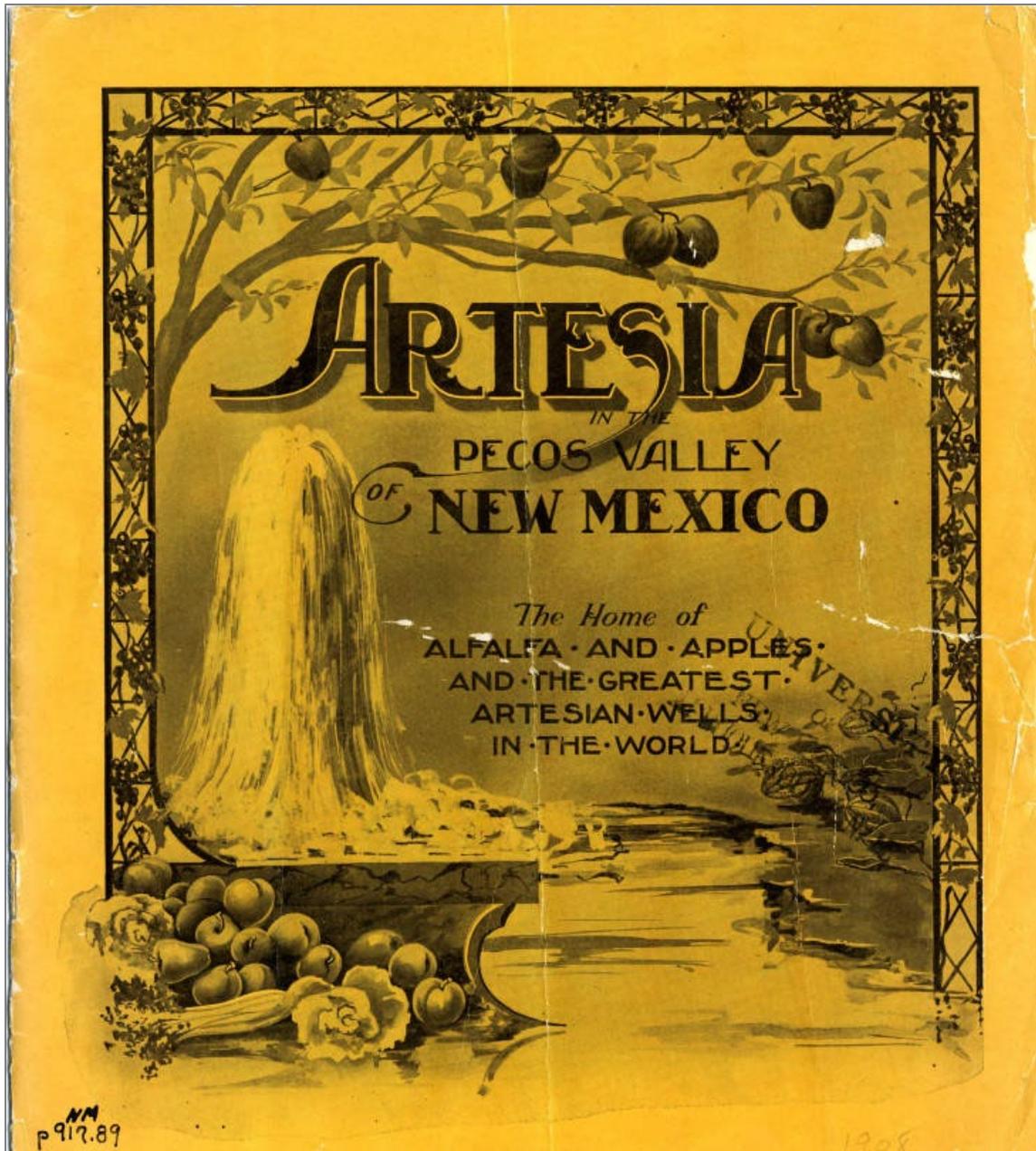


Figure 63. Promotional brochure Artesia

Artesia promotional brochure, produced by the *Artesia Advocate*
Home of Alfalfa and Apples and the Greatest Artesian Wells in the World

Repository: Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, MSS 115 BC, Box 1, Folder 8
Date: c1908. Available on-line at: rmoa.unm.edu/docviewer.php?docId=nmu1mss115bc.



Figure 64. Demeaning comic strip

“In Darktown, His Opinion, A Fool, Her Experience, Sure Enough”
 Demeaning caricatures were part of a relentless, daily barrage in print.

Source: *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 15 November 1912, p. 5.

NEGRO MINSTREL

Cottoowood's Cute Careless Charcters

Will positively appear at a Grand Re-
vival of the Minstrel Art the night of

Friday, November 19th

At Lower Cottonwood Schoolhouse

New songs, new jokes, new dancing
stunts. See the negro from Africa.
Hear the warbling coon from New
Orleans. You must not miss it.

Big Box Supper

After the show comes a box supper
and all women, girls and old maids
are requested to bring well-filled
boxes. We will be looking for you.

Admission 10c and 15c

Literary and Boys Corn Club

Figure 65. Advertisement 'Negro Minstrel'

"Negro Minstrel...See the negro from Africa. Hear the warbling coon from New Orleans..."

Source: *Artesia Pecos Valley News*, 11 November 1915, p. 3.



Figure 66. Santa Fe railroad depot

Santa Fe Railroad depot (Artesia, NM)

The railroad provided precious job opportunities for African Americans and other minorities.

Repository: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum (Santa Fe)

Negative Number: HP.2014.06.22

Date: c1925



Figure 67. Old Artesia General Hospital

The Old Artesia General Hospital was built in 1939.

It is not known whether the hospital served all residents regardless of color.

Source: Available on-line artesianews.com/1343557/and-the-walls-came-tumbling-down-2.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH INDICATES THAT HISTORICALLY ARTESIA'S BLACK COMMUNITY WAS CENTERED NORTH OF HIGHWAY 82 AND EAST OF ROSWELL HIGHWAY/SR357.

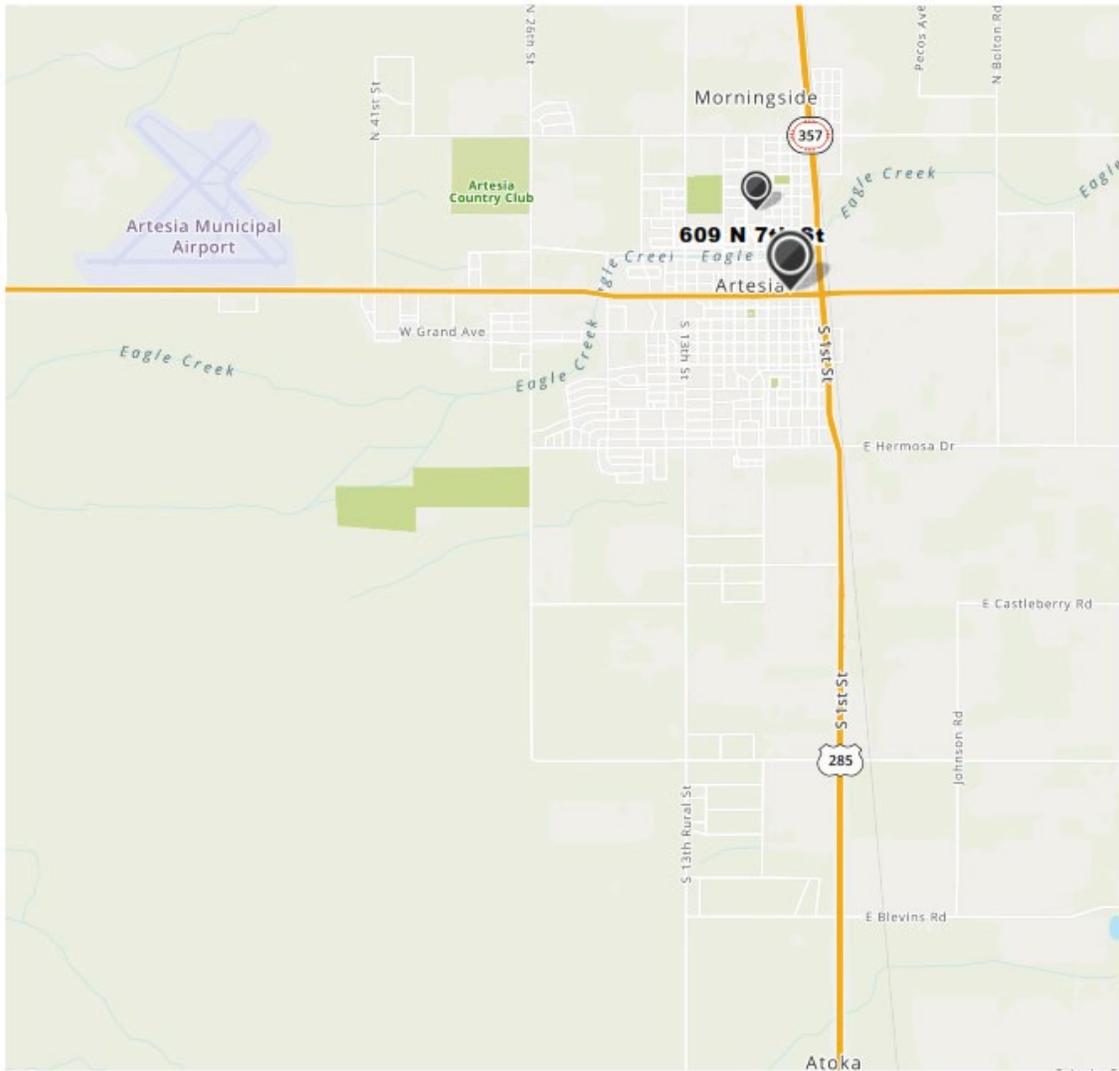


Figure 68. Historically Black neighborhood Artesia

Suggestions for Additional Research Artesia

Which pre-World War II businesses were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks?

What boundaries (ex. streets, geographical features, railroad tracks) historically defined the Black community neighborhood?

Was there a known Ku Klux Klan presence in or around Artesia?

In addition to the organizations and alliances already mentioned, what additional groups existed to instill racial equality and fair practices?

Known as a stopping point, were Artesia's tourist camps segregated?

What are the relationships between the National Register sites and the Black experience?

What are the relationships between the Works Projects Administration (WPA) sites and the Black experience?

Was there a relationship historically between the POW internment camp and Artesia's Black residents?

How critical were the Black churches to the daily lives of Black residents? Were services and events inter-racial?

Before state and federal civil rights legislation was passed, which White-owned dining and hotel establishments employed Blacks? Welcomed Blacks?

Which individuals, regardless of skin color, were largely credited with bringing about educational and social integration?

What were some of the successful civil rights strategies employed? A strong NAACP presence? Sit-ins? Boycotts? Demonstrations?

Were there any *Negro Motorist Green Book* sites in Artesia or the surrounding vicinity?

Where were the annual Juneteenth celebrations generally held and how was the Juneteenth tradition commemorated?

Since the municipal swimming pool welcomed Whites only, was there any type of city recreational facility constructed for Artesia's minorities?

Who is buried in the Black section of the (then) segregated Woodlawn Cemetery?

CARLSBAD



Figure 69. Map of New Mexico highlighting the city of Carlsbad

CARLSBAD

A few years before establishing Alamogordo as a railroad company town, the Eddy brothers also created the county and town of Eddy (modern day Carlsbad) in the New Mexico Territory in 1888. In a curious departure from typical Western frontier custom, the town outlawed the sale of alcohol. “Shortly thereafter a new town sprung up on the edge of Eddy, called Phenix, which dealt almost exclusively with the sale of spirits.”¹

An historian writing in 1910 described Carlsbad as being “one of the *least native* parts of the new state.”² By that he meant that the settlers attracted by the promise of irrigation and connected by railroads back East were predominantly Anglo. Absent were the Puebloan and Spanish architectural styles. Cotton dominated the fields instead of chiles. English was the dominant language, and the neighborhoods were segregated by skin color.

Writing in 1954 researchers Williams and Ryan observed that Carlsbad was “one of the older towns in this section of New Mexico, and its established character is evident from the type of residential neighborhoods, and from the appearance of its business district.

It is heavily dependent on potash mining as well as on the tourist trade from those who come to look at the famous caverns near-by. Although it has grown in the past decade, this growth has been at a slower pace than in some of the neighboring towns, and the new residents have been absorbed into the life of the community with little change in the usual patterns of community life.³

¹ Weller, Jeffrey A., *Alamogordo Daily News* guest columnist, available on-line at alamogordonews.com/story/news/local/community/2017/10/07/new-beginnings-amongst-sage/743524001.

² Hinton, Arthur R., “New Mexico – A New State,” in *The West Coast Magazine* edited by John S. McGroarty (Las Angeles: Grafton Publishing Company, 1910), p. 180. Emphasis added.

³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13.

Non-Circulating History Books

Once the Carlsbad libraries re-open to the public, the following books will be consulted:

1. Stanley, F. *The Carlsbad, New Mexico Story*. NMSU microform (1963).
2. Ryan, Flora M., Carlsbad Public Library, *History of Carlsbad, New Mexico* (1977).
3. Lewis, Charles William. *Early Settlers in Carlsbad, New Mexico, and Vicinity* (1976?)
4. Myers, Lee C. *The Pearl of the Pecos: The Story of the Establishment of Eddy, New Mexico and Irrigation on the lower Pecos River of New Mexico* (1970).
5. Marshall, Terry and Gary Nickelson. *Carlsbad* (1998).
6. Howard, Jed. Phenix and the Wolf: The Saloon Battles of Eddy and the Dave Kemp Saga – A Summary of the Contemporary Newspaper Accounts, Southeastern New Mexico Historical Society (1999).
7. *Southeastern New Mexico Historical Society of Carlsbad Photographs, 1891-1986*. RGHC.
8. *Carlsbad Army Air Field: Carlsbad, New Mexico* (1942-1945). Yearbook. OCLC 806474243.
9. *Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, Rules, Officers and Members: The Riverside Country Club, Carlsbad, New Mexico* 1948). OCLC 915082935.
10. Myer Printing Company. *This is Carlsbad: 'The Cavern City,' – New Mexico Golden Anniversary, 1912-1962* (1962).
11. Mrs. Tracy Oral History Interview (c1955). Audio cassette. OCLC 43364045.
12. Perrigo, Lynn Irwin. *Oasis on the Pecos: The Town of Eddy and Early Carlsbad* (1991). OCLC 28885230.
13. Oral History Interview with Olen Bates (9 October 1993). Civilian Conservation Corps Oral History Project, University of North Texas. Bates worked at a camp in Carlsbad, NM. OCLC 191046693.
14. Eddy County News, *Carlsbad's Golden Year of Progress: 1889 – 1939* (1939). OCLC 811615106.
15. Pitcaithley, Al S. Papers, 1903 – 1976. Three scrapbooks. Tent shows. OCLC 26067793.

Alliances, Organizations, Fraternal Orders

Elks

With membership at 772 in 1955, Carlsbad Lodge 1558 was founded 2 July 1929.¹

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity

While most local coverage regarding race relations trended toward the parochial or the mundane, the following local news item was a rare take on a Black perspective set against a national backdrop:

Melba Pattillo, 16, one of nine Negroes who integrated Central High school in Little Rock under the protection of paratroopers' bayonets, said today that she and the others have been barred from white official and extra-curricula[r] activities. 'We don't want to mix that way,' she said. 'We just want to get a good education.' She came to Dallas Sunday to accept on behalf of the nine Negroes a certificate from Phi Beta Sigma fraternity, a national honorary [and] educational organization... The certificate honors Melba and the other eight Negroes for being integration pioneers.²

Melba told the reporter she did not know who gave the order to bar Black students from extra-curricular activities. She also said that, without a ban, she would have wanted to serve on the student council. Concluding wistfully, Melba offered, "Things are bound to be better someday."³

Scarcity of Supportive Agencies

Whereas most of New Mexico's southeastern towns had developed some sort of Black-centered alliances, whether they be neighborhood associations, youth groups, fraternal organizations, chapters of national entities, or social societies, "there were no strong intergroup agencies in Carlsbad" when Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan conducted their research there in 1954. There was neither a YWCA nor a YMCA. A small chapter of the NAACP was nearly inactive, as was the Anti-Defamation League.⁴

¹ Emerson Brownie, "Here is Story of 16 Elks Lodges in New Mexico: Lordsburg Lodge is First With Full Information," *Roswell Daily Record*, 12 May 1955, p. 2.

² "Negress Accepts Sorority Award," *Clovis News Journal*, 30 December 1957, p. 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

Census Records Carlsbad

In 1919, the school census for the Carlsbad district tallied 665 Whites, 201 'Spanish-Americans,' and six Black students.⁵ The *Carlsbad Current* periodically dished up population statistics that not too subtly celebrated the dominance of the Anglo culture over all others. In 1908, *The Carlsbad Current* reported that New Mexico's population exceeded 400,000 "of whom more than fifty per cent are of Anglo-Saxon origin, Teutonic or Celtic blood."⁶

The same article also posted the following observations regarding New Mexico's current population:

There are many Italians in the cities, and in the coal-mining camps many negroes and even Japanese are given employment, and of late there has been an influx of Polish and Slovak blood. It must be remembered that the inhabitants classed as of the Spanish origin are practically all natives of the United States and more or less mixed blood, and, excepting the older generations, speak fluently the English language.⁷

The local mining and potash industries brought together more divergent nationalities than did farming or ranching, which remained predominantly Anglo.

By 1954, researchers Williams and Ryan reported that Carlsbad's population was estimated "at 26,000, of whom about 70 per cent were thought to be Anglo-Americans, 25 per cent Spanish-Americans, and 5 per cent Negroes." They noted that most of the Spanish-Americans were fairly recent immigrants from Mexico and "were not part of the older, more established Latin culture of the state."⁸

⁵ "Carlsbad Public Schools Start – Carlsbad Schools Start in Promising Manner, Monday Morning, with Good Interest and Good Attendance," *The Carlsbad Current*, 5 September 1919, p. 1.

⁶ "New Mexico News Summary – Wealth and Population," *The Carlsbad Current*, 6 March 1908, p. 4.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

Black Employment Opportunities

It is not known yet which of these businesses operating in 1944-45 were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks:

Mandell's, Schran's, Myrtice's, Riley Brothers, Dixie Courts, Crestview Courts, Wertheim Furniture Company, Burch Department Store, Bryant Link Company, The Workingman's Store, The United Inc., Sprouse Reitz Company, Inc., Kay's Dress Shop, Mrs. J. F. Flowers, The Fashion Bar, Harris Food Stores, Reed B. Loflin, Aldridge Vogue Shop, Ann's Shop, La Caverna Steam Laundry, Clyde Kelly/Washeteria, Bryan Cash Grocery, Bryan's Drive-in, Bond Ice Company, White Transfer and Storage, Lillian Bailey/Bailey Laundry, Potash Company of America, Tourist Courts, C. G. Morrison and Company, T. C. Horne and Sons/Horne Food Stores, Mac's Men's Shop, Sporing's Children's Shop, De Luxe Cleaners/Carlsbad Steam Laundry, CBS Builders Supply Company, Carlsbad Cement Pro Company, Arnold Transfer and Storage, Mr. Colloway/Carlsbad Steam Laundry, F. J. Marshaw/Williamson Laundry, Emma Biondic/Helpy Selfy Laundry, Leo Nora Walker/Green Heights Laundry, and the De Luxe Café.¹

L. Raynolds [?], nicknamed "Deacon Jones" was born in 1897 in Charleston, AR. He was the youngest of 15 children, 7 boys and 8 girls. His parents were both slaves. He worked as a child at a packing house, and later did roadwork in Oklahoma. He came to Carlsbad with a friend in 1929 "looking for a better place to live." His friend had visited Carlsbad before. When he arrived, Carlsbad was a small town with mesquite scrub everywhere. There were no cars -- "If you owned a horse, you were a big shot!" He remembers that the cowboys would come to town. Most of them would hitch their horses outside, but he recalls several who rode their horses right into the bar or the barbershop. At some point the "T-Models" arrived, but it would be many years before most townspeople owned automobiles. He helped plant a large pecan orchard in 1932. A friend of his, Tate Miller, was a fiddler, and Jones played the guitar. They would get paid to play for the cowboys, nearly all of whom would tip them a dollar thrown into a hat. They could make \$100 in a night! Jones observed that although there was a soup line in Carlsbad during the Depression, he was never in it because he "had a racket – I was a musician!" In those days, Jones remarked that "You had to take whatever job you could get." In addition to road work and farming, Jones was a theater janitor and a bartender. Although he stuck with it, he said it was the worst job he had ever had in his life. "I saw more fights..." and once he saw a female bartender get shot in the mouth. He would work from 7:00 am until 8:30 pm for \$1.25 per day. He stopped drinking because "bartending ruined drinking for me. I got fed up with it."²

¹ National Archives Catalog, U. S. National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Identifier: 83223551 (Date 1944 – 1945).

² Jones, "Deacon." Oral history interview. Available on-line at: drive.google.com/file/d/1ZafBlfknquyZTHxk_b0dzA9giGsB3VKV/view?usp=sharing. Courtesy of Samantha Villa, Library Director, New Mexico State University (Carlsbad).

William "Bill" Huff was born 19 July 1897 in Texas. While Huff was visiting Carlsbad, he was offered a job at the Gateway Motor Garage, where he ended up staying for 27-1/2 years. Instead of retiring, he served as the skipper for the George Washington riverboat at Lake Carlsbad. When he arrived in 1944 as a young Black man from the small Texas town of Kaufman, he remembers that downtown Carlsbad was all lit up at night:

It looked like heaven to me. The neon lights, the street lights... so many folks walking every night... the picture shows were open, the cafés were open, everything was open at night. The people were like flies downtown there were so many of us crowding the streets.³

He went back to Texas to quit his job there, where he had worked for \$12 a week, for 28 years, with never a raise, and no vacations. He worked for one more week there without pay to settle a \$12 debt. When Huff received his first weekly pay in Carlsbad, he checked with the bookkeeper to make sure there had not been a mistake. The \$55 check was the most money he had ever held in his hands at one time up until that moment. "I never knew there was so much money in the world until I came here!" Huff exclaimed.

In 1954, researchers Williams and Ryan observed that Blacks were employed only as unskilled labor in the mines and in the construction industries. "Except for the school teachers and a few ministers, there were no professionally employed Negroes in the town, and very few Negroes held jobs which could be called skilled."⁴ They also noted that no African Americans were employed by the city itself. Carlsbad hired its first Black police officer in 1970.

Neighborhoods Carlsbad

From the town's beginnings, a small contingency of Blacks lived on the east side of the river and worked in menial jobs such as dish washers or hotel porters. The few Blacks in town were "treated as a joke"⁵ according to one observer. Interestingly, while the town was segregated,

³ Huff, Bill. Oral history interview. Available on-line at: drive.google.com/file/d/1ybH50DO2aY-MtEcTerO6PS5iladr_edP/view?usp=sharing. Courtesy of Samantha Villa, Library Director, New Mexico State University (Carlsbad).

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁵ Tom Sheridan in *The Bitter River: A Brief Historical Survey of the Middle Pecos River Basin* (Boulder: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1975). Quoted in Bogener, Stephen Dean. "Ditches Across the Desert: Irrigation Along New Mexico's Pecos River," *Ph. D. Dissertation*, (Texas Tech University: December 1997), p. 223.

the schools at first were not. The Eddy school had 181 pupils in 1891, including twenty Mexicans and several Blacks.⁶

Deacon Jones, who has resided in Carlsbad since he arrived in 1929, told the interviewer that there were not too many Blacks back then. "Lots of Mexicans, but not too many Blacks," he recalled. He said that most lived in the "colored settlement" near the lumberyard. He said they lived there until a flood wiped the neighborhood out. He believes this may have happened in the 1940s.⁷

Longtime resident Bill Huff recalls that there was a White preacher who helped improve the Black neighborhood that he lived in beginning in 1944. For decades, Black residents did not have access to running water, electricity, paved roads, garbage collection or sewage. The roads would become impassable during rain events. Residents hauled water by the barrelful, used lanterns, and constructed outhouses. During an interview in 1982, Huff still remembered the foul odor.

By the time that Williams and Ryan arrived in Carlsbad in 1954, they recorded that the "Negro" dwellings were concentrated in the southern part of the town:

Most were south of the canal, a traditional boundary line, although some lived in a neighborhood adjacent to a white elementary school north of the canal... Spanish-Americans were not confined to any one neighborhood, but they tended to concentrate in the same residential areas with the Negroes. The Negro area also housed a number of white families in a veterans' housing project.⁸

Discrimination, Persecution, Prejudice

Black Travelers Banned

During Jim Crow, Carlsbad resident Bill Huff remembers that "Black folks had to go through here... they couldn't stay. They could stay in Hobbs, but they couldn't stay here -- they had to go all the way to El Paso." His employer, Jim Dirk, who was White, loaned Huff the money to fix up five units which he and his wife then rented to Black travelers as overnight accommodations. Later, they built a motel, and owned "the first Negro grocery store" in a

⁶ Bogener, Stephen Dean. "Ditches Across the Desert: Irrigation Along New Mexico's Pecos River," *Ph. D. Dissertation*, (Texas Tech University: December 1997), p. 221.

⁷ Jones, "Deacon." Oral history interview. Available on-line at: drive.google.com/file/d/1ZafBlfknquyZTHxk_b0dzA9giGsB3VKV/view?usp=sharing. Courtesy of Samantha Villa, Library Director, New Mexico State University (Carlsbad).

⁸ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

nearby town. His wife taught kindergartners for “Spanish, Negro, and White children.” For every venture, he was able to borrow money from his employer. “I paid every nickel I owed him back,” Huff proudly recalls.¹

Minstrel Shows

Social clubs in and around Carlsbad often hosted fundraisers, and for decades these took the form of White people pretending to be Black:

The minstrels Tuesday night under the auspices of the Woman’s Club for the benefit of the library building were a complete success, the big room in the corner of Tansill block being filled completely, and it is reported the affair netted about \$200 for the library building. The entertainment was interesting from the curtain’s rise to the last scene on the program, and of the players it would be impossible to say which excelled as a negro, though many were of the opinion Fitzhugh Marshall was the most natural, while Dick Thorne was the funniest.²

Front-page escapades featuring Black residents were often tawdry or violent in nature, while similar articles involving White individuals tended to be buried several pages later:

It appears that Jed Clark, a cowboy working for the Block cattle company got into a dispute with the negro cook and the negro gave Clark some ‘sass’ and about the same time went for a gun which he was carrying in his belt, but Clark was too quick and got his gun first and proceeded to fill a saucy ‘coon’ full of lead. Five shots were fired at the negro, two of them taking effect, one hitting him on the left side and coming out in the chest, another hit the negro in the wrist and broke the wrist bones badly and came out at the thumb... at last reports he was doing as well as might be expected.³

Stories such as the one headlined “The Nigger Shooter” demonstrate how frequently and casually the “N” word was used as part of the daily news banter:

The nigger-shooter season is on. Like the top-season, the marble-season, the kite-season and every other season of boyhood the nigger-shooter season will eventually run its course and be laid away until next time. But meanwhile accidents occur which are not

¹ Huff, Bill. Oral history interview. Available on-line at: drive.google.com/file/d/1ybH5ODO2aY-MtEcTerO6PS5iladr_edP/view?usp=sharing. Courtesy of Samantha Villa, Library Director, New Mexico State University (Carlsbad).

² “Local News,” *The Carlsbad Current* and *New Mexico Sun*, 5 June 1908, p. 11.

³ “Territorial,” *The Carlsbad Current*, 8 September 1900, p. 1.

so easily forgotten, for all of the inventions brought forward to amuse the youth of our country the nigger-shooter is one of the most dangerous. Only last week a most deplorable accident occurred in Carlsbad. A seven-year-old boy accidentally shot his father in the eye with a nigger-shooter, destroying the sight in that eye.⁴

‘Knows His Place’

Thoughtless and prejudicial language was a daily occurrence in the local media. Journalists reinforced the bigoted notion that Black people should “know their place,” and should refrain from complaining about mistreatments:

The Methodist church was filled to overflowing last Monday... The chairs on the platform were reserved for the colored people and nearly every one of that race was present who lived in or near Carlsbad... [Bishop Phillips] has a fine delivery, a good enunciation and delivered his sermon without any straining after-effect, in a quiet manner, utterly at variance with many preconceived notions of Negro oratory... *Bishop Phillips is one of the now very few old time negroes who was born in slavery and who knows his place* and loves members of the white race who are his friends and had not a word to say against the treatment he received at the hands of his Southern master.⁵

One report stated baldly that New Mexico’s citizenship was superior to states such as Mississippi, Nevada, or “in fact any of the states *with much negro or foreign population.*”⁶

Segregated Public Spaces

Deacon Jones, a longtime resident since 1929, reflected that strict segregation was a way of life from the moment he arrived. “I couldn’t go in a café through the front door... Mexicans neither.” Blacks would go in and out of the back doors of most businesses, if they were allowed in at all. “It was rough,” said Jones. There were some ‘colored’ people who owned clubs and cafés on Main Street. He remembers that one restaurant had a Victrola, and that there was also at least one Black-owned pool hall. The Spanish-speakers would frequent the Black bars.¹

⁴ “The Nigger Shooter,” *Artesia Pecos Valley New*, 24 June 1915, p. 2.

⁵ “Negro Preaching at Methodist Church,” *The Carlsbad Current*, 25 March 1921, p. 1. Emphasis added.

⁶ “Statehood Again,” *The Carlsbad Current*, 14 January 1910, p. 2. Emphasis added.

¹ Jones, “Deacon.” Oral history interview. Available on-line at:

drive.google.com/file/d/1ZafBlfknquyZTHxk_b0dzA9giGsB3VKV/view?usp=sharing. Courtesy of Samantha Villa, Library Director, New Mexico State University (Carlsbad).

A Texas transplant, and a Carlsbad resident since 1944, Bill Huff's remembrances during a 1982 oral history interview capture the indignities of living under Jim Crow, but also the small victories that were occasionally wrought:

The town was segregated back then. At the picture shows, we had to sit upstairs. We called that the 'buzzard's roost' back in Texas. The schools were segregated. The restaurants were segregated... We had to eat in the kitchen. Now the White people thought they was doing us bad, but we could eat as much as we wanted and since we were in the kitchen we didn't have to pay extra! I was kinda sorry when after Dr. King's marches and all we ate in the front and then we had to pay for extras!

While remembering that "the Spanish people were segregated, too," Huff believes that things are better now:

You can live in the White neighborhoods, plus you can buy anything you want to if you have the money. You can go to White churches...The whole country is much better than when I first came here.²

Ten years after Bill Huff's arrival, sociologists Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan provide the following snapshot of a Jim Crow Carlsbad in 1954:

Public facilities were open to Spanish-Americans with no discrimination but most were prohibited for the Negroes. Some hotels, motels, and restaurants would serve Negroes if they were accompanied by white patrons or were members of sports teams, but the usual pattern was to refuse service or to serve individual Negroes in cars at the drive-in restaurants. There was no swimming pool, the river being the usual place for aquatic sports. By custom the Negroes used the east side of the river, the rest of the community the west.³

² Huff, Bill. Oral history interview. Available on-line at: drive.google.com/file/d/1ybH50DO2aY-MtEcTerO6PS5iladr_edP/view?usp=sharing. Courtesy of Samantha Villa, Library Director, New Mexico State University (Carlsbad).

³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

Father Divine

While African American residents and visitors were generally excluded from hotels and restaurants, the following anecdote illustrates how prominent Blacks were (or were not) accommodated. Father Divine, also known as the Reverend M. J. Divine, was an African-American spiritual leader from about 1907, until his death in 1965. His full self-given name was Reverend Major Jealous Divine, and he was also known as 'The Messenger.' Due to his ideology, many considered him to be a cult leader. During one of his sojourns through New Mexico, Father Divine and his entourage sought out the best burger cafe in Carlsbad.

After being told that he would need to leave, or be served in the kitchen, Divine insisted on being served out front. So as to not offend their White patrons, the restaurant owners literally screened him from view:

Carlsbad, like all of the rest of the Pecos valley, is on the edge of the deep south, and has always drawn the color line. On that account, 'Father Divine,' the Harlem negro who has separated thousands of his people from their money under a degree of fanaticism with an apparent religious base, came pretty near having to eat hamburgers from a wayside stand the other day.

The Divine came to see the caverns. He was traveling in a car about the size of a box car with a black chauffeur and a remuda of three white women, who claimed him as their 'spiritual advisor.' This fantastic group selected one of the best cafes in town, *and at first were told to get out or back to the kitchen. That ruffled the dignity of Divine, and his crew and himself were finally fed at one of the back booths, with a screen thrown about it.* Whereat the Divine was greatly pleased and left his 'blessing' scrawled on the back of a menu card.⁴

The article editorialized by opining that "the decent colored people have the same feeling of revulsion that the white people do." Father Divine, the journalist continued, "is one of those negroes who makes it harder for those black people who are carrying on decently and with the respect of everybody, themselves included."⁵

In a blurb that hardly seems newsworthy, *The Carlsbad Current* reported that one Henry Jones returned to Carlsbad from Lordsburg after working with a surveyor named B. A. Nymeyer. Apparently, Nymeyer relied upon a Black cook. "Henry objected to eating the grub cooked by a negro, hence his return to the Pecos Valley."⁶

⁴ "'Father Divine' Fed," *Alamogordo News*, 4 April 1940, p. 3. Emphasis added.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Local News," *The Carlsbad Current and New Mexico Sun*, 24 July 1908, p. 11.

Oral history interviewee Francis Beeman grew up in and around Carlsbad. He was a young adult during the mid-1940s. He recalls that “discrimination was very prevalent” in those days:

The ‘blacks’ and Hispanics were definitely second-class citizens as far as the ‘whites’ were concerned,” said Beeman, “and they had a lot of work to pull themselves out... Yes, there was discrimination and those people were all looked down on as second-rate citizens... You know, they were in a situation they couldn’t get out of but they did the best that they could, and most of them were very smart and very talented. They were just being held down by discrimination.⁷

Williams and Ryan learned from their informants in 1954 that “there was considerable prejudice on the part of the Anglo-Americans toward both the Spanish-Americans and the Negroes, but that this prejudice was diffuse and more apparent in the lack of communication between the groups than in any overt tension between them.”⁸ They also recorded that relationships between the three groups in their own neighborhood were good.

Segregated Cemetery

At least one oral history suggests that Blacks were buried in a southeast corner at the back of Carlsbad’s oldest cemetery. Those of Spanish descent were also interred in the segregated section. In 1947 or 1948, the West Funeral home burned down, destroying all of the burial records in the process. Unless the graves were marked with a headstone (which many were not) there is no way of knowing who is buried where now.⁹

⁷ New Mexico Rural Heritage Oral History Project, funded by the New Mexico Humanities Council, the Loomis Foundation, and the Southwest and Border Cultures Institute at New Mexico State University (Las Cruces). Francis Beeman was interviewed by Kelly Jenks on 2 August 2018. The audio file is archived at the Farm and Ranch Museum (Las Cruces, NM).

⁸ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁹ Oral history. c1987. Available on line: drive.google.com/file/d/1migmgT6t1LR_IBM1gpcpkX9-w3gVusk/view?usp=sharing.

Healthcare Issues

Tuberculosis

In 1922, *The Carlsbad Current* reported on tuberculosis, pondering that the Black population was “especially susceptible.” The author noted that the close domestic/work relationships between Whites and Blacks meant that neither was safe from the scourge:

The death rate from tuberculosis is 14.2% higher in the South than in the Nation as a whole. One reason for the exceedingly high death rate in the South is the great prevalence of the plague among the negroes who are especially susceptible to tuberculosis, the death rate among them being three and one-half times that among the whites. But inasmuch as the negroes will doubtless continue to be intimately associated with the whites in domestic and other work in the future, the whites will never be safe from infection until the negroes, as well as the whites, have been freed from the plague.¹

Entertainment

Juneteenth

The following article written in 1928 captures the excitement in anticipation of that year’s Juneteenth celebration. It was to be a momentous occasion, expected to attract the “colored population of the whole valley.” According to the article:

The colored people of the Pecos valley are going to stage a distinct novelty in the celebration of their Independence Day, the 19th of June this year. Wayman Gray... has arranged a program to be staged there that will not have a dull minute in it. It will center around a visit to the Carlsbad caverns, by special arrangement with Supervisor Boles, a big barbecue, ball game, and at night a boxing tournament... followed by a snappy dance and cake walk. Especial and respectful attention will be paid to white visitors at these events, and it is expected that the colored population of the whole valley will be there.¹

Drive-in Movie Theatre

¹ “Southern Baptists Wage Vigorous Warfare Against Tuberculosis in This Section,” *The Carlsbad Current*, 6 January 1922, p. 7.

¹ “Colored Folks Will Celebrate June 19,” *roswell-daily-record-jun-15-1928-p-8*.

The Fiesta Drive-In originally opened in August 1948, with a single screen and a capacity for 450 cars. The massive original screen tower had a mural of a Mexican man and woman dancing, and was animated with neon lighting. Above the mural was the theater's name in Streamline-style lettering. The theatre was built by an Oklahoma theatre-owner named Carl Burton and was sold to Artesian Ray Bartlett shortly before it opened. By 1955 it was operated by Frontier Theatres.² Drive-in theaters often operated a separate rear entrance for Black patrons.

Theatres

The Lyric theater was renovated in 1910. As part of the extensive remodeling, the management decided to create separate seating for Anglos, Hispanos, and African Americans:

The present seating capacity is now slightly over four hundred. It is the intention of the managers to *arrange a gallery in the rear which will be set apart for the exclusive use of negroes [on] the one side and for their Mexican patronage on the other.*³

Although this remains to be verified, it appears that prior to 1910, the Lyric movie patrons were allowed to sit anywhere they desired.

Sports

The Carlsbad Blues, "the negro baseball champions of that city," defeated the Roswell Giants on July 1920 at Thorne Park on East Second Street by a score of 9 to 4.⁴ A resident of Carlsbad since 1929, Deacon Jones remembered with fondness that the Spanish and the Blacks played a lot of baseball together. They played in Carlsbad, and traveled to Artesia, Hobbs, and towns in Texas. They occasionally played Anglo teams. Even a fun pastime such as baseball, however, was not immune from virulent racism. He vividly recalls an incident in Texas when a White man confronted him by threatening, "Nigger, you better not win this game today."⁵

² Available on-line at cinematreasures.org and *Boxoffice* newsletter, 10 January 1948, p. 54.

³ "Clovis Steam Laundry," *The Carlsbad Current*, 21 October 1910, p. 1. Emphasis added.

⁴ *The Carlsbad Current*, 23 July 1920, p. 1.

⁵ Jones, "Deacon." Oral history interview. Available on-line at: drive.google.com/file/d/1ZafBlfknquyZTHxk_b0dzA9giGsB3VKV/view?usp=sharing. Courtesy of Samantha Villa, Library Director, New Mexico State University (Carlsbad).

Buildings, Structures, and Landscapes

Churches

Research into the following Black churches is warranted: The New San Jose Church of Christ, Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Rice Memorial C. M. E. Church, Mt. Zion Church of God in Christ, and the Mt. Olive Baptist Church.

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp: RG CCC Camp G-148 (NAID 77142684)

Research is merited to determine if there was any connection between CCC Camp G-148 and the Black experience.

National Register Sites

The following buildings and sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places will need to be researched to determine their relevance to the Black experience in Carlsbad:

Robert Weems and Mary E. Tansill House
Armandine
Carlsbad Caverns
Carlsbad Irrigation District
First National Bank of Eddy
Sitting Bull Falls

Works Projects Administration (WPA) Sites

Evidently, Blacks helped construct WPA projects for the city, whether or not they were welcomed as visitors after the projects were complete. Additional research will be required. Carlsbad Caverns, Carlsbad Museum Mural, Eddy County Courthouse and Jail, Sitting Bull Falls Recreation Area.

Desegregation

Three years before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, some schools in Carlsbad began to integrate -- largely due to the cost of maintaining accredited schools for both White and Black students. In 1951 the Carlsbad school district received word that the all-Black high school in town failed to qualify for accreditation. The estimated cost to bring the physical plant up to acceptable levels was \$100,000. "Unwilling to spend the money

but fearing race mixing, the school board considered various ideas, including running two high schools in the same physical plant, one in the morning and one in the evening.”¹ Just before the school session ended in the summer of 1951 the superintendent of the Carlsbad School District made an executive decision, integrating both schools into one:

Justifying his decision on the basis of cost and bolstering that decision with community input, he announced that the administration had polled the students at Carlsbad High School, the white high school in the district, and found that the students did not oppose desegregation. To prevent problems with the parents, the administration reached out to the ministers in the town and asked them to speak to their congregations on the matter.²

Few problems resulted once the school year began. While each city sponsoring segregated schools grappled with how best to comply with the 1954 Supreme Court decision to integrate, at least one editorialist cautioned everyone, including the NAACP, to proceed slowly. He reminded everyone that in many instances new facilities would be needed. “It is not the politic thing for the organization to cultivate ill will,” enjoined the article, “even in the face of the fact that schools have only one choice about what to do.”³

Beginning around 1952, the city’s playgrounds and the summer recreational program were integrated, and service clubs sponsored inter-racial Little League baseball teams. “These programs were given credit for improved attitudes among the three ethnic groups.”⁴ All people, regardless of ethnicity, could attend any movie house and sit in any section of the audience at this time as well.⁵

After integration, Carlsbad high school basketball, coached by Ralph Bowyer (who played at Albuquerque High and the University of New Mexico) won its second straight state title. The Cavemen had two Black starters, John Wooten and Joe Kelly. Wooten would go on to become a football all-American at the University of Colorado, a guard in the National Football League (Cleveland and Washington) for nine and a half years, and a fixture in NFL front offices before retiring in 1997. Kelly competed in four sports at NMSU, most notably as a quarterback, and was inducted into the school’s hall of honor. Wooten said he was “blessed” by the early

¹ Cooper, George M. “The Modern Civil Rights Movement in New Mexico, 1955 - 1975,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 205.

² Ibid.

³ Editorial. “Should Go Slow,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 12 July 1954, p. 4.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁵ Ibid.

integration of Carlsbad. “We didn’t have enough people at the Carver School, grades 1 to 12, to field a football team,” he said. “I’m only half joking when I tell people I might have wound up picking up trash for the city, like my father did, or working as a laborer. He attributes early integration at Carlsbad to enlightened leadership including head football and basketball coach Ralph Bowyer, Carlsbad principal Guy Wade, former principal and school superintendent Tom Hansen, and black community leader Emmitt Smith.”⁶

Biographies Carlsbad

John Wooten and Joe Kelly

Excerpted from an article by Milan Simonich for the *Ringside Seat* on-line opinion column. Contact: msimonich@sfnewmexican.com.

As a boy in southeastern New Mexico, John Wooten had no choice but to learn about the cruelty of segregation. He attended the Carver School for Negroes in Carlsbad, which educated some 110 kids in grades 1-12. All of them realized they were isolated at Carver because of the color of their skin. Carver didn’t have the numbers to field a football team, so Wooten gravitated to the lights and pageantry at Carlsbad High School, where white kids had many more opportunities. “On Friday night, I didn’t have the money to go to the game,” Wooten told me one recent day. “But I would stand by the fence. At halftime, they would let us in.”

Carlsbad decided to desegregate rather than keep spending to upgrade different campuses — one white and adequate, the other black and below par in just about every way. Wooten said white students even endorsed the desegregation of Carlsbad High School. Soon enough, everybody knew who he was. Wooten had never played organized football until he enrolled at Carlsbad High. No longer would he be on the outside looking in. He burst on the field as a sophomore in 1952 and found stardom as a fast, powerful tackle.

Another black player made just as big an impression. Running back Joe Kelly could tear open a game with uncommon quickness and athleticism. Desegregation made Carlsbad’s football team better than the days when it was all white. Wooten and Kelly were such exceptional athletes that they also helped Carlsbad win two state championships in basketball. The two were part of a graduating class numbering 249 in 1955. Desegregation had given them a better education, a chance to play ball on mixed-race teams and scholarships to college. “It was a godsend. Changed my life,” Wooten said. He could have gone to Dartmouth to play football and receive an Ivy League education. But New Hampshire was too far away to suit Wooten’s mother. He chose the University of Colorado. After college, he went on to block for Jim Brown of the Cleveland Browns. In all, Wooten played 10 seasons in the National Football League.

⁶ Moffett, Ben. “On Martin Luther King’s Birthday, Remembering the End of School Segregation in Hobbs and New Mexico, 1954,” 21 January 2014. Available on-line at nmsportsblog.com/2014/01/21/martin-luther-king-day-post.

Kelly became a four-sport star at what is now New Mexico State University. The Los Angeles Rams drafted him, but he didn't make the team. Kelly played pro football for three seasons for the Ottawa Rough Riders of the Canadian league.

Wooten said he initially was one of four black boys and three black girls at Carlsbad High. Being so small a minority might have made them targets. Wooten remembers no slurs or taunts directed at the pioneering students. "Never once in the entire time I was at Carlsbad High School was there a racial disturbance or name-calling," he said.

Kelly has a different recollection, saying jealous people resented the newcomers and their successes. His response to this was silence. "You didn't start no fires. I wanted to play, and I wanted to make something of myself, so I didn't complain," Kelly told me by phone from his home in Southern California. Yet there is no denying that the opportunity to play sports at an integrated high school was his first big break. He has never forgotten where he got his start.

Kelly returns to Carlsbad each Fourth of July for a family reunion. Wooten, who now lives in Arlington, Texas, happened to be in New Mexico at a turning point. Had Carlsbad persisted in dividing the races, he might never have been discovered by the outside world. People in northeastern Ohio still talk about how he cleared the way for Jim Brown to help the Cleveland team win an NFL championship over the Baltimore Colts. That golden moment occurred in 1964. The pivotal time, though, came when he was a 15-year-old kid, and skin color no longer counted for everything.

Additional biographies: Ralph Bowyer, Abraham Lincoln Brigade volunteers, Emmitt Smith, Ralph Bowyer, Bernita Smith-Payne. Oral Histories: Bill Huff and Deacon Jones.

SELECTED IMAGES CARLSBAD, NM

A SONG AT SUNRISE.

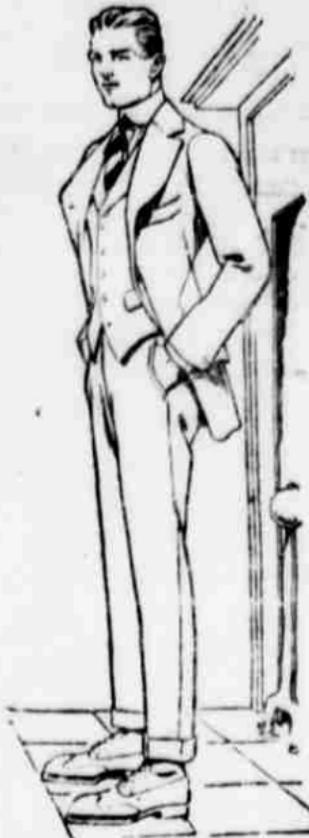
(Negro version, by Edmund Cooke.)

"When I head dat clock go off, I
calls dat clock a liah!
But des de same I crawls out en I
stahts de kitchen fiah,
Put de kettel on, en mix de batter
foh de bread,
Tho' maybe I'se so sleepy dat I
des can't shet mah head;
Set to wuk en wuk all dey, en res'
a little bit,
En den git up nex' mawnin' when
the clock done th'ow a fit!
Dat's de way dat po' folks do,
Dat's de way foh me en you,
Git up ev'y mawnin' when the sun
comes peekin' throu'
While de white folks des rolls
oveh!

"Looks like dat ain't jestic en
looks like dat ain't right.
Why should white folks lie abed en
des because dey's white?
Why does black folks wuk en wuk,
en neveh git a res'?
Dat's what I'se been axin', but de
good Lawd He knows bes',
'Case lemme tell you, honey, when
ol' Gab'el blows his horn,
We'll git up bright en early on de
Resurrection Morn!
Dat's de way dat us'll do,
Dat's de way foh me en you;
Settin' down in Heaven long befoah
de chune is through,
While de white folks des rolls
oveh!"

Figure 70. 'A Song at Sunrise -- Negro version'

Source: "A Song at Sunrise," *The Carlsbad Current*,
20 February 1920, p. 9.



Copyright Hart Schaffner & Marx

Irvin Cobb tells this one:

A negro sat outside of a factory; he was hungry, broke. Just then the noon whistle blew—the negro muttered to himself, “Dat’s dinnah time for some folks, but it’s jes’ plain twelve o’clock fuh me.

Isn’t that about the way some of you hard-to-fit men feel about the Fall Dress Up---it may be Dress Up time for some folks, but it’s just plain October for you?

You’re wrong; you don’t need to suffer the delays and inconveniences of a tailor; you don’t need to pay a lot of “extra money” for a fit.

You can come in here today---slip into a Hart Schaffner & Marx suit made for your figure, and it will only take about 15 minutes of your time and \$25 of your money.

Stout men, slim men, medium stout men, short, stocky men---every variation of the human figure is provided for by these great clothes makers.

Best of all, you’ll get the quality you’d pay a good tailor double for; we guarantee the fit.

Come on in---the “Dressing Up” is fine at this store.

T. C. HORNE

The Home of Hart Schaffner & Marx

Figure 71. 'A Negro sat outside a factory...'

“A negro sat outside of a factory...,” Clothing Advertisement. Source: *The Carlsbad Current*, 13 October 1916, p. 8.



Figure 72. Interior meat market

Interior of Colbut Meat Market, Carlsbad, New Mexico

It is not known which early Carlsbad businesses welcomed people of color, and which businesses refused to serve non-Whites.

Source: New Mexico Centennial Project

Negative Number: 161506

Date: 1914

Repository: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum (Santa Fe)

Available on-line at: nmhistorymuseum.org/collections/photo-archives/order-photos

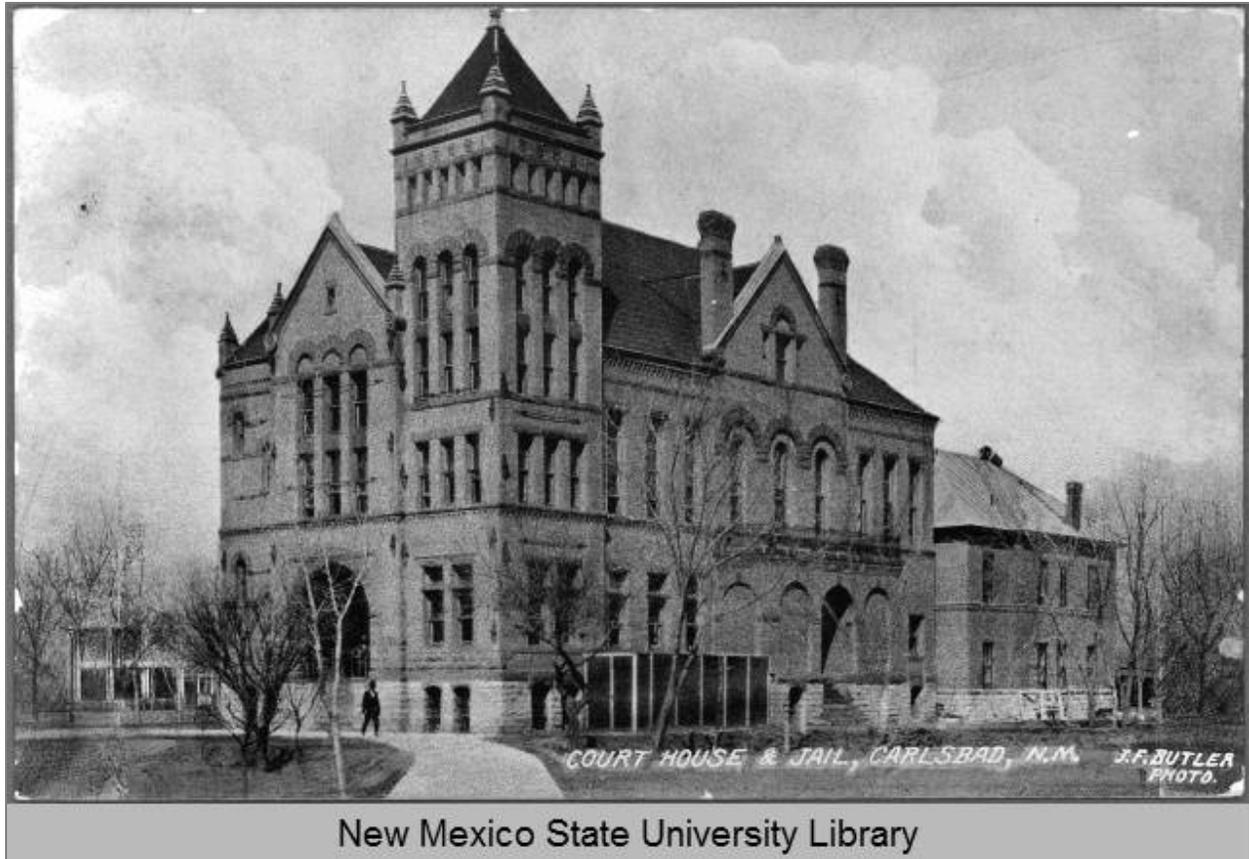


Figure 73. Courthouse and jail

Courthouse and jail (Carlsbad, NM)

Source: New Mexico State University Library, Rio Grande Historical Collections

Date: 1908 [verify]

Identifier: Ms02230221

Collection: Thomas K. Todsén Photographs, Collection No. Ms 0223

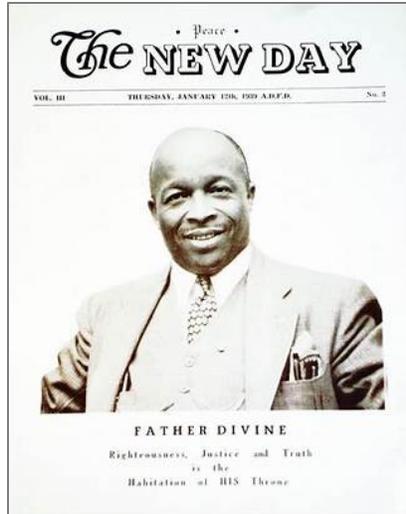


Figure 74. Father Divine

Source: harlemworldmagazine.com

Initially refused service at a Carlsbad café, the restaurant owners eventually accommodated his desire to dine in by screening Father Divine from view. An April 1940 *Alamogordo News* article recounted the event.

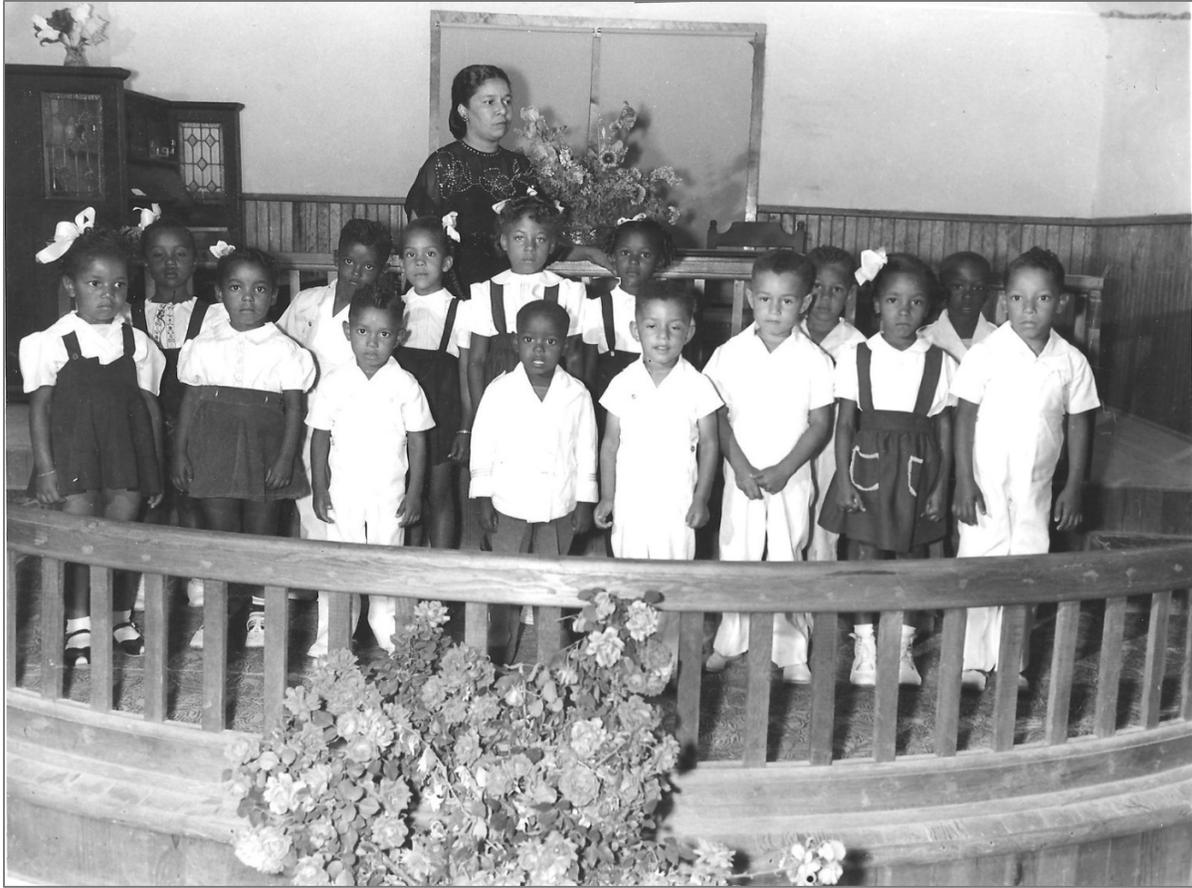


Figure 75. Jessie Huff and her kindergarten class

“Jessie Huff with 15 members of kindergarten posed at the front of an unknown church.”

Courtesy: Samantha Villa

Source: *New Mexico Carlsbad Bob Nymeyer Photo Collection*, Ray V. Davis (c1950).



Figure 76. Hilltop Nursery Kindergarten (segregated)

Mrs. Huff and assistant with Hilltop Nursery Kindergarten children.

Courtesy: Samantha Villa, Carlsbad Public Library

Source: Available on-line at nearlovingbend.net.

COMING

THE OLD RELIABLE

VIRGINIA MINSTRELS

Positively the best colored minstrel
show on the road

40 REAL NEGRO 40

Singers, Dancers, Comedians, and
: : : Musicians : : :

Will Exhibit at

CARLSBAD, SATURDAY,
APRIL 24

Big free street parade, band and calliope
concert at 2:30 p. m.

Figure 77. Virginia minstrels

“40 Real Negro Singers, Dancers, Comedians, and Musicians...”

Source: Virginia Minstrels Advertisement, *The Carlsbad Current*, 16 April 1915, p. 2.

—“OH! BOY”—
 LOOK AT THE DATE
 Cut it out and put it in your hat!

AUG. 17 ---- WEEK OF ---- AUG. 17

**American Legion
 CARNIVAL**

**FIVE BIG NIGHTS OF FUN AND
 AMUSEMENTS**

BIG BARBECUE THIRD DAY

10 ----- BIG SHOWS ----- 10

<p>Don't Fail to See the SMALLEST LADY IN NEW MEXICO 15 years old Weight 85 Pounds Height 80 inches</p>	<p align="center">—SEE— PRINCESS ZELMA She was found in New Mexico's Famous Aztec ruins and is one of the most famous mummies ever exhibited in this state.</p>
<p>“SPIDORA” THE SPIDER GIRL One of the biggest treats of the Carnival. SHE'S ALIVE!</p>	<p>THE MOST SENSATIONAL SHOW ON THE GROUNDS “NO NAME” a word to the wise— DON'T MISS IT.</p>
<p>WAR RELIC SHOW This will be one of the finest collections ever put together giving you a real touch of the war.</p>	<p>ATHLETIC ARENA Every night the best boxing and wrestling Some of the big boys of the state. Every night fast, snappy bouts GUARANTEED</p>
<p>“AND STILL ANOTHER” OLD MEXICO Native Songs, Dances and Music — A real touch of native life.</p>	<p>ANOTHER BIG-UN OLD SOUTHERN NEGRO PLANTATION SHOW Songs, Buck and Wing Dancing and Fun on the Plantation given by the best Negro talent.</p>

**Out of Door Dance Continues Every Night
 of the Carnival**

**MUSIC WILL BE FURNISHED BY
 CARLSBAD'S NEW BAND**

3 Days of snappy baseball at the ball park
 Between the best teams in the Pecos Valley

**3 Days of Wild West Show and Cowboy
 Tournament**

LARGE PRIZES AND ONE OF THE BIGGEST
 PROGRAMS EVER PUT ON IN EDDY COUNTY

40 BIG CONCESSIONS
 Dolls, Dogs, Drinks, Suits, Tires, Cats, Balls, Shooting Gallery, and in fact everything that goes for a big time.

WATCH FOR HAND BILLS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR ADDITIONAL FEATURES as this space will not hold all the Big Program that will be on the grounds.
 WRITE YOUR FRIENDS
 As this is going to be the **BIG HOME COMING WEEK**

Figure 78. American Legion Carnival advertisement

“Old Southern Negro Plantation Show” American Legion Carnival Advertisement. Source: *The Carlsbad Current*, 16 July 1920, n. p.

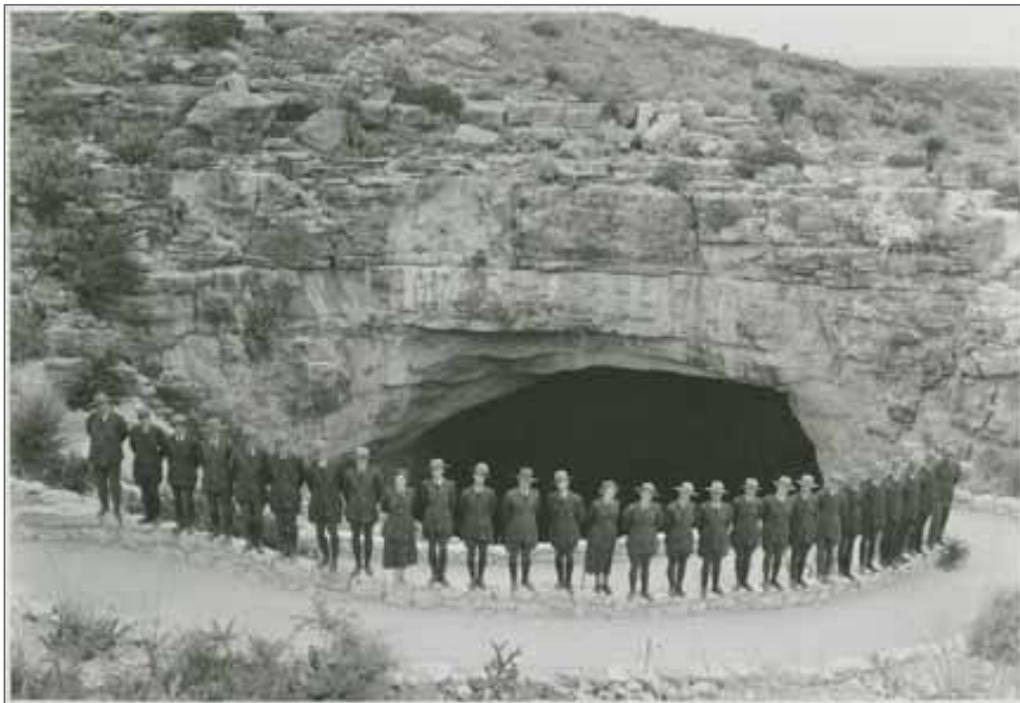


Figure 79. Park rangers at entrance to Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM

Two years before this photo was taken, Park Superintendent Thomas Boles arranged to host a Juneteenth celebration at the Caverns. The event was announced in a 15 June 1928 *Roswell Daily Record* newspaper article headlined “Colored Folks will Celebrate June 19.”

Negative Number: 052059

Date: 1936

Repository: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum (Santa Fe)

Available on-line at: nmhistorymuseum.org/collections/photo-archives/order-photos/



Figure 80. Peach packing plant

Peach packing plant, Carlsbad Irrigation Project on the Pecos River, NM

Note: Most of the workers at the plant appear to be non-White minorities.

Repository: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum (Santa Fe)

Negative Number: 055115

Date: 1905 [verify]

Available on-line at: nmhistorymuseum.org/collections/photo-archives/order-photos

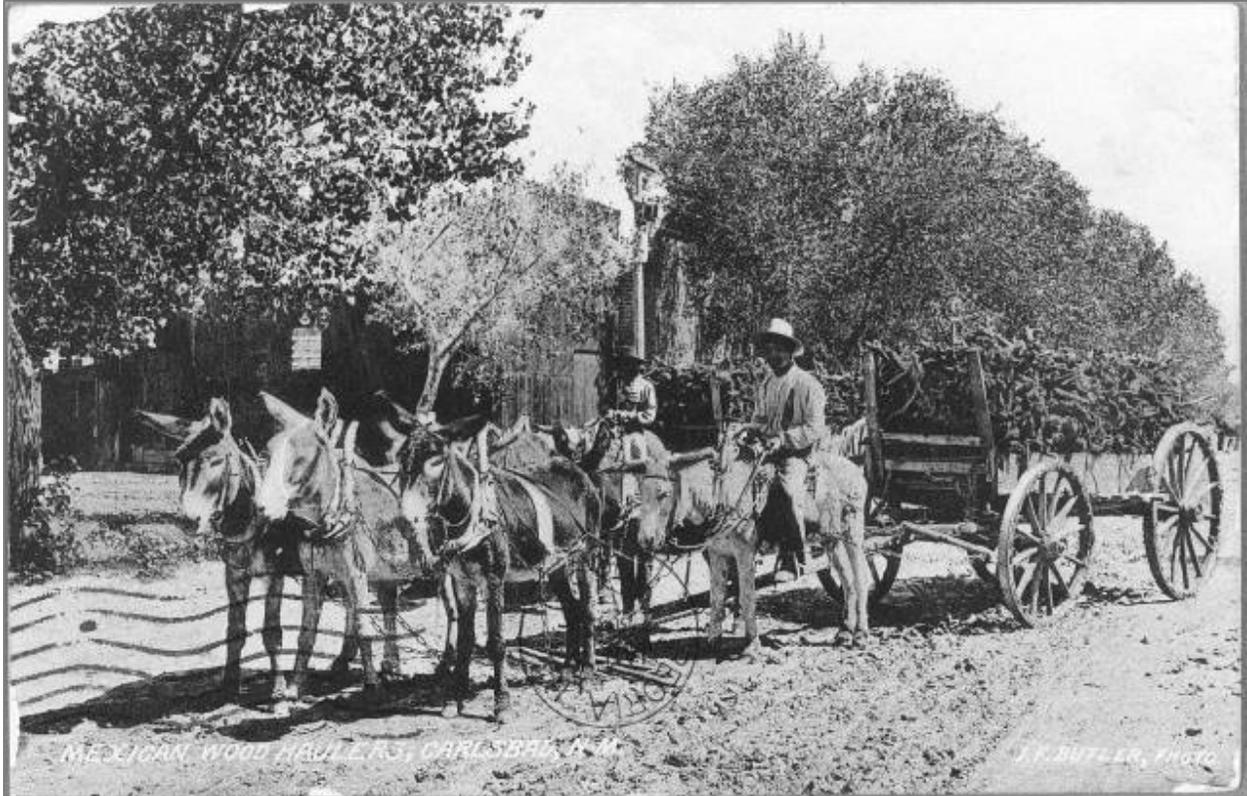


Figure 81. Mexican wood haulers near Carlsbad, NM

Well into the 1950s, ethnic minorities including African Americans had access only to service jobs, menial labor, or self-employment.

Repository: New Mexico State University Library, Rio Grande Historical Collections

Date: 1909 [verify]

Collection: Ms02230092

Collection: Thomas K. Todsén Photographs, Collection No. Ms 0223

**BLACK COMMUNITY SOUTH OF WEST LEA STREET, EAST OF HWY. 180 AND SOUTH/EAST OF SOUTHERN CANAL
(VERIFY).**

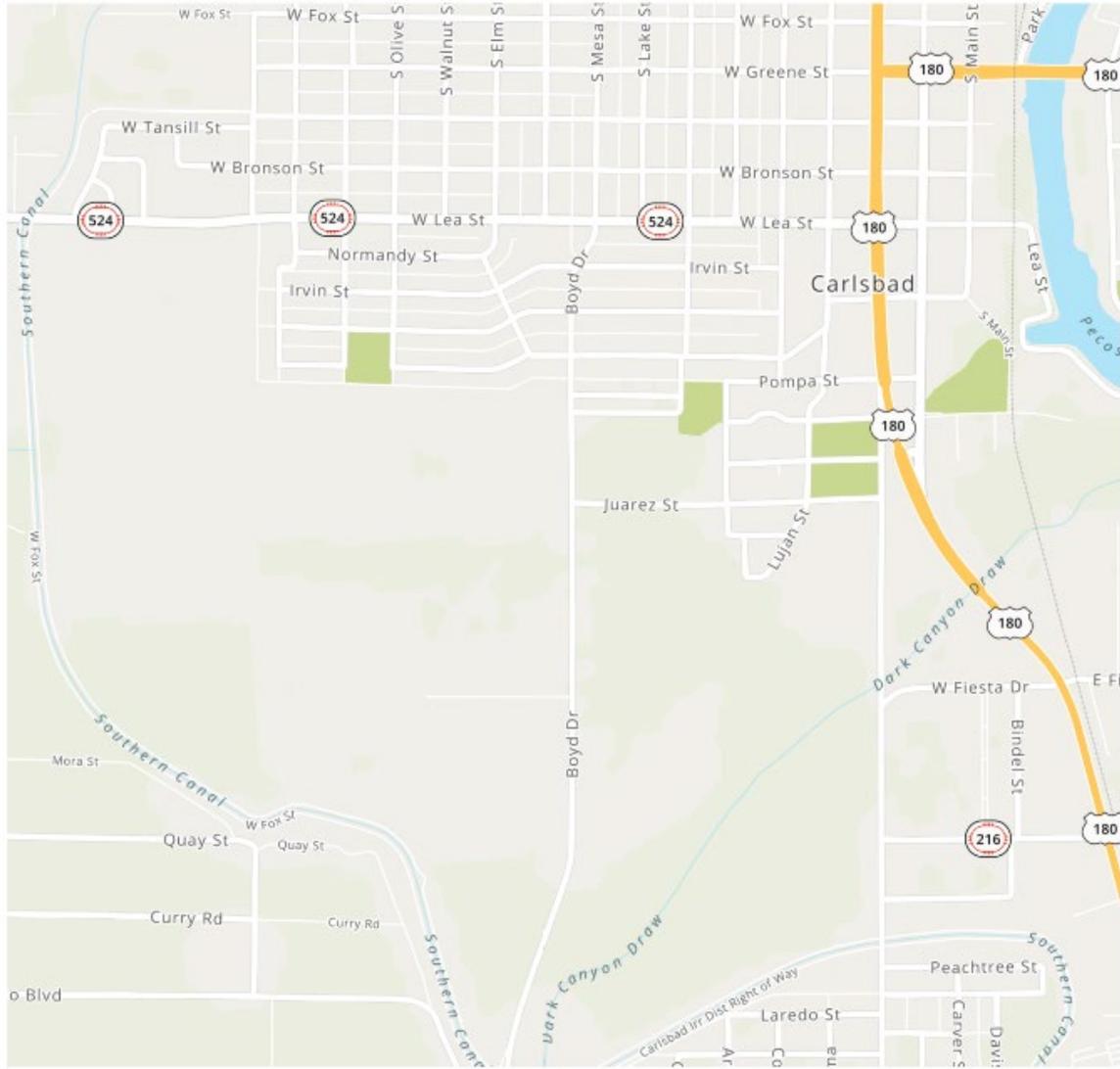


Figure 82. Map showing historically Black neighborhood Carlsbad

Suggestions for Additional Research Carlsbad

Which pre-World War II businesses were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks?

What boundaries (ex. streets, canals, geographical features, railroad tracks) historically defined the Black community neighborhood?

Was there a known Ku Klux Klan presence in or near Carlsbad?

In addition to the organizations and alliances already mentioned, what additional groups existed to instill racial equality and fair practices?

What role did the Potash Company of America play in employing minorities including Blacks?

What are the relationships between the National Register sites and the Black experience?

What are the relationships between the Works Projects Administration (WPA) sites and the Black experience?

How critical were the Black churches to the daily lives of Black residents? Were services and events inter-racial?

Before state and federal civil rights legislation was passed, which White-owned dining and hotel establishments employed Blacks? Welcomed Blacks?

At least one Juneteenth celebration was held at Carlsbad Caverns. Were there other connections between this federal park and Carlsbad's African American community?

Which individuals, regardless of skin color, were largely credited with bringing about educational and social integration?

What were some of the successful civil rights strategies employed? A strong NAACP presence? Sit-ins? Boycotts? Demonstrations?

Were there any *Negro Motorist Green Book* sites in Carlsbad or the surrounding vicinity?

In addition to Carlsbad Caverns, how did the nearby Guadalupe Mountain National Park influence the Black experience during Jim Crow?

Tradition held that Black residents swam on the East side of the Pecos River, and Whites swam on the West side. Were there other similar Black social and recreational enclaves?

Was there any relationship between Carlsbad's African American community and the Civilian Conservation Corps encampment (G-148)?

CLOVIS



Figure 83. Map of New Mexico highlighting the city of Clovis

CLOVIS

Clovis is situated in the high plains of east central New Mexico, nine miles west of the Texas border. It was established as a railroad town early in the last century. Ranching and irrigated agriculture have ensured prosperity. A newspaper article published in 1919 described Clovis as the transition between the lower and upper plains, and the gateway from “Texas into New Mexico and the famous Pecos Valley.” The article identified cattle ranching as the leading industry, wheat as being “a close second, with broom corn, and hogs coming next.”¹ For many in the opening decades of the 20th-century, New Mexico was a part of the nation’s last frontier. Settled mostly by Texas and Oklahoma farmers seeking a better life, a steady stream of “white prairie schooners and tourists” traveled to southeastern New Mexico, with Clovis serving as “the center trading and shipping point.”²

Clovis and Eastern New Mexico are served by the Santa Fe railway, one of the largest railroad systems in the United States. The line from Amarillo through Texico, Portales, Roswell, Carlsbad, and into Pecos, Texas was completed in 1894. Construction was started on the Belen cut-off, extending from Texico to Belen, in 1906. Shortly thereafter, Clovis was selected as the location for the terminal. The townsite of Clovis was laid out, and the work of erecting dwellings, hotels and businesses began. Employees of the Santa Fe Railroad Company established homes, spent their wages locally, paid taxes, and “materially assisted in the building of Clovis.”³

Non-Circulating History Books

Once the NMSU and Clovis libraries re-open to the public, the following books will be consulted:

1. Stanley, F. *The Clovis New Mexico Story* (Pampas, TX: 1966).
2. Stevens, David and Ray Sullivan. *Clovis, New Mexico: The First 100 Years*. (Clovis: Freedom Newspapers, 2007).
3. *726th Railway Operating Battalion, Clovis, New Mexico*. (Baton Rouge: Army and Navy Publishing Company of Louisiana, 1943).
4. Spencer, J. R. *The New Mexico Digest*. OCLC 2723677.
5. McAlavy, Don. *Clovis Remembered: 'Moments From the Past.'* (Clovis: High Plains Historical Press, 1976).

¹ “Clovis, Curry County, N. M.,” *The Clovis News*, 16 October 1919, p. 12.

² Ibid. Also: “4-Way Division Point Requires Big Shop Force – Lines Largely Responsible for Development of Section,” *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 19 October 1931, p. 14.

³ Ibid.

6. McAlavy, Don. *1912 Statehood Days: And Other Clovis-Curry County Items*. (Clovis: Clovis-Portales Arts Council, Historical Committee, 1972).
7. *Clovis, New Mexico, 1906 – 1953*. (Clovis: Clovis Chamber of Commerce, 1953).
8. Kirk, Robert F. *Flying the Lindbergh Line: Then & Now -- Transcontinental Air Transport's Historic Aviation Vision*. (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2013). The fourth leg of the TAT flight was from Albuquerque, NM to Clovis, NM. (Q. Were African Americans involved in any aspect of this endeavor, or excluded?)
9. Bakken, Gordon Morris and Brenda Farrington. *Racial Encounters in the Multi-Cultural West*. (New York: Garland Publishers, 2000?) OCLC 216759911.

[See original tabulation for a complete list].

Archives

According to searches targeting “Clovis” conducted using the Rocky Mountain Online Archive maintained by the University of New Mexico (Albuquerque), at least one collection archived at the State level may be able to contribute information related to the research topic at hand once these institutions re-open.

1. I. D. Johnson Papers 1941 -1947. Collection AC 545. Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, Santa Fe, NM. Long-time Clovis dentist.

Census Records

A directory survey of the town’s population in 1936 identified “37 Japanese, 72 negroes, 729 Spanish-Americans and 8449 white residents.”¹ The researchers who conducted the door-to-door survey described their experience this way:

Before we came here, and afterwards, too, we were told that we would find Clovis a hard town to work because of the difficulty in getting people to come to their doors, but on the contrary, we found the people the most pleasant of any town we have worked in the last two years.

A few times we had to go around back of houses and pull the light switch to shut off blaring radios which kept people from hearing us knock, but very few refused to come to the door. We found, too, that more people than usual asked us inside here and offered us drinks of ice water if it was hot.²

¹ “Survey for Directory Reveals City’s Population Over Ten Thousand Mark,” *Clovis New Mexico Evening News Journal*, 4 July 1936, p. 1.

² Ibid.

The heads of 59 families -- totaling 238 family members -- characterized their occupations as being government "relief work." Most of those on relief work requested that they be listed as laborers.³ By 1954 the Clovis population was estimated to be about 19,500, of whom approximately "400 were Negro, and 600 Spanish-American."⁴

Neighborhoods

In 1912, an incident occurred that highlights several aspects of what Black Clovis residents endured at that time. There was a certain section of town where African Americans resided. Their neighborhood was a ready-made target for racist behavior. White participants in lawlessness directed at minorities were generally exonerated. The article concludes by characterizing the racist incident and its aftermath as "the negro problem."

It would seem that several parties probably from country came into town on Saturday night and for want of some excitement went down to where the negroes are quartered and discharged their guns several times then probably mounted their horses and escaped from the scene. Several officers appeared a short time after the incident had occurred but a diligent search on their part probably failed in taking the parties wanted. Four men were arrested, however, and lodged in jail, but it was found that each could give an account of himself at the affair and each was released.¹

Once news reached Santa Fe that a "race riot had occurred at Clovis," an investigation was initiated. State officials and state law enforcement found that there "was no disposition on the part of the people of Clovis to aid or sympathize with the offenders," and the matter was put to rest. The editorialist, however, could not resist one parting shot. "The intimidating and dominant manner of one of the Santa Fe officers in criticizing the court," he wrote, "... came near causing more serious trouble than the negro problem."²

Two weeks after the targeted shooting incident occurred, a group of presumably White business men met in a back room of the First National Bank, in order to ascertain "what the attitude of the representative business men of Clovis is toward the negro population in Clovis." Each reportedly stated his strong disapproval of the incident, and agreed to join a cooperative effort to subject future offenders to the full penalty under the law. It was also suggested that "a

³ Ibid.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 213.

¹ "Reports of Race Riot Greatly Exaggerated," *Clovis News Journal*, 13 June 1912, p. 1.

² Ibid.

fund be made for the furtherance of this end.”³ Although awareness may have been raised, and good intentions were verbalized, it seems that very little changed in terms of achieving racial equality over the next four or five decades.

The Black community, derisively referred to as “darktown,” had its share of mishaps, breezily reported in the local newspaper. The following spot, headlined “Darktown Has Shooting Scene Tuesday Night” is typical of the news coverage prior to the 1950s:

‘Turkey Trot,’ tallest citizen of darktown, is recovering from two gunshot wounds and ‘Happy Jack’ Wrenn, shine artist, is under a \$500 bond as the result of a shooting in the colored district Tuesday night. Happy Jack is alleged to have shot the big black boy following domestic disturbances.⁴

A Black resident who petitioned to be appointed as a police officer in his own neighborhood was refused. He was told that the city had insufficient funds to hire any additional officers:

A petition from W. P. Parker, negro, who sought appointment as an officer in the colored section of the city, was refused on grounds that the city has insufficient funds to hire additional police. Parker’s petition bore 39 signatures, a majority of which were those of white persons.⁵

Sociologists Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan observed in 1954 that Clovis was “culturally an Anglo-American town.” They further witnessed that:

by tradition the Spanish-Americans and the Negroes have lived in the southwestern quadrant of the city near the Santa Fe roundhouse and the stockyard. A few Spanish-American families in the higher socioeconomic levels have moved into other sections, but the Negro residential area has expanded much more slowly.⁶

Those running for political office appealed to the minority citizens of Clovis by offering to improve their neighborhood once elected:

We are mindful of the needs and conditions of the people living South of Grand Avenue. We will make every effort to improve the

³ “Citizens on the Negro Question,” *The Clovis News*, 27 June 1912, p. 1.

⁴ “Darktown Has Shooting Scene Tuesday Night,” *Clovis News*, 31 March 1921, p. 1.

⁵ “Petition is Denied,” *Clovis News Journal*, 15 July 1938, p. 2.

⁶ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 213.

streets and sanitary conditions in the Colored section and the Spanish American section of Clovis.⁷

The neighborhood was also the focus of toy drives and other philanthropic events, particularly during the holidays. Members of the Sunday School Class of the St. James Episcopal Church, for example, “went on an expedition to colored town to distribute dolls, dressed by girls individually, to needy children.”⁸ A classified advertisement appealed to potential buyers interested in purchasing a “practically new 3-bedroom home, fenced back yard, and established lawn,” located in the “new part of the Spanish & Colored section of town.”⁹

A group of Black citizens brought forth a complaint against the town’s liquor commission. They charged that the commission was discriminating “against their race” by not allowing a liquor establishment “in their area of town.” They wanted a bar, and they wanted a Black manager to operate it. “It’s not special privileges we want. It’s a segregated town, and we need our own liquor establishment in our part of town,” one woman explained. An attorney testified that “the Negro element in Clovis should have a bar they can attend to meet their own kind.” Petitions were presented to the commission claiming that no provision had been made “to locate a liquor outlet in the Negro area.”¹⁰ At one point during the discussion a Black petitioner asked the commission if “Negroes would be permitted in white bars,” since no bar was allowed in the “Negro district.” The City Attorney “fired back a snappy ‘yes,’” explaining that it was New Mexico state law to allow equal access to all public spaces.¹¹ The fact that the question was asked, however, highlights the disparities between the rule of law, and long-standing local traditions.

⁷ “Calling the Attention of all Voters to the Platform of the Citizens Ticket—Support This Platform by Voting for the Following Candidates: R. C. ‘Bob’ Vinyard – O. G. Potter – Sam Campbell,” *Clovis News Journal*, 2 January 1949, p. 12.

⁸ “Gifts Given to Needy Children by Church Class,” *Clovis News Journal*, 23 December 1951, p. 9.

⁹ “Practically New,” Classified Advertisement. *Clovis News Journal*, 14 July 1957, p. 26.

¹⁰ “Liquor Action Stands,” *Clovis News Journal*, 9 December 1960, p. 1.

¹¹ “Liquor,” *Clovis News Journal*, 9 December 1960, p. 2.

Alliances and Associations

Federated Progressive Club

In 1944 educator Ida Jackson's home was used as the organizing site for the Federated Progressive Club, which still functions in Clovis.¹ Jackson also housed Black railroad travelers, because they were not welcomed in the local hotels.²

Elks

With a membership of 359 in 1955, the Clovis Elks Lodge was founded 4 September 1950.³

Santa Fe Men's Club

More research is needed into the Santa Fe Men's Club, formed by Black civilians living in Clovis and employed by the Santa Fe railroad.⁴

Sports

Although the Little League and Pony League baseball teams were segregated through the summer of 1954, the teams played matches together. "Interest in sports seemed to have been stronger than feelings about racial separation on the part of the patrons of the different games."⁵

¹ Baton, Maisha. "New Mexico's Black Women – Establishing Perspectives," in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 163.

² Personal communication with Geni Flores (Portales, NM). Written responses to a research questionnaire (Fall 2020).

³ Emerson Brownie, "Here is Story of 16 Elks Lodges in New Mexico: Lordsburg Lodge is First with Full Information," *Roswell Daily Record*, 12 May 1955, p. 2.

⁴ 13 August 1944 p. 11 *Clovis News Journal*.

⁵ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 214.

Black Employment Opportunities

In 1936, there were approximately 450 businesses in the city.¹ The following establishments were in operation by 1944. It is not known yet which of these businesses were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks:

Levine Brothers, Mandell's, Dunlap's, Cinderella Shop, Bateman's, Thelma's, Snyder Furniture, Jackman's, Barnes Cleaners, Custom Mill, Plaza Hotel, F. W. Woolworth Company, Jack Holt The Clothier, Children's Vogue, Carmack and Sons, Mildred Marie Shoppe, Modern Eve Dress Shop, Noyes Miller Style Shop, Hallie's Dress Shop, Farmers Cooperative Elevators, Inc., Barnard and Collins, Clovis Custom Mill, Starkey Packing Company, Meadors Chevrolet Company, Gateway Auto Company, First Federal Savings, J. A. and J. B. Holt Stores, Roy S. Walker/Walker's Used Cars, Leonard Smith, Clovis Motor Company, Maye Baker's Fashion Shop, Campbell Dairy and Ice Cream Company, Clovis Elevator and Feed Company, Stockmen's Elevator and Feed Company, Holt's 5 Cent and \$1.00 Store, Maudlin Lumber and Builders Supply.²

Employment for minority groups in and around Clovis was limited for decades to the railroad roundhouse, the stockyard, or as common or service labor. Some Hispanos worked in the feed mill but none in the flour mill. For Blacks, economic opportunities were more limited. However, researchers Williams and Ryan documented in 1954 that:

there have always been a number of porters and waiters employed by the railroad, and this has tended to keep the economic level of the Negro community slightly higher than in other similar communities in the state.³

Beginning in the 1950s, Williams and Ryan found that jobs for the Latinx population in Clovis had opened up. For reasons that were not explained, office secretarial positions, store clerkships, and other skilled employment opportunities were for the first time made available to non-Whites. Some were hired or appointed to serve as city and county officials. However, these opportunities were still not extended to Black Clovis residents. Aside from the professional staff at the Black segregated school, "there were no Negroes employed in professional activities in Clovis" in 1954.⁴

¹ "Survey for Directory Reveals City's Population Over Ten Thousand Mark," *Clovis New Mexico Evening News Journal*, 4 July 1936, p. 1.

² National Archives Catalog, U. S. National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Identifier: 80692917 (Date 1944 – 1945).

³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 213.

⁴ Ibid.

Entrepreneurship

In his groundbreaking research on the Black Western experience, historian Lawrence B. de Graaf concluded that managing hotels and running tonsorial palaces were among the most prestigious businesses operated by black women and men. Boardinghouses were one of the earliest, most widespread black enterprises in the West and one of the few to obtain substantial white patronage. By 1900 seventy hotels west of the Mississippi were run by blacks, quite a few by women.

In her groundbreaking work *Bridges: New Mexican Black Women, 1900-1950*, Charlotte K. Mock lists a number of women in New Mexico who managed hotels and tonsorial parlors, among them: Allie Harris and her sister Ruby Simmons, who came to Clovis, New Mexico, in 1924 and, recognizing a need, 'purchased a 21-room hotel and named it the Harris – Simmons Hotel. The upper ten rooms of the hotel were for rental. The eleven rooms downstairs were for the private use of the sisters... Allie and Ruby's ambitious work schedule involved housework all day for well-to-do Clovis families and operation of the hotel from 3:00 p.m. to the next morning.'"⁵

Cannon Air Force Base

Cannon Air Force Base was the major Federal employer in the Clovis area. It was also cited for being a serious offender in the matter of discriminatory employment practices. The New Mexico Advisory Committee, under the auspices of the United States Commission on Civil Rights highlighted the following at the conclusion of their study:

- Few Spanish Americans and Negroes are hired for any job
- They are given only menial jobs – dishwashers and orderlies, etc.
- Minority workers who are hired are seldom promoted.⁶

During an interview conducted in 1969, a Black mother stated that, while trying her best to help her children navigate a better life, "You get the run-around on schools and jobs in Clovis. You get the run-around like a dog chasing his tail."⁷

⁵ Charlotte Mock cited in Baton, Maisha. "New Mexico's Black Women – Establishing Perspectives," in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 159.

⁶ United States Commission on Civil Rights, New Mexico Advisory Committee, *The Civil Rights Status of Minority Groups in Clovis, New Mexico: A Summary of a Meeting of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights*. May 1969), p. 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

African Americans and the Military

NM Army National Guard

The New Mexico Army National Guard has provided decisive roles in nearly every major conflict since the Spanish-American War, including participating in the legendary charge of San Juan Hill under Teddy Roosevelt, and pursuing Pancho Villa into Mexico after his forces raided Columbus, NM.

The New Mexico National Guard expands the operational capacity of the U. S. Army by providing trained, equipped and event-ready soldiers and units. These units range from small, elite teams to highly effective battalions, brigades and air wing organizations across the spectrum of combat, combat support, and emergency service preparedness. "The NM National Guard defends the nation from foreign enemies, protects lives and property here at home, and assists in building better citizens and contributors to New Mexico and the Nation."¹

World War I

On 6 April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. "By 30 June 1917 New Mexico had contributed 1,239 soldiers, and by June 1918 New Mexico had enlisted 10,000 young men between the ages of 21 to 31 in the armed services of the United States."²

Buildings, Structures and Landscapes

By 1919, Clovis featured all of the hallmarks of a successful agrarian community, railroad town, and trading center. It featured the Santa Fe Railroad machine shops -- "the largest west of Topeka"¹ -- which employed approximately 500 men, an ice plant with a 125-ton daily capacity, a modern two-story depot, one of the largest Fred Harvey Hotels and eating houses in the State, and a Santa Fe Railroad hospital. The October 1919 *Clovis News* article also reported that Clovis had two grain elevators, a flour mill, and was an extensive shipping point for "wheat, feterita, maize, kaffir corn, pinto beans and broom corn."² "We have the finest roads in the west," boasted the article, "Automobiles are as thick as flies – the country is full of them... Clovis has good hotels and more of them than any other city in New Mexico."³

¹ Western Regional Partnership, New Mexico Army National Guard available online at: nm.ng.mil.

² Clovis Branch Family History Center Finding Aid, 1996. Reference to 26 July 1917 *Clovis News Journal* that published the list of all Curry County draft registrants to date. OCLC number 866369912.

¹ "Clovis, Curry County, N. M.," *The Clovis News*, 16 October 1919, p. 12.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

This same article noted that the newly-founded town of Clovis thrived in other physically striking ways:

Clovis also has the best of school and church facilities. Three brick school buildings. There are thirteen different religious faiths represented here. Some paved streets and contracts to soon be let for more. Several miles of sidewalks, three banks, three hardware stores, three drug stores and another to go in soon, eight dry goods stores, thirteen grocery stores, one wholesale grocery, several produce stores, four garages and many other business enterprises.⁴

As the story of Clovis unfolds, and additional research is compiled, those buildings, sites and landscapes historically venerated by -- or relevant to -- the Black experience will be identified and highlighted.

National Register Sites

Each of the following buildings and sites will need to be assessed in terms of their relevance to the historic Black experience:

Lyceum Theater
State Theater
Hillcrest Park Archway
Clovis Baptist Hospital
Hotel Clovis
Old Clovis Post Office
Curry County Courthouse
1908 Clovis City Hall and Fire Station
First Methodist Church of Clovis
Santa Fe Passenger Depot
Lincoln Jackson School

Works Projects Administration (WPA) Sites

Note: Evidently Blacks helped construct WPA projects for the City, whether or not they were welcomed as visitors after the projects were complete. Hillcrest Swimming Pool was segregated, for example. Additional research is warranted.

⁴ Ibid.

Hillcrest Park Zoo

While it is known that African Americans worked to construct the Hillcrest Park Zoo, there is evidence to suggest that they were not allowed into the park once it was completed. A “footloose bear,” for example, was known for “terrorizing negroes” working at the zoo:

As many as three times a day the bear has been climbing out of his cage despite jutting spikes at the top. He has never left the zoo grounds, however, and the only damage he has done has been to kill several guinea pigs.⁵

Curry County Courthouse and Jail

The historic Curry County Courthouse (and jail) was developed as a New Deal project in 1936. The Public Works Administration (PWA) provided a \$73,507 grant for the project, whose total cost was \$163,388.⁶

Marshall Junior High School

Marshall Junior High School was constructed in 1936. The Public Works Administration (PWA) provided a \$55,271 grant for the project, whose total cost was \$123,102.⁷

Memorial Hospital

The historic former Memorial Hospital building was constructed in 1937-9. The Public Works Administration (PWA) provided a \$53,761 grant for the project, whose total cost was \$120,834. The facility was later managed by a spiritual organization.⁸ By 1969, the hospital was a city-owned-and-operated institution that was dependent upon income received for services. It employed a total of 203 persons. Twenty-five were Spanish surnamed, and 12 were “Negro” with most of the twelve “in menial service jobs.” There were “no minority group staff physicians.”⁹

⁵ Gila Monster, and Deer for Zoo; To Put End to Wanderings of Bear,” *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 15 June 1937, p. 1.

⁶ Public Art and Architecture in New Mexico 1933-1943: A Guide to the New Deal Legacy, compiled by Kathryn A. Flynn. Available on-line at livingnewdeal.org/us/nm/clovis-nm.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ United States Commission on Civil Rights, New Mexico Advisory Committee, *The Civil Rights Status of Minority Groups in Clovis, New Mexico: A Summary of a Meeting of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights*. May 1969), p. 10.

Former Post Office

The distinctive former Post Office building was constructed by the Treasury Department in early 1931, just before the New Deal. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It features a New Deal mural by Paul Lantz. The mural “New Mexican Town” was funded by the Treasury’s Section of Fine Arts Program in 1937.¹⁰

Negro Motorist Green Book Sites

Additional research is warranted to determine whether or not Clovis offered any safe havens for African American motorists during the period of Jim Crow.

Japanese Internment Camp at Clovis

Culley, John J. “World War II and a Western Town: The Internment of the Japanese Railroad Workers of Clovis, New Mexico.” *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan., 1982), pp. 43-61. Published by: Oxford University Press. Available on-line at jstor.org/stable/969064.

[Q. Were African Americans in any way involved with the internment camp?]

Cannon Air Force Base and the ‘Negro’ United Service Organization (USO)

A 1944 *Clovis News Journal* article captured the challenges and rewards inherent in creating and maintaining the “Negro USO” in Clovis:

It has been a constant struggle to keep a Negro USO in Clovis, a constant struggle of juggling figures and needing help, and trying to interest the negro community in its importance.¹¹

The article concluded by remarking that:

One has only to enter the spacious lounging rooms, the library, the game rooms, at the headquarters at 113 West First, and notice the groups of enlisted men from the Clovis Army Air Base, intent on games or just enjoying relaxing, to know what a happy solution this

¹⁰ Public Art and Architecture in New Mexico 1933-1943: A Guide to the New Deal Legacy, compiled by Kathryn A. Flynn. Available on-line at livingnewdeal.org/us/nm/clovis-nm.

¹¹ “Negro USO Pays Big Dividends: Sponsors Overcome Handicaps – Club Fills Real Need in Community,” *Clovis News Journal*, 13 August 1944, p. 11.

was to keeping several hundred negro men entertained in a town where facilities for negro entertainment is limited.¹²

In the beginning, a small group lobbied for the establishment of a Black USO when “community interest in the project was almost nil.”¹³ The group, headed by Rev. William Young, pastor of the Black Baptist Church, Mrs. Young, Mrs. Ida Mae Jackson, and under the direction and guidance of Miss Elizabeth Rowe, director of the Main Street USO, “worked tirelessly with the handful of willing and far-seeing group who recognized the need for a recreational place for the negro soldiers.”¹⁴

Miss Olive Ruth Jackson, director of activities, “began making personal contacts with the community negroes. She asked their advice – and used it plenty – and organized, and never for a minute gave up.” She and Miss Rowe:

worked shoulder to shoulder to make the negro USO in Clovis a success – a place where the negro men and their wives could come and enjoy themselves... they worked at making the whole negro population of Clovis feel it was THEIR work, too, and [in] their interest.¹⁵

Over time, the West First Street USO provided all of the necessary amenities for stationed and traveling soldiers, their wives and families, and the Black population of Clovis, including modern restrooms, hot showers, sewing bees, dances, a snack bar, games, and indoor and outdoor recreation. The Santa Fe Men’s Club -- made up of civilian Blacks employed by the Santa Fe Railroad – and other groups and auxiliaries, sponsored numerous holiday and cultural events including banquets. Railroad porters brought the most recent newspapers and periodicals left behind by train passengers to the USO library and reading rooms. Special courses including Red Cross accreditations were taught in the classrooms. The facility was frequented by users of all ages, and became a second home for many.¹⁶

Travel-weary soldiers took advantage of the hot showers nearest the train station. “White soldiers, having only a few minutes and therefore not time between trains to go to the main USO on Main Street, have by the hundreds taken their showers *enroute* to other camps at the negro USO here.”¹⁷ It is a sign of the times that hundreds of White soldiers showering at the Black USO was deemed newsworthy. It seems that inter-racial interactions were an unintended

¹² “Negro USO Pays Big Dividends: Sponsors Overcome Handicaps – Club Fills Real Need in Community,” *Clovis News Journal*, 13 August 1944, p. 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

consequence of having the Black USO in Clovis, even before the military was officially integrated.

After the segregated Black troops were transferred away from the Clovis Army Air Field, their USO club was slated to close on 15 December 1946. Kathleen Jarrell, the USO director, arranged for the building to be “available for use by Negro citizens by appointment.”¹⁸

The Armory

Q. Was the Armory segregated?

AT&SF Passenger Train Depot

Q. Was the AT&SF passenger train depot segregated?

Death and Cemeteries

The following circumstances are indicative of the daily trials and tribulations facing people of color, even after death. J. E. Sweet, a 45-year-old “Tulsa negress,” as she is described in the 1935 *Clovis Evening News Journal*, died while traveling by car (apparently from heart disease) a few miles south of Kenna in Chaves County. Three Black men accompanying Sweet were Rev. H. Douglas, Paul O’Bannon and Mac McCain, all of El Centro, CA. Sweet had been ill, and they were taking her home to Tulsa. Because they were more familiar with Clovis, they chose to pass through Kenna, Elida, and Portales. They were not charged with violating the rules of jurisdiction, however, due to their explanation that they “didn’t know anything about the towns they were passing through, and *doubted if an undertaking establishment in those places would handle a negro’s body...*”. They made their way to Clovis, instead, with which they were better acquainted.¹⁹

The town’s cemetery was originally called “Clovis Cemetery” because it was the only one for a long time. Now known as Mission Gardens, it was established in 1908 on West 7th Street on the north side of the road. There are several famous people laid to rest there, including New Mexico Governor Andrew W. Hockenhull.²⁰ Additional research will determine whether or not African American residents were interred here.

¹⁸ “Negro USO Club Will Close Dec. 15,” *Clovis News Journal*, 4 December 1946, p. 1.

¹⁹ “Negro Woman Dies in Car; Body Here,” *Clovis New Mexico Evening News Journal*, 24 April 1935, p. 6. Emphasis added.

²⁰ Available on-line at findagrave.com/cemetery/38232/mission-garden-of-memories-cemetery.

Churches

Research is warranted for the following Black churches in Clovis:

Church of Christ
Bethlehem Baptist Church
Christian Believers
First Church of God in Christ
Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church
Patterson Chapel CME
Primitive Baptist Church
St. John Baptist Church
Triangle Baptist Church

'Colored' Baptist on West Third

Throughout the research, oblique and overt references to different 'types' of 'Negroes' were discussed in print. Editorialists remarked upon urban Blacks versus rural, between rabble-rouser newcomers and oldsters who 'knew their place.' Although these prejudicial stereotypes are uncomfortable to dissect, sometimes these distinctions were made within the African American community itself, as the following conversation revolving around a visiting Black preacher from Waco, TX illustrates. Rev. Carrington accused Black newcomers to New Mexico as being uncivil. Sermonizing in 1931, he reminded his Black congregation that they would always need to rely upon the mercies of their White friends in order to flourish themselves:

In an effort to help lift the colored population of this district to a higher standard of life, morally and religiously, W. M. B. Carrington, Waco, TX is here conducting a Bible institute at the Colored Baptist church on West Third. Bible lessons are held each afternoon and preaching services each night. H. E. Marshall is here as a gospel singer from Wichita, KS leading the congregation in old-time spirituals. The majority of the colored people who have drifted into this territory, said the conductor, know little about civility and have caused the race to receive a black eye from the public...

The object of the meeting, it is stated is to help the colored people understand their relationship to the white people of Clovis. 'We realize that God has given the white people control over all the world's goods and that every crust of bread that we as a race break in this country must be by the mercies of our kind white friends,' said Conductor Carrington.²¹

²¹ "Plea for Colored Made by Visiting Preacher," *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 16 July 1931, p. 5.

This type of paternalistic thinking – that Black individuals should be uncomplainingly and even willingly dependent upon Whites – must have stuck in the craws of progressive thinkers. It would take decades before minorities fought for and achieved some semblance of civil rights during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The tensions simmering between those who wanted to maintain the *status quo*, and those who wanted change, however, were evident beneath the surface for several generations prior.

Mount Zion Baptist Church

‘Mount Zion Baptist Church’ was chosen as the name of the second Baptist church, organized “by the colored people of Clovis when they met in the Armory Sunday, with the Rev. R. E. Jones in charge,”²² assisted by other visiting ministers. Rev. M. B. Haywood of Littlefield, Texas served as the pastor of the new church.

Fred Harvey House (Gran Quivera Hotel)

The Fred Harvey restaurants and hotels which flourished throughout the Southwest for almost a century deserve careful inquiry, particularly through the lenses of New Mexico tourism, hospitality, and race-relations. During World War II, there were not enough servers for all of the traveling soldiers. In 1943 -- the sixtieth anniversary of the hiring of the first Harvey Girls in Raton -- the vaunted Harvey System of carefully training young, predominantly White women, and dispatching them to live in chaperoned dormitories finally gave way to expedience. For many women of color in the Southwest, who previously might not have been considered for employment, this change in Harvey hiring was a civil rights breakthrough.²³ Blueprints for some Harvey Houses in New Mexico and Texas did specify ‘colored’ seating areas. But any such vestiges of Jim Crow seating also disappeared during the war.²⁴ While Fred Harvey was never known to refuse Black patrons, he was sometimes guilty of seating them together in less desirable tables.²⁵ It will be fascinating to understand how the overarching philosophy and policies of the Harvey corporation were interpreted and carried out in places such as the Gran Quivera Hotel in Clovis, NM.

²² “Colored People Organize Mount Zion Church,” *Clovis New Mexico Evening News Journal*, 9 April 1936, p. 8.

²³ Fried, Stephen. *Appetite for America: Fred Harvey and the Business of Civilizing the Wild West --One Meal at a Time*. (New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks, 2011), p.p 376-7.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Segregated Public Spaces

Hotels and Restaurants

Sociologists Williams and Ryan adeptly navigated the contemporary cultural currents when they conducted their personal interviews in 1954. They found that most of the accepted scripts for social interactions were unspoken:

Most private facilities were closed to Negroes. However, in the last few years, some motels would accept teams with a bi-racial personnel; the main hotel would not. There was a Negro hotel in town. Restaurants did not serve Negroes, with the exception of a few persons who were members of men's service clubs because of their position in the schools. They were served when the clubs met for luncheons, but they did not at other times ask for service in these restaurants.²⁶

It is telling that the places where minorities were accepted (and when and where they were not) was based upon a long-time and unspoken tradition. Black patrons knew that when they were not in the company of Whites, they were not welcome for dinner in the same places they had just dined in at lunch. It was not necessary to post signage in most local establishments.

Local restaurants that attracted tourists or out-of-towners, however, tended to rely upon signage to make sure there were no misunderstandings. As a young child of eight or nine in 1963 or 1964, Patsy Delk remembers an incident while visiting Clovis with her parents. Her father, an electrician at Cannon AFB, was moonlighting to help with some renovations to the Lyceum Theater. Money was always tight, she remembers, but he wanted to take the family out to a good Mexican restaurant. While waiting in line at El Monterey, Patsy noticed a big hand-painted sign that said, "No Coloreds Allowed." She thought the sign was referring to paint colors, and didn't understand it. When she asked what it meant, her parents told her that it had to do with 'Negroes' not being allowed to eat at the restaurant. They told her that it was a long story, but that "now wasn't the time to talk about it."²⁷ Another incident seared Patsy's consciousness soon afterward. While shopping with her mother at a local variety store, they happened upon a little girl sobbing, while crying out, "But there aren't any Black baby dolls, Mama!" It made Patsy wonder why all of the dolls were White.

Long-time Carlsbad resident Woodrow Irving remembers noticing that his little girl was activating the side-by-side water fountains at the back of the store when the clerk wasn't

²⁶ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 213.

²⁷ Telephone communication with Patsy Delk, President of the High Plains Historical Foundation (9 July 2020).

looking. Disappointed, she told her father that one wasn't "colored" after all, and that the water from both fountains looked exactly the same.²⁸ Upon reflection many years later, Patsy realized that there never seemed to be a good time for her parents to explain such things. For many parents, it was difficult to make sense out of discrimination, especially to a child.

Grocery Stores

Although the exact nature of the grocery store situation in Clovis is not known, educator Geni Flores residing in nearby Portales learned from an oral history that "Mexicans" were not allowed to shop in the Portales stores well into the 1950s. "Even when I came in the 1970s," notes Geni, "there were some stores the Latino population avoided." She was told that people from the *barrio* "would travel to Santa Fe and Albuquerque to buy supplies such as flour, coffee, salt, baking powder" and the like. They would then "sell the provisions to the Latinx population out of someone's house, at a slight mark-up to cover travel expenses."²⁹ She wonders now if the sole Black family in Portales at the time, the Griffins, purchased their necessities in this manner as well. It is doubtful that this remedy was unique to Portales. More than likely, regional residents banned by certain grocers responded by acquiring and distributing their own foodstuffs amongst themselves.

Recreational Facilities

While city recreational facilities including ball fields were open to everyone, swimming pools tended to be segregated. As an exception to the usual practice of exclusion, Black servicemen from Clovis Air Base received special permission to swim in a pool located in a White residential neighborhood near the base. In the summer of 1954 another park was opened "near the Negro and Spanish-American residential area, and the pool was open to all who wished to swim there."³⁰

Municipal Swimming Pool

The municipal swimming pool at Hillcrest park officially opened in May 1936. The pool was segregated, with a separate facility, Potter Pool, constructed many years later at the opposite end of town for African-Americans and Hispanos.³¹

²⁸ Oral history with Woodrow Irving (Carlsbad, NM). 28 October 1991. Audiotape courtesy of Samantha Villa, Carlsbad Public Library.

²⁹ Personal correspondence with Geni Flores (Portales, NM). Written responses to a research questionnaire (Fall 2020).

³⁰ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 214.

³¹ "Swimming Pool Opens," *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 26 May 1936, p. 1; Hillcrest swimming pool and park National Register nomination.

Theatres

In 1936, a new show house that could seat 400 persons was constructed inside a former wholesale grocery store. The *Clovis Evening News* reported that as of yet there was neither a name, nor a “policy” for the new theater.³² This may have been an oblique reference to whether or not the theater would be racially segregated. According to the interviews they conducted in 1954, researchers Williams and Ryan reported that “all movies except one would admit Negroes.”³³

The last big event for the Mesa Theatre was a political gathering in support of John F. Kennedy late in October of 1960. The Mesa was running on fumes, open just two days a week and trying to make it financially featuring all-Spanish films. It would close within a month of this event on 20 November 1960. The second Mesa Theatre suffered a major fire and was rebuilt in 1948. Operator E. R. Hardwick said that everything in the theater would be new, “including the four (segregated) rest rooms.”³⁴ It is unclear as to whether the word segregation referred to race or gender. The architect for the project was Jack Corgan, who – at a client’s request -- did design racially segregated theatres elsewhere in the Southwest.

Long-time Clovis resident Robert Patrick recalls that the Mesa theater was just across the street from the Hotel Clovis, adjacent to the railroad tracks, and was:

tacitly thought of as a diversion for ‘transients,’ which would include traveling salesmen, land- or cattle-buyers, military personnel, migratory workers, and the like. One could pick up illegal whisky at the Mesa. ‘That end of town’ was thought of as slightly sleazy, although it can’t have been more than five blocks from the shiny intersection of Main and Seventh Streets, where the Courthouse, the First Methodist Church, the high school, and the wholesome commercial paradise of The Village (an early miniature mall with a soda shop, record store, and magazine stand) presided over virtuous pursuits. On those rare occasions when an ‘adult’ movie was allowed to slip into town, it played at the Mesa.³⁵

³² “New Theatre for South Main Soon,” *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 30 November 1936, p. 1.

³³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 214.

³⁴ Available on-line at cinematreaasures.org/theaters/15533/comments; *Boxoffice* newsletter (6 March 1948).

³⁵ Patrick, Robert. “New Mexico Movie Houses of My Youth,” available on-line at robertpatrickpersonal.wordpress.com/2012/08/13/new-mexico-movie-houses-of-my-youth (2012).

State Theatre

Patrick remembers that the State Theatre, with its famous “Tower” sign, was the top-notch theater that showed the latest movies:

The State got the M.G.M., Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Brothers, and Walt Disney pictures. It was where one took ‘nice girls’ for dates. The Silver Grill was right next door for Cokes, sandwiches, or sundaes after a show. The State featured Gene Kelly, Betty Grable, and Doris Day/Gordon MacRae Technicolor musicals.³⁶

The Sunshine Theatre

According to Robert Patrick, the Sunshine was on the same side of Main Street as the State, right across a cross-street, next door to the Thrifty Drug:

The Sunshine was narrow-fronted and inconspicuous... I think the Sunshine had been a silent movie theatre and never altered its façade. The Sunshine got mostly Paramount, RKO, Columbia, Universal, and United Artists movies. The Sunshine featured black-and-white Ma and Pa Kettle or Francis the Talking Mule or Martin and Lewis comedies or an RKO sociological drama.³⁷

The Lyceum

The Lyceum, across Main Street from the Sunshine, was in the early 1950s, Patrick recalls, the ‘kids’ theatre’ of Clovis, playing double bills of shoot-‘em-up westerns, car-chase cop movies, and wacky kid-comedies. The Lyceum also featured live performances. Harking back to its start as a vaudeville house and live theater, it boasted full stage riggings, ropes, and belaying-pin racks.³⁸

Skating Rink

W. C. Boyce and Mey Hunt, formerly of Carlsbad, announced the 1934 opening of a roller-skating rink in the old Jungleland building at the corner of Second and Axtell streets. The establishment was known as the Clovis Roller-Skating Rink, and featured a new maple floor.³⁹ It is not known whether Black residents were welcomed.

³⁶ Patrick, Robert. “New Mexico Movie Houses of My Youth,” available on-line at robertpatrickpersonal.wordpress.com/2012/08/13/new-mexico-movie-houses-of-my-youth (2012).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “Opening Skating Rink,” *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 16 January 1934, p. 1.

Bars and Restaurants

In a December 1960 letter to the Editor, Manzy Simms referenced the controversy over the fact that there were currently no whiskey licenses in the Black section of town. “They made a mistake in not supplying a place for colored people to buy a drink,” wrote Simms. She then countered the city attorney’s contention that the Clovis bars were integrated:

I care not how many laws the city attorney quotes on colored people drinking at any they wish. (It just hain’t so) and you and I know it. It may be so in theory but not in fact and we are dealing in facts... Sincerely yours, Manzy Simms.⁴⁰

Lincoln Jackson School

The following history was prepared by Bruce and Joyce Pollard during the process of nominating the Lincoln Jackson School to the National Register of Historic Places. Known originally as the “Colored School,” a segregated school for African Americans was organized in 1924. Classes were held at Patterson Chapel CME Church located at 609 West First Street in an industrial area along the rail yard. The first year started with two students and one teacher, Marjorie Ford from Temple, Texas. In 1926, classes were moved to Bethlehem Baptist Church at First and Calhoun streets. In that year, Ida O. Jackson began her twenty-eight-year teaching career in Clovis. She taught five students in her first year. In 1929, the Clovis school board acquired the school, which became part of the Clovis school system. Then referred to as the “Clovis Colored School,” the school for African American children remained at Bethlehem Baptist church until 1930. That year, the school system purchased a one-room house and two lots at 104 and 106 Merriwether Street to serve as the school for African American children in Clovis. By 1935, enrollment reached thirty-five students and James Williams served as principal.⁴¹

In 1938, the Clovis school system, in need of a larger campus, purchased the block bounded by Alphon, Beta, and West Second streets and West Grand Avenue. The site comprised four wood-frame buildings: a U-shaped barracks building, and three small domestic-type buildings. In 1941, the school was named Lincoln Jackson School in honor of former teacher Ida O. Jackson and President Abraham Lincoln. In 1945, two new teachers were hired.⁴²

By 1948, the student population reached 122 students. In 1949, the school system added 12th grade to the curriculum and the school was renamed Lincoln Jackson High School. In 1950, five teachers taught 154 students with “no biology equipment, and the school subscribed to no magazines or periodicals for its spare library.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Letter to the Editor, *Clovis News Journal*, 14 December 1960, p. 21.

⁴¹ Pollard, Bruce and Joyce. “Lincoln Jackson School.” National Register of Historic Places Registration/Nomination Form. Lincoln Jackson Alumni Association, Clovis (NM) 25 August 2017.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

In compliance with the 1954 Supreme Court decision, the Clovis school system converted Lincoln Jackson High School to a racially-integrated elementary school. African American students attended the newly desegregated Clovis Junior High and Clovis High School.⁴⁴ The Lincoln Jackson School listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is significant at the state level under National Register Criterion A in the areas of black ethnic heritage and social history because the school—the gymnasium and the 1954 classroom building—is an important example of a school built in the last years of racial segregation in eastern New Mexico. The school served as a predominantly African American elementary school from 1954 to 1965. The Lincoln Jackson School in Clovis, New Mexico, is eligible for listing at the state level under National Register Criterion A in the area of education because the racially segregated campus was the only school in Clovis that provided primary, middle, and secondary education for African American children from 1938 until the Clovis school system desegregated its schools in 1954.⁴⁵

Discrimination, Persecution, and Prejudice

In a 1919 article headlined, “Clovis, Curry County, N. M.” the following information was presented as historical fact:

Its Commercial Club slogan is *10,000 in 1920*. Twelve years ago, it did not exist – today it is a growing city of 6,500. It is the biggest city of its age in the southwest. It is the fifth largest city in the state... Clovis is the commercial and transportation center of Eastern New Mexico... *Clovis is a white man’s town*, there being few negroes or Mexicans here.¹

Juxtaposed with boosting or promoting the town to attract White newcomers, the local press also dutifully reported smatterings of national and regional news, in addition to Clovis occurrences. There was never a shortage of petty crimes and mishaps involving Blacks reported in the regional press. Routinely demeaning, the following brief examples typify the local reporting at the time. Unsavory incidents involving Blacks made front-page news, while similar circumstances involving White residents tended to be buried deeper within the pages of the newspaper:

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. See also: United States Commission on Civil Rights, New Mexico Advisory Committee: “The Civil Rights Status of Minority Groups in Clovis, New Mexico: A Summary of a Meeting of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the United State Commission on Civil Rights.” (Washington DC: Government Services Administration, May 1969), p. 4-5.

¹ “Clovis, Curry County, N. M.,” *The Clovis News*, 16 October 1919, p. 12. Emphasis added.

Several of the negroes in town, it seems, have been engaging in their favorite past time of shooting craps during the few days previous to the fracas, and the quarrel resulted over a division of the spoils of the game. Doc Howard has been in Clovis for several months and is a porter at the Sanitary Barber Shop. Watts has been here only a few weeks, but had been here before. Both negroes have served in the army.²

The following anecdote proffered by Clovis columnist Mose Crutch references Waynoka, a town in Oklahoma located approximately five hours East of Clovis:

Two colored men were overheard talking at the [Clovis] depot the other morning and the course of the conversation was something like this: 'Boy, you is going to be here all day, isn't you?' 'I sure is with nothing to do but walk around and see the town.' 'Say, boy, if these people here is like the people in Waynoka you may walk out but they sure will have to carry you back.'³

Charges were still pending when the following incident was reported in the local newspaper:

Authorities had not filed charges today against either of two Clovis negro men who were involved in a cutting scrape in a house in the colored section of town Wednesday afternoon... Only one knife was found by the officers. Milligan, a local hotel porter, was only slightly injured in the fight.⁴

Perpetually relegated to unemployment, under-employment, menial labor, or service jobs -- livelihoods for people of color in Clovis were inexorably linked to limited educational opportunities. Researchers Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan conveyed the following information based upon their 1954 on-site fieldwork:

Until the early 1920s, there had been no school for Negroes in Clovis. About that time one was started in the Baptist Church, with one teacher. Until six years ago, even after the Lincoln-Jackson School had been built, Negro children attended school only through the tenth grade. The first class of three to finish the twelfth grade graduated in 1950. At that time the school employed five teachers.⁵

² "Crap Game Causes Negro Shooting Scrape," *The Clovis News*, 14 August 1919, p. 1.

³ "Railroad News by Mose Crutch," *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 23 July 1929, p. 6.

⁴ "Negro Held After Cutting Affray," *Clovis News Journal*, 22 August 1940, p. 1.

⁵ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), pp. 214-215.

Disturbing as it is, that Black students were limited to a tenth-grade high school education until the 1950s, it is even more devastating to understand that education is nearly always directly linked to employment opportunities. Through no fault of their own, without holding a high school degree, these residents were virtually guaranteed a lifetime of menial work. The only way out of this circumstance was to seek high school educations elsewhere, or to find colleges that would admit them without diplomas.

New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights

The United States Commission on Civil Rights is an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957. Later, the Act was amended by the Civil Rights Acts of 1960 and 1964. One of its many duties is to regularly submit reports to the President and Congress. An Advisory Committee was established in each state.⁶

In April 1968, New Mexico's Advisory Committee held a 2-day closed meeting in Clovis to explore the civil rights status of African American and Spanish-surnamed Americans with a special emphasis on their challenges with employment and education. More than 30 private citizens, public and private employers, government officials and representatives of local organizations, participated.⁷

In May 1969, the New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights prepared a meeting summary that must have stunned most unaware White residents:

Information brought before the Committee during those two days revealed a long-standing pattern of discrimination in Clovis that has become a way of life. It is deeply ingrained and all-pervasive, permeating every institution and social and economic structure of the community. *It is accepted so thoroughly by the Anglo population that those who might act otherwise do not even realize they are discriminating.* For the Spanish surnamed American and the Negro American it means a stonewall – a lifetime of unequal opportunity that begins in school and is extended into the areas of employment and political participation.⁸

⁶ United States Commission on Civil Rights, New Mexico Advisory Committee: "The Civil Rights Status of Minority Groups in Clovis, New Mexico: A Summary of a Meeting of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the United State Commission on Civil Rights." (Washington DC: Government Services Administration, May 1969), p. *i*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸ United States Commission on Civil Rights, New Mexico Advisory Committee: "The Civil Rights Status of Minority Groups in Clovis, New Mexico: A Summary of a Meeting of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the United State Commission on Civil Rights." (Washington DC: Government Services Administration, May 1969), p. 1. Emphasis added.

The most troubling aspect of the findings was the realization that the daily discrimination was so pervasive, so deeply systemic, that the Committee concluded the Anglo population of Clovis for the most part did not even realize they were behaving prejudicially. It is difficult to discern whether members of the White majority were genuinely unaware, willfully ignorant, or willingly complicit in the daily prejudices that Clovis' minorities confronted.

During the course of the Committee inquiry, instances of teachers using derogatory language to minority students were documented:

He got mad at one of the Spanish American boys and he called him a 'Spic' and he told him to get up there on the stage and tell him what the lesson was... He got mad at this colored boy, and he said, 'All right, nigger, come here, I want to talk to you.' He just pulled him by the collar of his shirt, pulled him toward the wall, and made him stand there for the rest of the class.'⁹

Another parent said that the lack of recognition of minority students' abilities caused them to lose incentive. He remarked that, "even if a Negro boy is twice as good as an Anglo boy at playing ball, they will make sure it is not the Negro who gets the recognition."¹⁰

Prior to the arrival of the State Advisory Committee on Civil Rights to Clovis, "the principal of Marshall Junior High School was reported to have announced over the loud speaker several times that 'if anyone said anything about Marshall Junior High, that student or teacher would be kicked out.'"¹¹

Despite such efforts to obstruct the Committee members, numerous personal testimonies compelled the Committee to conclude that discrimination was firmly embedded in every facet of life in Clovis. Though their report dealt primarily with employment and education, the Committee observed that "the minority populations have inadequate opportunities in the political and social life of Clovis as well" simply because the majority imposed the standards. Lamented the civil rights investigators, "There is no sensitivity to, interest in, or concession to cultural or educational differences."¹²

The Committee's summary report highlighted the discrimination prevalent "in all aspects of employment in both the public and private sectors." These disparities were noted in hiring practices, rates of pay, and scarce opportunities for promotion. In a casual admission of how commonplace unfair practices were, an official responded to a complaint from a Black employee whose advancement had been consistently thwarted by retorting, "Well you understand one thing young man, I promote whomever I please, whether they are qualified or not."¹³ Most minority workers in Clovis, stated the report unequivocally, "have menial and

⁹ Ibid., p. 19-20.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 19-20.

¹² Ibid., p. 23.

¹³ Ibid., p. 10.

dead-end jobs.”¹⁴ Although more time was spent on documenting inequalities than offering solutions, the Committee did attribute the pervasive discriminations to a perpetual “lack of representation of the minority populations in the political structure of Clovis, including boards and commissions.”¹⁵ In concluding their important work, the members of the Committee stated their fervent hope that the report would “stimulate immediate action to reverse the life conditions portrayed.”¹⁶

It is worth noting that additional research will be required to fully understand the extent of the body of work created by the NM Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Did they conduct interviews in other New Mexico towns? If not, why not? Were their efforts impeded in other locales? Although the results may have been unflattering and incriminatory, it is a credit to the city of Clovis that the Committee was able to conduct their interviews, and that the results were published. If other similar reports can be located, they may provide the best snapshots to date of the era of Jim Crow in New Mexico.

Entertainment

Juneteenth

In 1934, with slavery having ended 71 years earlier, “Clovis negroes” and “colored folk from all over Eastern New Mexico and West Texas” were anticipating the all-day Emancipation Celebration at Cavalry Park according to an article in the *Clovis Evening News*. At noon there was to be a free picnic barbecue, and later on a baseball game between the Clovis Sunshiners and the Clovis Boosters. A dance at the Spanish-American Hall in the 700 block on W. First Street was to be held that night, and all “white friends” were invited.¹ The year before, permission to use Cavalry Park “for the day of June 19th has been given the colored people of Clovis.” The Mayor, J. A. Carter asked that “they all join us as one body and have a glorious day.”² In 1938, Emancipation Day was celebrated at Hillcrest Park. The *Clovis News Journal* announced that the program for the day promised to “be the biggest that’s ever been held in

¹⁴ United States Commission on Civil Rights, New Mexico Advisory Committee, *The Civil Rights Status of Minority Groups in Clovis, New Mexico: A Summary of a Meeting of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights*. May 1969), p. 23.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ United States Commission on Civil Rights, New Mexico Advisory Committee: “The Civil Rights Status of Minority Groups in Clovis, New Mexico: A Summary of a Meeting of the New Mexico State Advisory Committee to the United State Commission on Civil Rights.” (Washington DC: Government Services Administration, May 1969), p. 1.

¹ “‘Juneteenth,’ Emancipation Day, Will be Celebrated in Colored Section Tomorrow,” *Clovis New Mexico Evening News Journal*, 18 June 1934, p. 1.

² “‘June Teenth’ will be Celebrated in Clovis by City Colored Folk,” *Clovis New Mexico Evening News Journal*, 8 ay 1936, p. 11.

Clovis for the colored people.” The “White citizens” were “extended a cordial invitation” to attend.³

Boxing

The boxing arena was one of the earliest venues shared by all races and attended by ethnically partitioned audiences. One eyewitness recounted the following match:

The colored boy was a comical sight in the ring, and the fans expected to see the Fort Sumner flash knock him out in an early round. But McDonald took everything Perry slung at him and only grinned, licked his lips, ‘bugged’ his eyes out and made fun of the white fighter. He retaliated by flooring Perry twice for nine counts, while the colored section screamed for a knockout.⁴

Desegregation

By May 1954, Clovis and Hobbs were the only cities in the state, Education Department officials stated, which still maintained separate high schools “for Negro pupils.”¹ Without providing specific names, the officials acknowledged that there were additional communities “which do not practice ‘the philosophy of segregation’ but which have all-Negro schools in all-Negro residential areas.”² Well into the 1950s there were cases “where an athletic team with a Negro Member was not welcomed in some East Side cities.”³

It bears mentioning that some parents within the Clovis Black community wanted to keep their students out of White schools to avoid prejudicial treatment. Many also wanted to keep their own successful athletic teams by not integrating. In noting both of these circumstances, researchers Williams and Ryan concluded that these feeling resonated within the larger White community as well, because they too “appeared to favor segregation.”⁴

Of course, the Supreme Court’s ruling to desegregate schools nationally meant that it was no longer a local decision. The *Albuquerque Journal* described the situation as being “the most

³ “Emancipation Day to be Celebrated on Monday Here,” *Clovis News Journal*, 10 June 1938, p. 1.

⁴ “Skinny Amarillo Negro Proves He Can Take Plenty – Dick Vick Chops Velasquez Down in Three Rounds; Looks Likely,” *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 12 September 1936, p. 7.

¹ “Clovis, Hobbs Will Feel Ruling on Segregation,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 18 May 1954, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 217.

explosive North-South issue since the Civil War.”⁵ New Mexico, as one of twenty-one states that permitted segregation, had already largely divested itself from separate schools from a practical stance. It had simply become too costly to maintain separate systems. With only Clovis and Hobbs remaining, State Superintendent Wiley succinctly stated that “New Mexico will work out the necessary details to conform with the Supreme Court decision.”⁶

Biographies Clovis

Biographies

Norvil Howell, Earl Gene Large, Sr., Roy Ebihara, Ida O. Jackson, Travis Stovall

Oral Histories

Living Histories

Oscar Robinson, Patsy Delk, Geni Flores, Selmus Price

Geni Flores teaches at Eastern New Mexico State University. Her areas of expertise include Teacher Education, Bilingual Education, teaching English to speakers of other languages, and celebrating cultural diversity. She is White, 64 years old, and lives in Portales. She has also lived in the Virgin Islands, Carlsbad, Lovington, New Jersey, and New Orleans. Her responses to the research questionnaire are included in this study, because her experiences in the Deep South seared her memory, and have affected her interactions with all people ever since. She and her husband were very active during the struggle for Civil Rights in southeastern New Mexico. She served as the Diversity Instructor at ENMU for 16 years.

⁵ “Non-Segregation Ruling,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 18 May 1954, p. 6.

⁶ Ibid. Also: “Negro Parents in Carlsbad to File Petition: To Seek ‘Full De-Segregation’ in School System,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 9 July 1954, p. 1 and a prepared statement by Hubert LaGrone, president of the state chapter of the NAACP, quoted in, “Clovis Making Sincere Effort, Negroes Believe,” *Clovis News Journal*, 5 August 1954, p. 1.

SELECTED IMAGES CLOVIS, NM

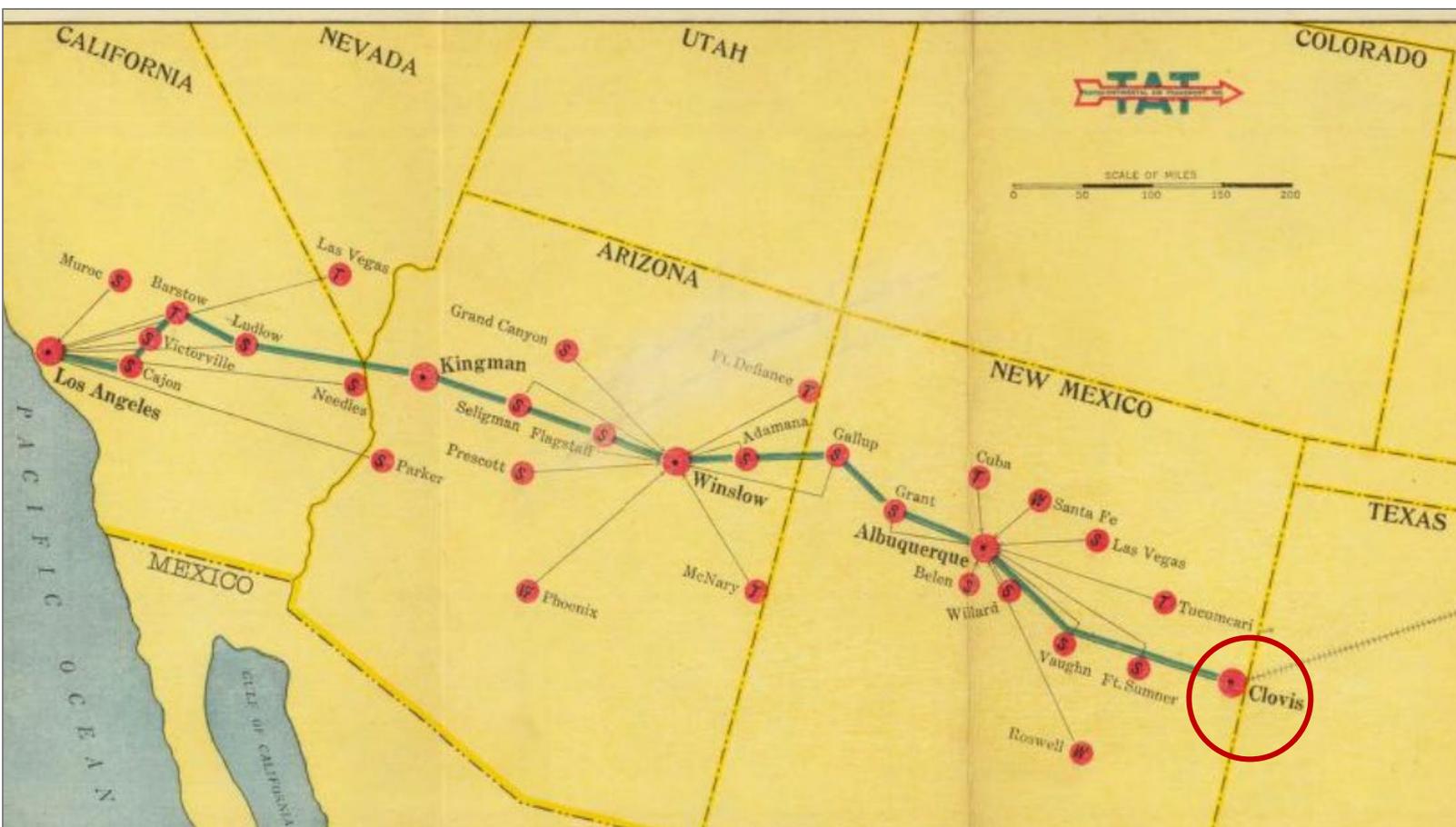


Figure 84. Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT)

TRANSCONTINENTAL AIR TRANSPORT (TAT)

In 1929 Clovis, NM became part of an innovative concept in coast-to-coast transportation. The founders of Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT) were businessmen led by Clement M. Keys, president of Curtiss Aeroplane and Motors Company, and included famed aviator Charles A. Lindbergh. They envisioned a combined air-and-rail service to take passengers across the country from New York to Los Angeles in forty-eight hours.

Lindbergh laid out the route. Travelers would sleep in Pullman cars on trains by night and fly on TAT's Ford Tri-Motor planes by day. On 7 July 1929, the inaugural Pennsylvania Railroad train left New York City with passengers bound for Columbus, OH. There on July 8 they transferred to TAT. They made several more stops before arriving at Waynoka, OK where they boarded the Santa Fe train for Clovis. On 9 July, they flew from Clovis into Los Angeles.

Well-known personas such as Will Rogers, William G. McAdoo (Pres. Woodrow Wilson's former treasury secretary), and journalist Ernie Pyle were among the first to bring national attention to each stop along the way. Both Amelia Earhart and Charles Lindbergh held positions within the company.

The short-lived but pioneering venture will be another viable topic to pursue in understanding the Black experience during this time period.



Figure 85. "Accused Negro Lynched by Mob..."

Racial violence including public lynchings in neighboring states routinely made front-page Clovis news for decades. Many Southern-born locals followed closely the violence that most hoped they had left behind.

Source: *Clovis Evening News*, 27 October 1934, p. 1.



Figure 86. Potash car cleaners

Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad yard employees, hired to clean the potash cars.

Location: Clovis, NM

Date: 1943

Repository: Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Photographer: J. Delano

Available on-line at: loc.gov/item/201784465



Figure 87. Potash car cleaners

Abbie Caldwell, employed in the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad yard to clean potash cars.

Location: Clovis, NM

Date: 1943

Repository: Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Photographer: J. Delano

Available on-line at: loc.gov/item/201784465

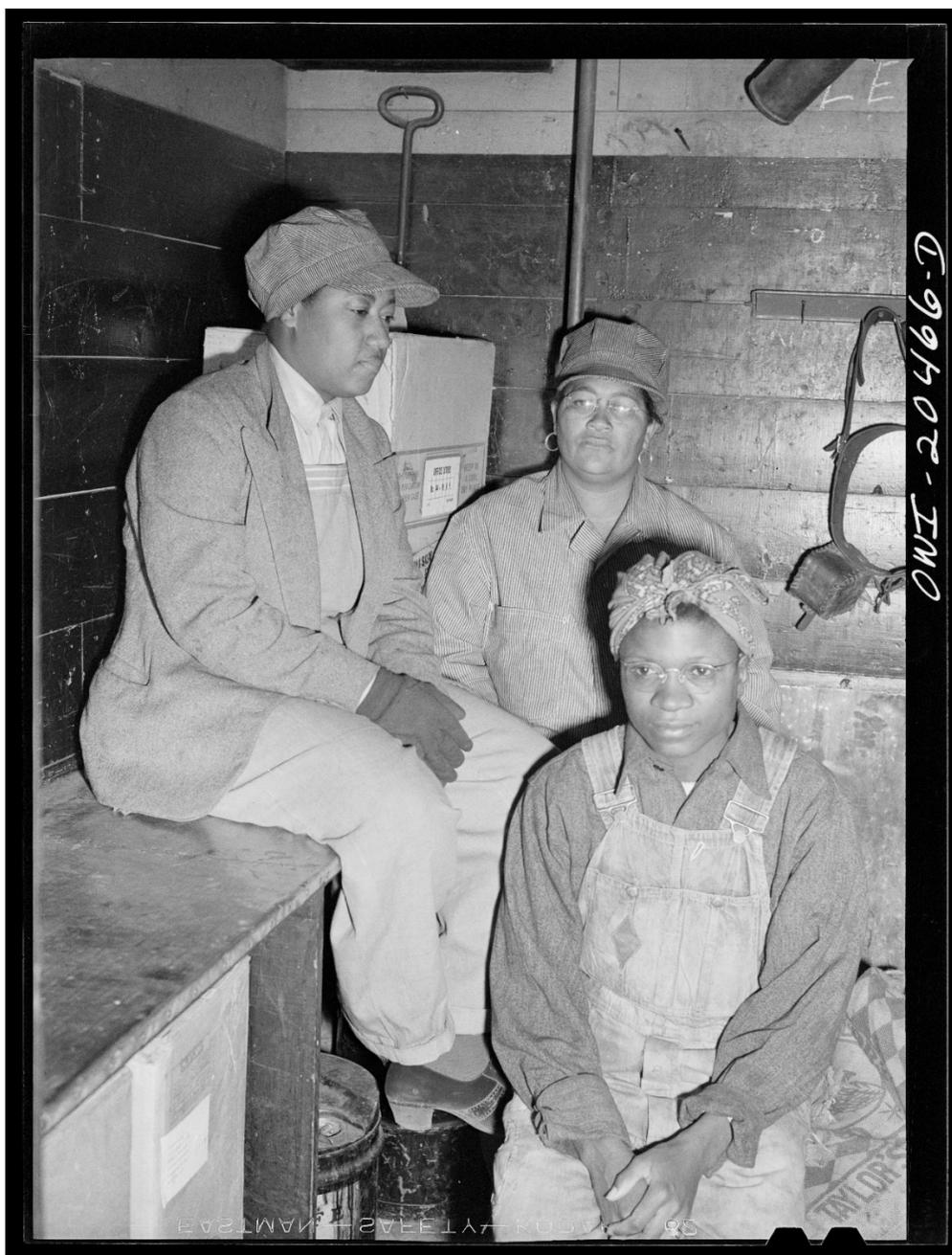


Figure 88. Potash car cleaners

Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad yard employees, hired to clean the potash cars.

Location: Clovis, NM

Date: 1943

Repository: Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Photographer: J. Delano

Available on-line at: loc.gov/item/201784465



Figure 89. "8-Piece Colored Orchestra"

"Featuring Dutch Campbell and His Rhythm Boys (8-piece Colored Orchestra)"

Source: "Newspaper advertisement," *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 23
January 1934, p. 6.

Dance!

AT
Jungleland
CLOVIS, N. M.
TONIGHT

Presenting
Fitzhugh and His
Orchestra

ONE NIGHT ONLY
Music by Buffalo Rhythm
Stompers, 6-pc. colored or-
chestra, every Wednes-
day; 9 till--? Change of
Orchestras on Saturday
nights.

Figure 90. "6-pc. colored orchestra"

"Music by Buffalo Rhythm Stompers, 6-pc. colored orchestra..."

The Jungleland was the local roller-skating rink.

Source: "Newspaper advertisement," *Clovis Evening News Journal*, 11 July 1931, p. 6.



Figure 91. "... colored people only..."

"Colored people only..." Classified Advertisement (1953)

Source: *Clovis News Journal*, 22 July 1953, p. 7.

Colored People To Have A Great Revival

Dr. J. W. Bailey, National Evangelist from Marshall, Texas, will preach at the Bethlehem Baptist Church all this week.

Dr. Bailey is not only a national man, but of international repute, having gone abroad in the interest of evangelistic work. He has a broad experience, and is a wonderful preacher. It is through the effort of the Moderator of the state association and pastor that his services have been secured.

The entire City is cordially invited. There will be special seats for our White friends.

O. F. DIXON, Pastor

Figure 92. "Colored People to Have a Great Revival"

"Colored People to Have a Great Revival... There will be special seats for our White friends."

Source: *Clovis New Mexico Evening News Journal*, 13 July 1936, p. 2.

If you want to have
 a while of a good time
 And Laugh like the Dickens
 be there to see the
LIONS CLUB
COON VALLEY
MINSTRELS
 ... ON OUR STAGE ...
 FRIDAY and SATURDAY
 NIGHTS

CLOVIS ASKED
 for another minstrel
 show. Here it is! The
 first one in six years
 ... and it's a hum-
 dinger!



FUN! MUSIC! GAGS! DANCING!
 Coon Valley Choir
 Harmony the Dixie Way
 Leather Burning Dance Specialties
COON VALLEY QUARTETTE
 Singing the Way You Like It
 Coon Valley Country Store
 Never Anything Like It Before

30—ENTERTAINERS—30

Figure 93. Lion's Club "Coon Valley Minstrels"

"Coon Valley Minstrels," Newspaper Advertisement.

Source: *Clovis News Journal*, 4 April 1940, p. 6.



Figure 94. Main Street Clovis

“Main Street, Clovis, New Mexico. Population 6,522.”

Source: National Hispanic Cultural Center History and Literary Arts
Barelas Collection: Box 1, Folder 4, Image 485 (NHCC 00016). No date.

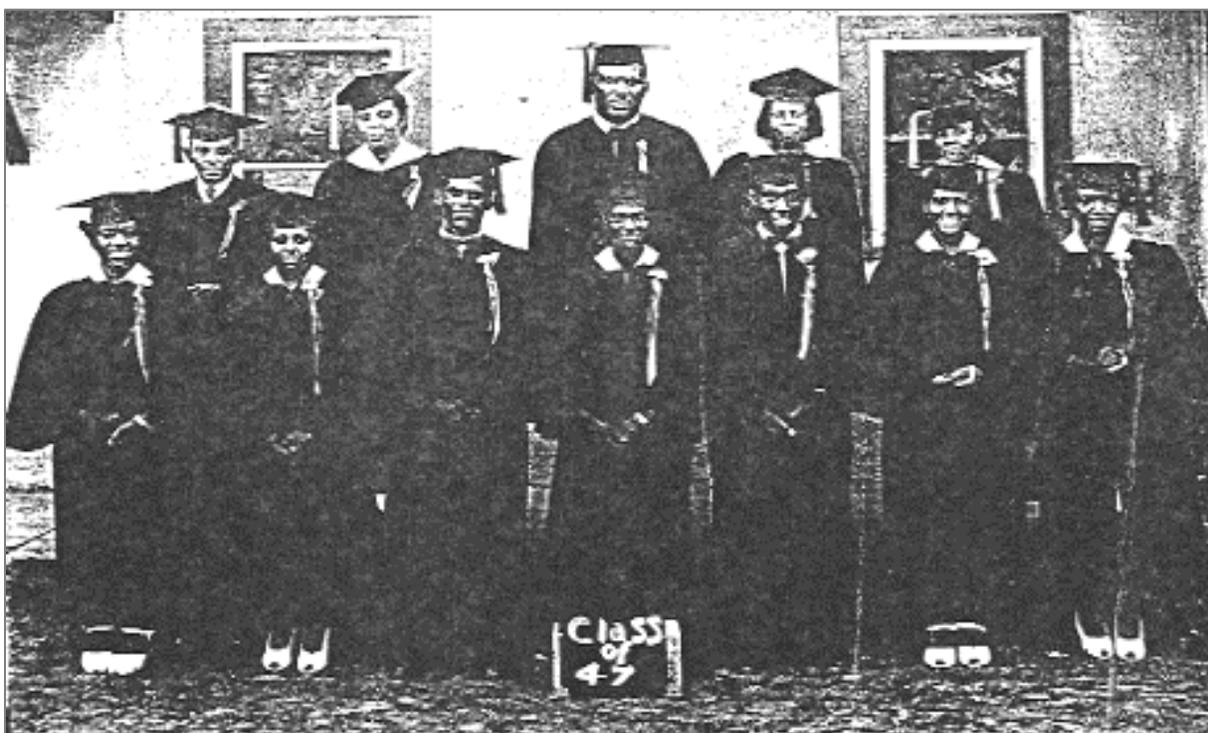


Figure 95. Graduating Class of 1947

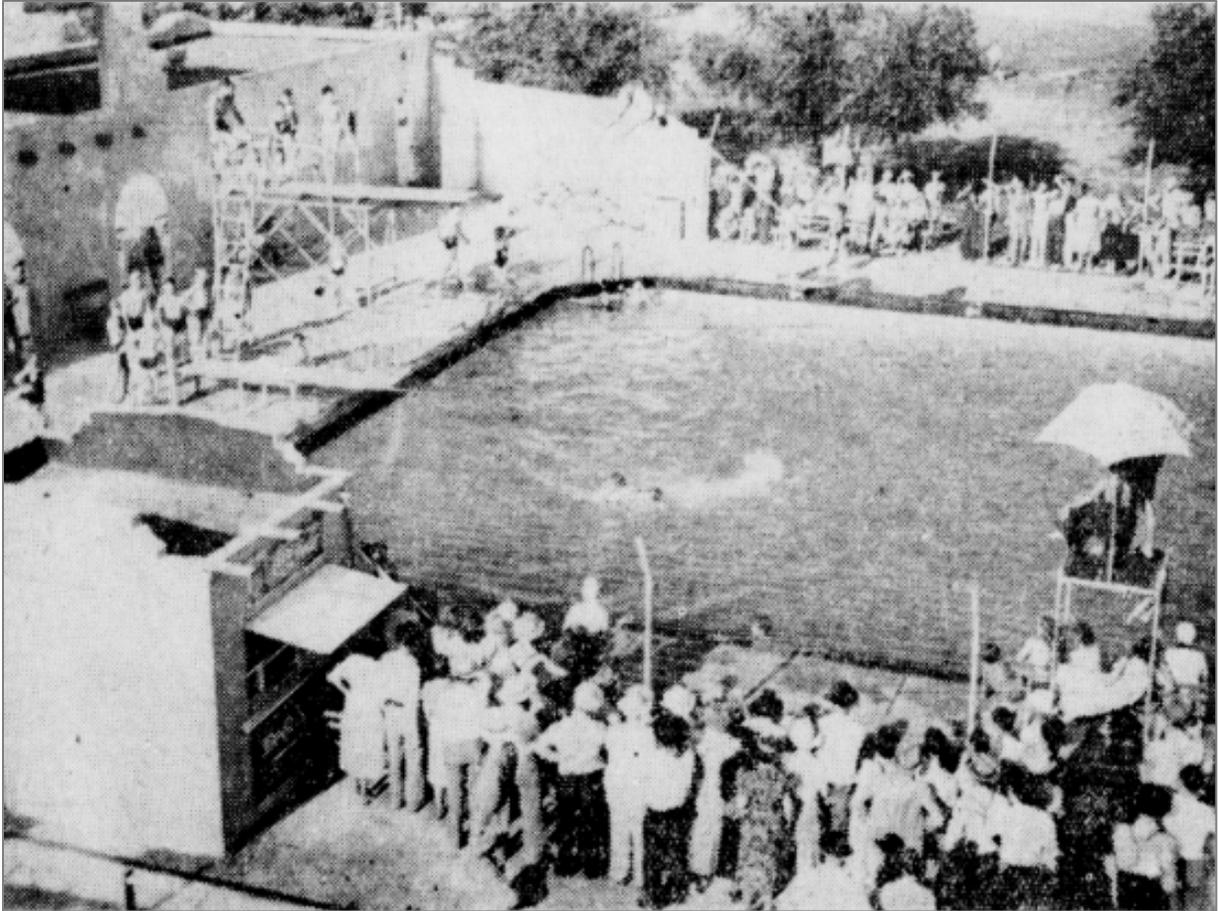


Figure 96. Fourth of July Hillcrest Park (1938)

“Duck’s Eye View of the water carnival at the municipal swimming pool here yesterday was snapped by a *News-Journal* photographer who scaled a nearby tower. The picture shows part of the crowd which lined the fence to the fun and a diver may be seen jack-knifing off the high board. The water sports were part of the Fourth of July celebration at Hillcrest Park.”

The municipal swimming pool at Hillcrest park officially opened in May 1936. The pool was segregated, with a separate facility, Potter Pool, constructed many years later at the opposite end of town for African-Americans and Hispanos.

Source: *Clovis News Journal*, 5 July 1938, p. 1.



Figure 97. Ida O. Jackson and her students

“Ida O. Jackson, top right, taught in the Clovis school district for 28 years.”

Courtesy photo: High Plains Historical Foundation, n.d.



Figure 98. Mesa Theatre, Clovis

"Maisie Gets Her Man" at the Mesa Theatre (Clovis)

Repository: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives.

Credit: Jack Hill.

Photo date: June 1942

Source: *The Clovis Times* newspaper photo.

FREE SHOW Tonight at 7:30 all this week and next week.
 Corner Grand and Main Streets, Clovis

H. D. Rucker and His Famous Korak Wonders
 Including "The La Dells" and Billy La Dell, the famous blackface minstrel

Before you go home take some Korak Wonder and Korak Oil with you. They are now being sold at advertising prices. Ask your neighbor about them. Don't forget to loosen up that stiff joint or to remove the pain and soreness from those feet. Try a bottle of Ruckers Korak Oil for that jumping tooth ache, neuralgia, headache, rheumatic pain, wire cuts and lameness.

If you have any stomach, bowel, bladder, kidney or blood trouble try Rucker's Korak Wonder.

If you have a child addicted to bed-wetting try a box of Korak Wonder.

If you are troubled with getting up during the night, don't fail to give Korak Wonder a trial.

Come out and enjoy some wholesome amusement, free to all tonight, corner Main and Grand.

Figure 99. "... Billy La Dell, the famous blackface minstrel"

"...Including 'The La Dells' and Billy La Dell, the famous blackface minstrel..."

Advertisement for H. D. Rucker and His Famous Korak Wonders.

Source: *The Clovis News*, 15 July 1920, p. 9.



Figure 100. Norman Petty studio, Clovis

The String-A-Alongs, Buddy Holly, Jimmie Gilmer and the Fireballs, and the Everly Brothers all recorded at the Norman Petty studio (Clovis, NM). Buddy Holly in particular merged country with rock-and-roll, and bridged racial divides (Source: Stock Internet images).



Figure 101. Opening event Clovis municipal pool

Participants in opening events for municipal pool (Clovis, NM)

Repository: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum (Santa Fe)

Date: 1937

Identifier: HP.2010.40.01

Photographer: Jack Hull



Figure 102. Multi-racial company outing

Black-and-white photo of a multi-racial Clovis company outing (n.d)

Repository: National Hispanic Cultural Center, Department of History and Literary Arts

Identifier: NHCC 00245

Source: NHCC Barelas Collection, Box 5, Folder 5, Image 421.



Figure 103. "Segregation in Nation's Schools Outlawed..."

"Segregation in Nation's Schools Outlawed... Clovis, Hobbs Will Feel Ruling on Segregation."

Source: *Albuquerque Journal*, 18 May 1954, p. 1.



Figure 104. AT&SF Railroad Train Station

Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) Railroad Train Station at Clovis, NM

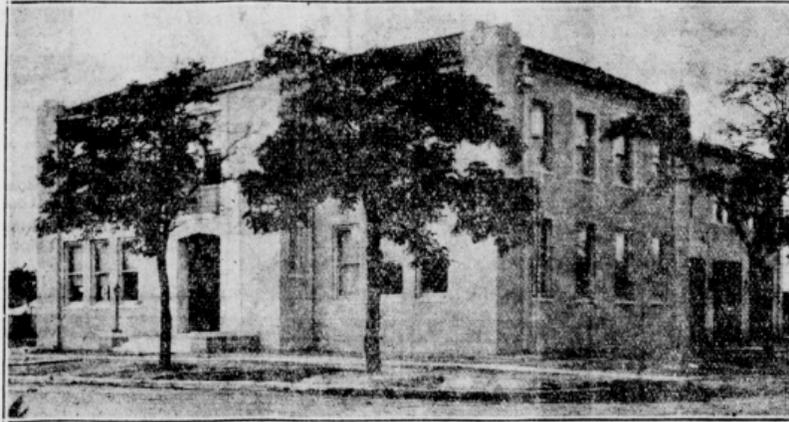
The Santa Fe Men's Club was a fraternal organization organized by Black AT&SF porters and railroad workers.

Source: National Archives Records Administration (NARA). Record Group 79. Identifier: NPS_NM 95001451.



Figure 105. Norman Petty's studio

(Top to bottom) Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Hank Ballard and the Midnights, Bo Diddley, Charles Brown. In February 1957, 20-year-old Buddy Holly and his new band The Crickets drove west to Clovis and recorded their first single, "That'll be the Day," at Norman Petty's studio, which reached #1 on the Billboard chart in September later that year, and "Peggy Sue," which topped the hit list in October. Buddy Holly and his band publicly acknowledged their indebtedness to these and other Black artists.



CLOVIS CITY OFFICIALS
EXTEND A
WELCOME
TO OWNERS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE
HOTEL CLOVIS

We join with the entire populace in welcoming you to our community. It is our belief that you chose to locate your magnificent hotel in the finest town of the entire west. Feel that you are a part of us and let us all work toward the development of Clovis.

Ned Houk, Mayor

Ivan Bridges, City Manager

Commissioners:

Ralph Ross

J. T. Stalker

Ceph Graham, Chief of Police

R. V. Miller, Fire Chief

Hortense Westerfield, City Clerk

Figure 106. "Welcome...to Hotel Clovis"

Although denied entry as patrons, Hotel Clovis appears to have employed numerous African American porters and domestic workers.

Source: *The Clovis Evening News*, 19 October 1931, p. 7.

New **10^c** **Sunshine** **20^c** Theatre

LAST TIMES TODAY
 RONALD COLEMAN
 —IN—

"The Light That Failed"

PAL TICKET
 This Ticket With One Paid Adult
 Will Admit Two, Wednesday and
 Thursday.

10^c Friday and Saturday **20^c**

DOUBLE FEATURE PROGRAM

The Dead End Kids & Little Tough Guys
 in
'Give Us Wings'



Battling...
 brawling... bullying
 ...with eyes to the sky!

—AND—
 Johnny MacBrown Fuzzy Knight

—IN—

"RAGTIME COWBOY JOE"

5^c HEY— **5^c**
 KIDDIES

Special Kiddies' Matinee
 Saturday Morning 9:00 to 12:00

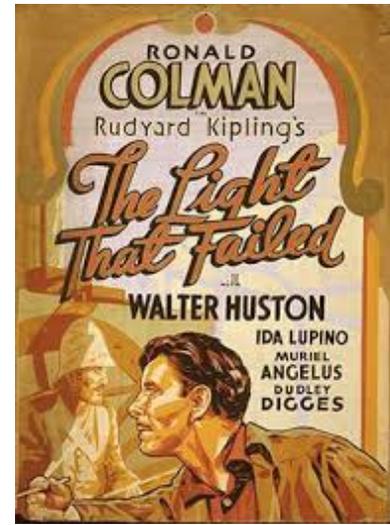


Figure 107. "The Light That Failed" movie featured local Black residents as extras

Source: Clovis News Journal, 5 June 1941, p. 6.

Venerated Spaces Black Community Clovis

NAME	TYPE	LOCATION
Darktown, etc.	Historically Black Neighborhood	South of Grand Ave.
Ida Jackson's Home	Federated Progressive Club	Verify location
Santa Fe Railroad	Roundhouse/Men's Club	Verify location
Harris-Simmons	Black-owned Hotel	Verify location
Black USO Cannon AFB	Community Center	113 W. First Street
National Register Sites	Sites, Structures, Buildings	Verify relevance
Works Projects Administration	Buildings	Verify relevance
Negro Motorist Green Book	Safe havens	Verify locations
Cavalry Park	Juneteenth Celebration Site	Verify location
Hillcrest Park	Juneteenth Celebration Site	Verify location
Japanese Internment Camp	Site	Verify relevance
Clovis Cemetery	Landscape	Verify relevance
"Colored" Baptist Church	Building	West Third Street
Mount Zion Baptist Church	Building	816 N. Davis
Potter Pool (for non-Whites)	Site	Verify location
Booker T. Washington HS	Building	Verify location
Church of Christ	Building	1400 E. Skelly Street
Lincoln - Jackson School	Building	Verify location
Gran Quivera Hotel	Fred Harvey hotel (integrated)	Verify location
Potter Pool	Swimming pool for minorities	Verify location
Boxing Arena	Recreation site (integrated)	Verify location

Table 4. Venerated Spaces Black Community Clovis

BLACK COMMUNITIES FOCUSED SOUTHWEST CORNER OF CLOVIS.

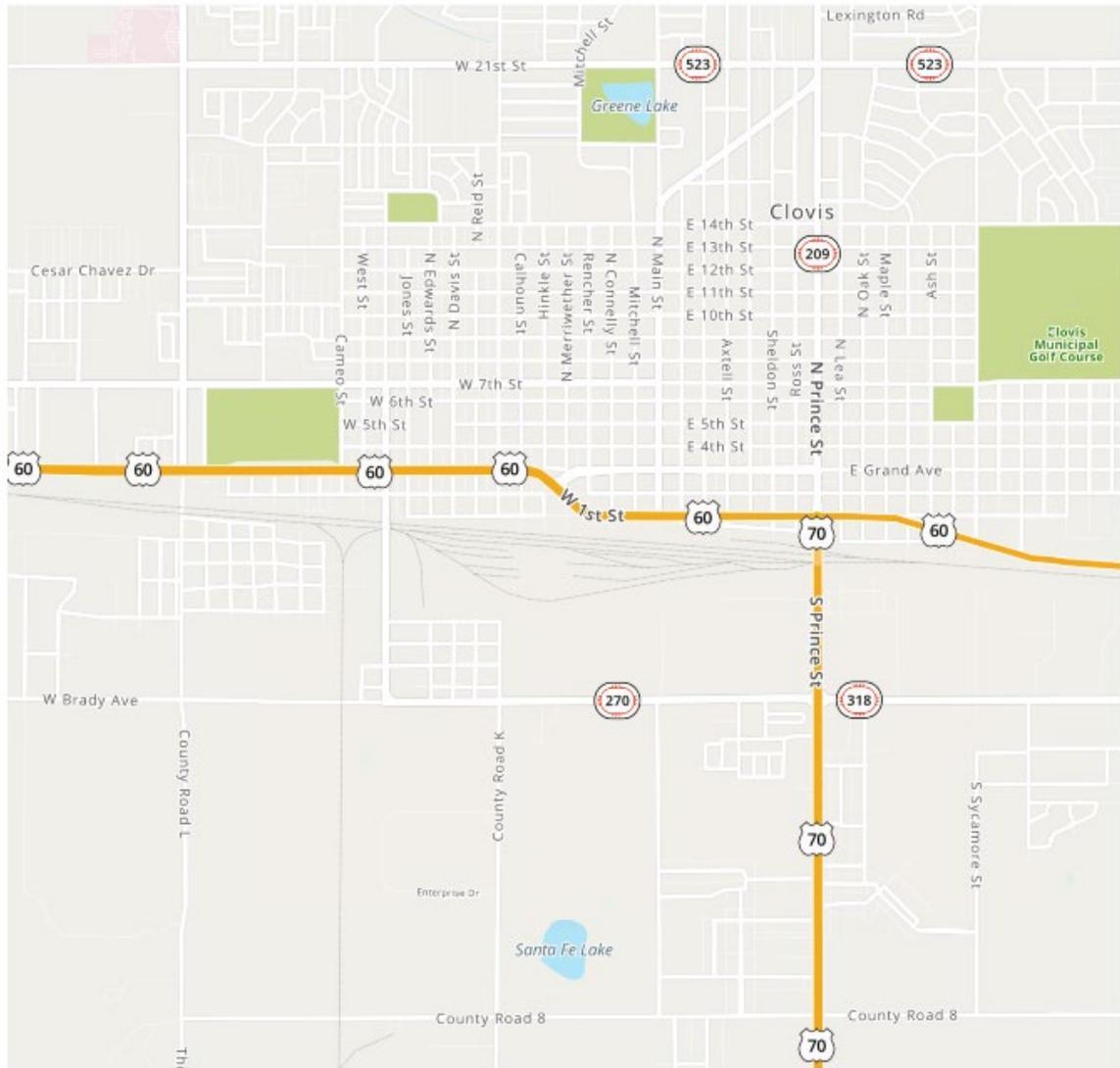


Figure 108. Map of historically Black neighborhood Clovis

Suggestions for Additional Research Clovis

Did C. Lindbergh's innovative Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT) service welcome or employ Blacks?

Which pre-World War II businesses were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks?

What boundaries (ex. streets, geographical features, railroad tracks) historically defined the Black community neighborhood?

Was there a known Ku Klux Klan presence in or near Clovis?

In addition to the organizations and alliances already mentioned, what additional groups existed to instill racial equality and fair practices?

What role did the "Colored" USO associated with Cannon AFB play in the daily life of Black residents?

What are the relationships between the National Register sites and the Black experience?

What are the relationships between the Works Projects Administration (WPA) sites and the Black experience?

How critical were the Black churches to the daily lives of Black residents? Were services and events inter-racial?

Before state and federal civil rights legislation was passed, which White-owned dining and hotel establishments employed Blacks? Welcomed Blacks?

The Pony League and the Little League were integrated before the schools were. Who was responsible for this? Where were the games played?

Which individuals, regardless of skin color, were largely credited with bringing about educational and social integration?

What were some of the successful civil rights strategies employed? A strong NAACP presence? Sit-ins? Boycotts? Demonstrations?

Were there any *Negro Motorist Green Book* sites in Clovis or the surrounding vicinity?

Where were the annual Juneteenth celebrations generally held and how was the Juneteenth tradition commemorated?

Was there any association between the Black residents of Clovis and the Japanese internment camp?

What more is known about the role of the Fred Harvey houses, in this case the Gran Quivera Hotel, in fostering inter-racial interactions at their establishments -- between workers and between patrons?

What was the Black experience in Clovis as it related to serving in the NM National Guard?

HOBBS



HOBBS

In March 1907, farmer James Isaac Hobbs and his family were the first to homestead what now constitutes the City of Hobbs, in southeastern New Mexico near the Texas state line. Other homesteaders soon followed. By 1909 there was a school and a general merchandise store. A post office was established in 1910. Sparsely populated, and supported economically by ranching and cotton farming, the settlement changed little between 1910 and 1927. Historian and *Hobbs Sun News* editor Gene Hinshaw notes that in 1927 the tiny town of Hobbs became “one of the last great oil booms of the West” after the discovery of oil and natural gas. Cranes and rigs “operated around the clock,” instant wealth poured forth, commandeered by “crews of soiled and sunburned working men,” surrounded by “flocks of developers, promoters, adventurers and professional people of every description” moving in tandem.¹

During the boom of the late 1920s, Hobbs was comprised of three distinct and separate townsites: Hobbs, New Hobbs, and All Hobbs. The village of Hobbs was incorporated on 7 August 1928. By 1929, additional amenities appeared. There were hotels and eateries, newspapers, new schools, automobiles, new housing, and in 1930 the Texas & New Mexico Railway connected the town with the Greater Southwest. By January 1931 oil prices were dropping fast. Oil field workers and their families picked up and left. In 1934 the economic trend reversed itself. A slow but persistent stream of people began moving into Hobbs once again. “The rush . . . now became a stampede of humanity that overflowed”² all three Hobbs townsite sections. The three communities – Hobbs, All Hobbs, and New Hobbs – merged and were granted city status by Gov. Clyde Tingley on 30 May 1937. For the rest of the decade, the oil fields prospered. Hobbs became a regional trade center for oil workers, ranchers, and farmers. It was considered one of the fastest growing cities in the United States at the time. Hobbs expanded from a settlement of 598 according to the 1930 federal census, to just under 14,000 in the 1950 census, to become the state’s petroleum center with a population exceeding 25,000 by 1960. Hobbs serves as a supply, shipping, and trading point for the oil-drilling industry and for the surrounding cattle ranches and artesian-irrigated farmlands. Nearby potash deposits also contribute to the economy. Hobbs is the seat of the College of the Southwest (1956) and the New Mexico Junior College (1965). The Confederate Air Force Flying Museum is 3 miles west. The population in 2000 was 28,657, and in 2010 was 34,122.³

In 1954, researchers Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan noted that most of the streets were paved between 1949 and 1954. They observed that South of the main thoroughfare, “many of the houses were small and poorly constructed,” and that there were in “a large number of

¹ Dodge, William A., Ph. D. “The History & Archaeology of the Hobbs Army Air Field,” Project No. 277-07, Van Critters Historic Preservation, LLC (January 2008).

² Ibid.

³ *Britannica Encyclopedia* available on-line at Britannica.com/place/Hobbs; Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 199.

trailer homes.” The older residential neighborhood was located North of the main street, and further North were the newer homes. They wrote that the “latter were substantially built and better kept than those south of the main street.”⁴

Much of the population through the early 1950s was largely transient, due to the fluctuating nature of the extraction industry. In 1950 nearly one-half of the people in Hobbs had lived there fewer than five years, and only 14 per cent had resided there more than fifteen years. The population was younger than the national average. Until the 1920s, those of Anglo-Saxon descent made up “more than 99 per cent of the population.”⁵ Ethnic diversity within Lea County since the 1920s evolved rapidly, mainly due to two major factors: The changing pattern of agriculture, and the arrival of the oil and gas industry.

During a study undertaken in 1954, researchers found that there were “fewer than fifty Spanish-American families who lived in the southwestern quadrant of the city among Anglo-American neighbors.”⁶ Approximately 9 per cent of the total population was “Negro.” The researchers concluded that the ethnic proportions had remained relatively stable during the rapid growth of the area. They concluded that behind Albuquerque, a much larger city, Hobbs had the second-largest Black population in the state.

Writing in 2004, reporter Rene Romo echoed that “Hobbs has long had the highest percentage of Black residents of any New Mexico city.”⁷ According to school records garnered in 2004, Booker T. Washington high school was comprised of 24 percent Blacks. Hispanics accounted for two-thirds; and the rest of the student body was Anglo.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 199-200.

⁵ Mladinic, Peter; Tueredia McBride, Amy Perales, and Jim Harris, eds. *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), pp. 7 and 9.

⁶ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 200.

⁷ Romo, Rene. “Tracing a Difficult Path,” *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

Black Employment Opportunities

Jobs were always scarce for Black arrivals. "Jobs were at a minimum, and if you weren't an educator, nurse, hairdresser or minister, you took whatever employment was offered to you."¹ In an effort to enhance marketable skills, Black community leaders in 1938 facilitated a summer cooking school in the "colored section" of town, where all "colored maids and cooks"² were invited to attend. Self-employment in a variety of ingenious and necessary ways offered a reliable income for many Black Hobbs entrepreneurs.

James Arthur Smith provided the following information regarding African American entrepreneurship that counteracted discriminatory hiring practices in other realms:

J. D. and Faye Dilworth owned a motor rewinding shop downtown on S. Turner Street. She was the first African American secretary at Helzer Junior High School. Robert Lee "Jabo" Richards was the first African American in New Mexico to get a state carpenter's license c1940s. William "Bill" Richards was the first African American to earn a heavy equipment operator's license in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Both men were John Arthur Smith's uncles.

Tim and Clem Clay owned the Clay Brothers Construction company. They accomplished concrete finishing projects throughout New Mexico and Texas and the Navajo Nation (Tuba City) during the 1950s and 1960s, including many farmsteads and other concrete foundation projects.

Smith's step-father was the groundskeeper at the all-White Hobbs Country Club. Lillie Mae Smith, Arthur's mother, started out in Hobbs cleaning houses, and later landed a job at the General Telephone Company as a switch operator. She earned her G. E. D. while working there. The company eventually hired her in a personnel capacity to screen Black applicants. Sadly, his mother passed away 2 February 2019 at the age of 96. George Mosely was the first African American to drive an oil tanker with the B. F. Walker Company. Dr. Charles Jackson was the first Black podiatrist in Hobbs, and may still be practicing. A man nicknamed "T-Model" installed and maintained septic tanks, and was also called upon to move houses. Mr. Davis and S. J. Jackson owned Black cab companies. Sara Smith was a barber.

The Brooks brothers ran a trucking service, and a (dynamite) Demolition Co. After Arnett Williams retired from the military, he ran the Hicks Grocery Store. He also owned a hauling business. Virgil "Jaton" Sanders ran a scrap iron business. Smith remembers that Sanders would haul a load of scrap to El Paso, return with \$800 cash, and then throw up two handfuls of coins in the air for the young kids to scramble around and collect as they bounced and clattered on

¹ Rising, Evelyn. "Lea County Black History," *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 239.

² "Colored Section to Get Cooking School," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 27 August 1938, p. 5.

the wood bar and café floor. Lewis Richardson owned Richardson's Grocery Store. Smith remembers buying two big cookies for a nickel and paying a nickel or so for a pickled pig's foot pulled out of a large countertop jar.

The following is a list of businesses listed in the National Archives as operating within the 1942-1946 date range. Because it is not known yet which of these businesses were owned by Blacks, discriminated against, or employed Blacks, additional research is warranted:

Lippmann's, Harden Hotel, Baker Pharmacy, The Dunlap Company, Grime's Grocery, New Mexico Furniture Company, Palmer Motor Company, Neithercutt Dress Shop, J. W. Day Motor Company, Nick the Hatter, Myron Lovett -- Maytag Steam Laundry, Furr Food Stores, Bill Parnell Supplies, N. C. Pazuros, Belvedere Hotel or Apartments, Lea County State Bank, Bank Bar -- South Turner, Duke's Home Laundry, G. F. Wacker Stores, Mrs. Cecil Beeson -- Junior Miss Shop, R. N. Kayal -- Fair Department Store, Self-Laundry -- Cecil's Helpy Self, Hobbs Concrete Company, Mineral Rock Products Company, Inc., H. D. Wages Boiler and Welding Company, Butternut Bakery.³

Few job opportunities with the City's administration existed. An exception to this rule was Lonnie Shepherd, who became the city's first Black police officer in the late 1930s. Lonnie Shepherd was called "the Lone Wolf." He was the only Black officer, and "because no one wanted to work with him, he often traveled by himself and drove his own car."⁴ With the Rev. W. S. Richardson at the helm, the newly-formed Colored Civic Welfare Association fought to raise Lonnie Shepard's salary as one of their initial and galvanizing objectives.⁵ Mr. Shepherd's Black successors were Allen Patterson Jr., Dozie Slade, R. B. Whitmore, Henry James Davis and Chester Smith.⁶

Lonnie Shepherd was also followed by Henry Davis in 1946, and Horace Weathers, the first Black deputy sheriff. Hobbs' Andrew Jimmy Palmer became the first Black Chief of Police in New Mexico. When Palmer first started, the police had their own cars but no radios. "The police officers had to call from a pay phone. White officers were paid twenty-five dollars more to start. If a Black cop arrested a White offender, he had to call a White cop for assistance."⁷

³ National Archives Price filings, 1942 – 1946, RG 188 Records of the Office of Price Administration, 1940 – 1949, NA Identifier: 80694005.

⁴ Rising, Evelyn. "Lea County Black History," *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 246.

⁵ "Welfare Association Appreciates Raising of Shepard's Salary," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 3 July 1939, p. 1.

⁶ Rising, Evelyn. "Lea County Black History," *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 246.

⁷ Mladinic, Peter. *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 53-54.

During a 1954 study, researchers Robin M. Williams and Margaret W. Ryan found that “There were no Negro clerks in the stores, although during the harvest season some stores hired Spanish-American clerks for the serving of transient laborers.”⁸

Informed persons reported that there were very few openings for Blacks above the unskilled or semi-skilled level:

with the exception of school teachers and a very few plumbers and carpenters. There were two Negro policemen in the Negro section of town, and the city departments of water and sanitation hired a few Negro laborers. None of the oil companies, which furnished the major source of employment, hired Negroes.⁹

Although their informants acknowledged that the impermanence and risks associated with the oil business may have dissuaded some from applying, Williams and Ryan found it curious indeed that no Black workers were employed by a single oil company in 1954.

Several researchers, an Associated Press (AP) journalist, and other knowledgeable observers noted that jobs for Black residents remained extremely limited well into the 1960s. In 1964, journalist Burton Wittrup wrote, “There’s little here above the unskilled or semiskilled level for the Negro youth who has a high school or college education.” He reported that according to a leader in the White community, “There are Negro teachers and a few plumbers and carpenters. Otherwise, the only jobs open to the Negro are menial. The high school Negro graduate usually either goes on to college or just moves out of town.”¹⁰

“We can’t keep our young people here,” lamented Rev. Frank W. Wells, a well-respected Black leader. “With the schools integrated now 10 years, our young people are better equipped than we old folks to reach out for opportunity. But they have to go someplace else to find it.”¹¹

AP Journalist Wittrup echoed the sentiments expressed by Rev. Wells by warning that, “If job opportunity does not come to the capable Negro youth, the community is apt to remain much as it is – with 3,000 unskilled persons living in substandard housing.”¹² Ten years after the

⁸ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 201.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wittrup, Burton A. (Associated Press Writer), “Hobbs Integration: ‘We Can’t Keep Our Young People Here,’” *Roswell Daily Record*, 2 August 1964, p. 9.

¹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹² Wittrup, Burton A. (Associated Press Writer), “Hobbs Integration: ‘We Can’t Keep Our Young People Here,’” *Roswell Daily Record*, 2 August 1964, p. 9. Ralph Littleton was an important leader, serving as the principal for Booker T. Washington, and as the first Black principal of a desegregated school. Please see: “Doors Opened up for Hobbs’ Blacks,” *Hobbs News-Sun* (12 January 1992), p. 1 and p. 19.

Williams and Ryan study, Ralph D. Littleton, principal at Washington School, again concurred: "Sure, we have youngsters who are qualified to work or could easily be trained in the many jobs and trades in this city," adding, however, that "Negroes" still could not "even get jobs as clerks."¹³ Employment inequities at some establishments continued well into the 1970s. Remembering the Honda Inn restaurant, Hobbs resident Helen Houston recalls that "I was the first Black waitress in 1973."¹⁴

Employment Opportunities the U. S. Military

With the onset of World War II in response to the 7 December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, many young Black men sought employment and engagement with the military. Even that patriotic endeavor was fraught with disparities and discrimination. In 1948, a disobedience movement protesting Jim Crow in the military ensued. A front page 19 April 1948 *Hobbs Daily Sun News* article reported the following regarding a Black citizen named Grant Reynolds, who was serving as the national chairman of the 'Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training' testifying before the House Armed Services committee:

He showed the committee a card saying he will not be drafted for 'Jim Crow Military Service.' Reynolds said this is the first such card to be signed. They will be circulated nationally, he testified and others of all races will be urged to sign them. Besides the cards, Reynolds said, his organization has placed an order for 100,000 buttons with the inscription 'Don't Join a Jim Crow Army.' Reynolds continued: 'Upon delivery we expect to launch the sale of these buttons – outside the White House and on the steps of the capitol. In this way, we hope to impress the mind of White America that Negroes have had enough of this bi-partisan maneuvering on civil rights [and] that, come what may, we are withdrawing our support of Herr Jim Crow.'"¹⁵

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴ Email correspondence. Helen Houston, Hobbs resident (18 February 2017).

¹⁵ "Negroes Protest Segregated Army Draft," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 19 April 1948, p. 1.

Alliances, Organizations and Inspirations

Social Clubs

Addressing a topic that deserves far more in-depth research, poet, historian, and University of New Mexico professor Maisha Baton affirms that social activities were an “indispensable antidote to the hardships in the lives of western Black women.” Writes Baton,

The social club served as a source of funds for community improvement as well as a place to get together. Through most of the nineteenth century, these activities were centered in the churches or in individuals’ homes. The women’s clubs were responsible for fund-raising for the community; by holding festivals or cultural events to attract Whites, Black women raised funds for education, the arts, and for individuals in distress.¹

The importance of social affiliations in bettering the lives of everyone they touched cannot be overstated. The Lovely Ladies Federated and Art Club purchased three lots to build a nursery school after a tragic fire killed four small children. The Washington Heights Nursery School grew into a community project that required moving to a larger facility. “In recognition of George and Myrtle Farquhar’s contribution to the community and the children of Hobbs, the well-respected couple had a city street named in their honor.”²

Charlotte K. Mock reminds us that the impact of women’s clubs organized to uplift African Americans reached New Mexico long before statehood was granted on 6 January 1912. “Black club women” writes Mock, “helped shape the destiny of New Mexico.”³

¹ Baton, Maisha. “New Mexico’s Black Women – Establishing Perspectives,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 163.

² *Ibid.*, 163.

³ Baton, Maisha. “New Mexico’s Black Women – Establishing Perspectives,” in Bruce A. Glasrud, ed. *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 163; Mock, Charlotte K. “African American Women in New Mexico,” in Thomas Lark, ed. *History of Hope: The African American Experience in New Mexico*. (Albuquerque, NM: Albuquerque Museum, 1996); Mock Charlotte K. *Bridges: New Mexican Black Women, 1900-1950* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women, 1985).

Fraternal Orders: Black Masons Prince Hall

As a powerful counterpart to women's social clubs, fraternal orders also provided social amusement, opportunities for education and advancement, and focused community efforts on improvements to daily lives. All members of the East Gate Lodge number 8, F. & A. M. Prince Hall affiliation, were asked to be present for a regular meeting to select representatives to the Grand Lodge. The newspaper article reported that Hobbs had originally been named as the city for the Grand Lodge, but it was changed to Albuquerque instead. No reason for the decision was given. The educational component was perhaps most often carried out through public lectures. In 1948, the "colored" Masonic Hall in 'Harlem Heights' hosted the Rev. R. W. Ford from Albuquerque to speak on the new Right to Work Amendment. An April 1942 East Gate Lodge No. 8, and Eureka Chapter No. 10 of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge mass meeting at the Ebenezer Baptist Church featured the topic, "How and Where the Negro Mason Stands in New Mexico."⁴

Civic Welfare Association

Perhaps the most influential community organization working on behalf of the Hobbs Black minority was the Civic Welfare Association, first led by the Rev. W. S. Richardson. The group selected pressing problems of the day and addressed them by appealing to City Council and the general public. Judging from the frequency and content of the news articles throughout the association's tenure, the local press was favorable toward advertising their concerns and promoting solutions to their causes. A 4 March 1940 *Hobbs Daily News Sun* newspaper article announced the first anniversary meeting of the Civic Welfare Association, described as the "colored association working for the betterment of the colored section." Members told the reporter that they were "favorably impressed with the progress that we have made," and that they were encouraged to "continue our efforts to do greater things to make a greater Hobbs." They asked every "civic-minded resident" of 'Harlem Heights' to meet with them.⁵

Their first year's efforts in 1939 included requests to the City Council that "one colored person be employed at the new City Hall, that streets in the colored section be dragged, and that a street light be erected" at a specified location within the neighborhood. Richardson reiterated that the purpose of the organization was "only to upbuild the colored people in the city, county, and state." The last issue in question was a light for the corner where the Johnston Hotel and the 'colored' Methodist church were located, which Richardson characterized as "one of the darkest corners in town."⁶

⁴ "East Gate Lodge Members Asked to Attend Meeting," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 5 May 1941, p. 9; "Labor Meeting in Harlem Heights," *Hobbs Daily Flare*, 24 October 1948, p. 2; "Colored Masons Slate Meeting," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 27 April 1942, p. 9.

⁵ "Colored Group in Three Requests to City Councilmen," *Hobbs Daily News*, 18 April 1939, p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

An early contentious battle was fought over the placement in 1939 of the new municipal sewage disposal plant adjacent to the Black neighborhood. Extensive coverage was provided by the local newspaper as the residents complained about the proximity and foul odors. This circumstance may have been the principal impetus behind the formation of the Civic Welfare Association. The following *Hobbs Daily News Sun* excerpt, although lengthy, does capture the urgency and emotion of the moment:

An attempt to 'hush-up' the protest against the sewer disposal plant by threat was revealed today by the Rev. W. S. Richardson, minister of the colored Methodist Church. Richardson said the threat was made by a man who was later identified to him as H. A. Miller, city plumbing inspector and manager of the sewer disposal plant. Rev. Richardson appeared at the council meeting last night in company with a group of others from the colored section and waited quite a while before a hearing was granted... the minister stepped outside the city hall, and it was there the threat occurred, he said.

He was approached by one of the men who had been inside, and was confronted with the statement that the negroes had been 'put up to coming down here to make trouble.' Speaking in a low voice, and in what Rev. Richardson said was a threatening tone, the man told him, 'you had better not make any trouble about it...' Richardson said he told the man who spoke to him outside that he was sorry the intentions of the delegation had been misconstrued, that the colored people were not trying to raise trouble but were only trying to get justice.⁷

Richardson and the Rev. F. W. Wells, pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, had both made public statements concerning the odor emanating from the sewer disposal plant, and city officials were aware that the delegation had appeared for the purpose of asking for relief. Stepping back inside to address the city councilors, Rev. Richardson explained:

There is a strong odor – otherwise we wouldn't be here. It's true we're negroes, but we feel that we're entitled to some consideration as citizens and taxpayers, nevertheless... We have a right to be heard. There's no question about the odor – when the wind is still, it's so strong as to almost stifle you in your home. Our property will soon be useless unless something is done. I'm not a politician and I'm not affiliated with any,' he

⁷ "Hobbs Colored Minister Tells of Threat Last Evening: Describes Attempt to 'Hush' Him – Says Miller Warned Him to 'Not to Make Any Trouble,'" *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 7 March 1939, p. 1.

said. 'Gentlemen, if something isn't done about that smell soon, God only knows what will happen to us this summer!'⁸

Immediately after Richardson ended his plea, City Council appointed a committee to "check into the situation."⁹

In a detailed newspaper article published the week before, Rev. Richardson described the new city sewer disposal plant as a health menace... 'The odor is something terrible,' Rev. Richardson said today. 'I think it is unsanitary altogether. To speak in plain English, actually the plant stinks.'" Outlining many grievances brought upon Black residents by the placement of the plant at the outskirts of their neighborhood, Richardson repeated the promises that were made to him at the time:

'It was the understanding of our people when the plant was being built that there would be no smell,' Richardson said. 'And because we believed the people who told us that, the residents of this section did not raise any objections, even though they did not think it any asset to our community. But now we see that the information given us was wrong, at a time when it is too late for us to do much about it. Here in the middle of winter we are forced to smell odors so bad they seriously offend us.'¹⁰

Richardson told the reporter that the Civic Welfare Association was organized to promote the welfare of the "colored section" in general, to see that the "section is kept clean, look after sanitary conditions, promote education and get justice for the colored people." He concluded the interview by stating that its "purpose is to cooperate with city, county and state governments."¹¹

In addition to grappling with the sewage disposal plant situation, W. S. Richardson apparently also negotiated some early turbulence from T. C. Martin, Chairman of the New Mexico Colored Democratic Central Committee. Mr. Martin, reacting to some of the issues he heard that the Association was confronting, appeared to accuse the group of engendering too much "agitation and publicity." Richardson denied these charges, including the follow-up complaint that the school board had been presented with "demands," by responding in a letter signed by the Executive Committee:

We the Civic Welfare association do not consider T. C. Martin a leader in civic, religious, political or education in the state... T. C.

⁸ "Hobbs Colored Minister Tells of Threat Last Evening: Describes Attempt to 'Hush' Him – Says Miller Warned Him to 'Not to Make Any Trouble,'" *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 7 March 1939, p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰ "Colored Residents Protest Odors from Disposal Plant: Minister Says Section is Unsanitary—Outlines Grievances of Hobbs' New Sewer System," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 1 March 1939, p. 1 and p. 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

Martin said “the agitators” (referring to the Civic Welfare Association members) are seeking the setting aside [of] seven acres of land for the construction of a brick building for colored children.

It appears that T. C. Martin is the agitator, for no demand or request has been made of the Board of Education by the association. The superintendent of city school of Hobbs, namely W. G. Donley, states ‘No demand or requests for increased school facilities in the colored section have been made to the board of education as yet.’¹²

In response to Martin’s contention that there had been too much “agitation” and “publicity” regarding the disposal tank, sewage system, school conditions, and law enforcement, the Association declared that, “We believe the time has come that we should practice true Democracy... especially when our interest is involved.” They accused Martin of “attempting to pull political straws with the school board,” and “trying to build prestige with the school board for selfish purposes.” They concluded their rebuttal by observing that while Martin did not “want the *race tranquility* disturbed,” it appeared to them that “Martin has disturbed the race tranquility more than any other would-be leader.”¹³

Prior to tackling the sewage plant health concern, the Civic Welfare Association focused on increasing educational facilities, the organization of a nearby Lovington group, and the continuance of a program for state-wide organizational work. At a May 1939 meeting, in an apparent response to charges of Communistic motives, Rev. Richardson made a brief address “dwelling on Americanism” by urging members to “tolerate no Un-Americanism in your midst... Regardless of various actions on problems important to us,” he told them, “We will not stoop to any Un-American activities in attempts to accomplish our aims.”¹⁴

Characterized as potentially “one of the largest gatherings in local colored history,” a 29 March 1940 Civic Welfare Association banquet drew front-page attention and praise from the *Hobbs Daily News*. “Organized for advancement of the colored race in Hobbs,” reported the local paper, “the Civic Welfare group has spent the past year working for betterment of the colored section and has made a fine record.” The reporter noted that on the program was “S. B. Chamberlain of Roswell and former teacher here, and secretary of the state Colored Democratic Central Committee; Mrs. Joe Sparks, Rev. F. W. Wells, Rev. A. B. Lee, and Mrs. H. H. Collins, Jr.” The Rev. H. H. Collins, Jr. was slated to serve as toastmaster, “with the latest spirituals by the Harmony Four, and other musical entertainment.” Jimmy Horton, who

¹² “Hobbs Negro Leadership Under Strong Fire Today: Civic Group Replies to T. C. Martin – Welfare Association Answers in Signed Statement,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 24 March 1939, p. 1 and p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6. Emphasis original.

¹⁴ “Welfare Group Stresses School Needs: Organization Meet Held at Lovington,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 14 May 1939, p. 1.

apparently succeeded Richardson as president of the group, “asked all colored people, and as many of their white friends as cared to attend, to be present.”¹⁵ In addition to recognizing the year’s achievements, the event may also have signaled a peaceful resolution to the previously contentious relationship between the Association and the Colored Democratic Central Committee.

Another article at the end of the March 1940 touted the Association’s “strong influence in the section,” and revealed that the focus of the meeting at Lane Chapel, Colored Methodist church, was the “value of organization and the benefits which come when a race stands together.”¹⁶

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

A strong succession of Hobbs ministers responded to citizens’ requests for assistance, oversaw problem-solving, formed the Civil Welfare Association, and later ran the NAACP. They encouraged residents to take a stand, to show up to City Council meetings, to vote, to fight for better jobs, fair wages, paved roads, and improved infrastructure including sidewalks, street lights, sewage, residential electricity, and fire hydrants. The Hobbs chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People held its first annual banquet on 12 February 1942 at the Cole Café on East Skelly Street, with the Rev. J. W. Hudson presiding. The original chapter, borne of many members of the former Civic Welfare Association, met regularly “for discussion and talks”¹⁷ at the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

By September 1942, the NAACP was confronting perennial problems confounded by the fact that the establishment of the nearby air base had resulted in overcrowding in the “colored section” school. Rev. J. W. Hudson, President, also cited the need for police protection including more officers “with the arrival of so many new people” and the need to bring electricity into “colored homes.” Reverends Hudson and A. B. Lee, publicity chairman, asked members to meet at the Pleasant Green Baptist Church on Midwest Street to discuss these issues, and to compare prospective “candidates and their attitude toward the colored race.”¹⁸

By the mid-1950s, Robin Williams’ and Margaret Ryan’s research revealed that the small NAACP chapter was the only interracial organization active in Hobbs. The authors observed that although this group had been working publicly toward desegregation of the Black school, the chapter’s existence was unknown to all “but a very few of the White residents.” It claimed

¹⁵ “Colored Group [Expects] Big Crowd at Banquet,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 7 March 1940, p. 1.

¹⁶ “Colored People to Get Work on Road,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 29 March 1940, p. 1. (Note: Article continues on p. 8 but only 5 pages digitized.)

¹⁷ “Hobbs NAACP Has Banquet Tonight,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 12 February 1942, p. 1; “NAACP Head Cites Problems Brought Population Jump,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 11 September 1942, p. 1; Rising, Evelyn. “Lea County Black History,” *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 244.

¹⁸ “NAACP Head Cites Problems Brought Population Jump,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 11 September 1942, p. 1; “Mass Meeting for NAACP is Called,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 17 August 1942, p. 4.

about seventy members, but one leader said that fewer than two dozen were active. These active persons were apparently known to the White community, but they were not recognized as local members of a national organization. One influential informant considered them “the ‘radical’ part of the Negro community.”¹⁹ Later, community leaders Leola Dilworth and Lillie Mae Smith were credited with keeping the local branch of the NAACP alive.

In addition to the NAACP, there were at least a few local attorneys who would represent Black plaintiffs. One case involved Sally Williams, who the papers described as a “Hobbs Negress,” who sued the City for damages after falling from one of the “old WPA side walks.” The accident occurred in the 600 block of South Selman. Easley and Quinn of Hobbs were “the attorneys for the Negress.”²⁰

‘Colored’ Democratic Committee

While the full influence of the NM Colored Democratic Committee remains to be explored, the group clearly influenced Black voters to consider changing their political party affiliation from Republican to Democratic. The conversion began to take place in the late 1930s, and took hold permanently by the mid-1960s. The Chairman of the Committee wrote the following letter dated 28 October 1938 to the *Hobbs News-Sun* publishing company. He traced his rationale for being a Black Democrat, and urges others to switch their party affiliation from Republican to Democrat as well:

I take this method to set all at ease who seem to be interested in my status as to my political affiliations. After taking cognizance of the history of the Republican Party for the past 20 years, the time is pertinent for the colored citizens throughout the nation to make a retrenchment in the casting of their ballots. We rever[e] the history and traditions of the Republican Party as it was founded in 1856, and perpetuated by Abraham Lincoln, Grant, Garfield, McKinley and Roosevelt, but since that time, it appears to me that the Republican Party has varied considerable from the old land mark, and left the colored man traversing a region of uncertainty. Since January the first, 1863, We, the colored citizens of America, have been loyal, faithful and true to the Party as it appeared to us, gave to us our freedom during those years of toil, suffering and sacrifice, bowing our heads in humble submission to promises made and never fulfilled. Walking across the bloody marls of a

¹⁹ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 202; Rising, Evelyn. “Lea County Black History,” *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 245.

²⁰ “City of Hobbs Sued for \$7500,” *Lovington Leader*, 15 December 1950, p. 11.

reconstruction hell, we defied all the privations that came against us, yet we stood steadfast, waiting for the 40 acres and the mule. All the progress that the colored people have ever made has been made in the land of Democracy. I hold now that the debt has been paid and a clear receipt should be given and we vote for the man rather than the Party. We should study the past history of candidates and peruse his manipulation and his attitude toward the under man... why should not the colored brother draw his sword Excalibur and fight side by side with the soldiers who are already in the trenches for a happy and a glorious victory, by voting a straight Democratic ticket.²¹

'Colored' Boy Scouts

Coles Café appears to have been a popular meeting spot for Black civic and church organizations, including the "colored Boy Scout troop." An organizational meeting for "all colored boys of scouting age"²² convened on 21 July 1942.

Supportive Local News Coverage

Reporters and editors with the *Hobbs Daily News Sun* followed the activities of the Civic Welfare Association closely, most often displayed on the front page of the newspaper. At one point the journalists reprimanded the Hobbs City Councilors for not treating the Association members with more respect. They went so far as to accuse certain councilors and staff of violating the "fundamental freedoms of America" during the discussions between the Association and the City regarding the sewage disposal plant. We "accuse the council," they wrote, "of handling the complaint of the negro delegation in a most unkindly and un-American way, and of displaying a remarkable lack of understanding of the fact that all persons in America regardless of race or creed, have a constitutional right to petition for redress of grievances... It might be well for the council members to read a little law, and learn about public responsibility, and official d[e]corum."²³

'Colored' United Service Organization (USO)

The Black USO was a critical influence and became an integral component of the Black Hobbs community. Denied admittance to the Whites-only United Services Organization (USO) Black servicemen would come into the community to their USO. Here they could socialize, write

²¹ "State Chairman Colored Democratic Committee Issues Statement Today," *Hobbs Daily News*, 28 October 1938, p. 1.

²² "Colored Scouts to Meet Monday Night," *Hobbs Daily News*, 21 July 1942, p. 1.

²³ "RE: 'Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to Petition the Government for a Redress of Grievances.' *The Federal Constitution (Amendment 1)* Rights – and Wrongs! An Editorial," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 7 March 1939, p. 1.

letters home or simply relax. When the base closed, the USO building was turned into a recreational center for young people in the community. It became known as the 'Center.' "This was probably the best thing to happen to the Black kids in Hobbs" remembers Charles Becknell, "This was a place where we could go and 'hang out,' listen and dance to the latest music, eat hamburgers, meet friends and shoot pool. The White kids had always had their places to go and we were not allowed. The Center was our place. It became the focal point for social activities in the Black community."²⁴

Juneteenth Celebrations

Preliminary research indicates that Juneteenth celebrations were not covered as extensively by the press in Hobbs as they were in other southeastern New Mexico towns. In the absence or lack of print coverage, oral histories may need to be collected instead. When Geni Flores taught high school in Lovington during the 1990s, her husband at the time, a Latinx, and their two kids attended the Hobbs Juneteenth celebrations. She remembers that they "were usually the only non-Black people there."²⁵ Although Juneteenth *mishaps* at other locations – namely in Texas -- were reported, no local story regarding Juneteenth celebrations in Hobbs prior to 1950 has been located to date.

Discrimination, Prejudice, and Persecution

Discrimination, prejudice, daily indignities and legally-sanctioned persecution permeated every aspect of life in Hobbs, from segregated housing, to police mistreatment, to an unfair legal system, to being called 'nigger' as a kid, being barred from restaurants and having to enter through the back door to visit a White friend. "Unfortunately, segregation was a way of life in Hobbs," remembers Charles Becknell. "Although we didn't like it, we did accept it. It was not economically safe to protest, make waves or even question segregation. If a young person stepped outside the rules, parents were held accountable, and if they wanted to keep their jobs, they had better keep their children in line."¹

The following is a small sampling, by no means comprehensive, of the ways that unfair treatment based upon skin color was widespread for decades.

Black Face

What may have seemed like harmless entertainment for non-Blacks, caused Blacks intense personal pain. Black face, minstrel shows, radio and television personalities and other

²⁴ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 33.

²⁵ Personal communication with Geni Flores. Written responses to a research questionnaire (Fall 2020).

¹ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 31.

performances depicted Blacks as inferior. “I grew up with the cruel racist antics of Amos and Andy,” recalls author and educator Charles Becknell. “They amused other White people by reinforcing stereotypes, which further projected the idea that Blacks were second-class citizens to be laughed at and ridiculed.”² Becknell’s high school classmate, James Arthur Smith, says he heard about traveling minstrel shows from his family. His family “hated blackface,” and “he hates blackface.”³

Jury Selection

Although billed as the luck of the draw or the spin of a wheel, the fact was that very few African Americans were selected to serve on juries in and around Hobbs well into the 1960s. In 1952, a formal charge that “minority groups” and “common working people” were barred from Chaves county juries was levied during a trial. Testimony showed that the names of only five Blacks were placed in the “jury wheelout” that included a total of 750 names, and that “no Negro names”⁴ were included in the previous wheel in 1949. This of course meant that Black defendants were not – as the law clearly stipulated they must be – judged by juries of their peers.

Voter Manipulation

An editorial in 1948 identified an end to an era when the writer felt that blue-collar workers and people of color could be easily persuaded to vote as a bloc one way or the other. Referring to the Black neighborhood as “the Flats” the editorial proclaimed:

The results of the election certainly overwhelmingly tell those who would dominate the people of Hobbs, that they refuse to be shoved around any longer. The day is past when workers can be lined up to vote. The day is past when politicians can go to the Flats and give a barbecue and vote the Negroes like rubber stamps. Today, the worker has money in his pocket, the same is true of the Negro. He is independent. No one is going to tell him how to vote and all those who have attempted it in the past had just as well make up their minds that the laboring group have leaders, and they are organized. The same is true of our colored friends. They have leaders some with Masters degrees, others with business ability, who are most capable of leading and

² Ibid., p. 24.

³ Personal communication with James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

⁴ “Art Johnson Sentenced to on April 18: Slayer Enters Plea for Wife,” *Hobbs Daily Sun News*, 24 June 1952, p. 1.

advising their group, and they have organizations whereby they can meet and discuss affairs pertaining to their well being.⁵

Denial of Racial Bias

Recurrant denials of racial bias only compounded the daily discriminations. Ironically, a 1948 *Hobbs Daily Flare* editorial hotly contested the notion of racial discrimination, while acknowledging an acceptance of White entitlement:

We state with emphasis: 'There is no NEGRO problem in Hobbs'... The Negro in Hobbs knows that he is a Negro and he doesn't resent it. He knows better than anyone that the white men are not responsible for his being black... They have always had the greatest respect for the white people in Hobbs, while we can't say that some of the whites have shown any tolerance or patience with the Negroes.⁶

The editorialist was trying to quell tensions fomented by a police presence at the polls. While denying that racism exists, the article described how Whites expected the Blacks to let them cut in line ahead of them:

The Negroes arrived at the polls first. They formed their line. The whites that arrived next expected the Negroes to let them vote first. The Negroes didn't do it. Had they stepped back every time a white came up, they would have never voted. In voting, one takes his place and awaits his turn. Color does not matter. Old Abe Lincoln took care of that. The insult of having the police department surround the place and a man placed out front in a car with a Tommy gun in full view, is an insult to all the peoples of Hobbs. We repeat, there isn't a race problem in Hobbs.⁷

The article, replete with contradictions and racist illogic, urged the entire matter of "the Negro problem" to be dropped and "dropped now."⁸

Derogatory Names

Those of Mexican descent incurred the same hostilities and were generally barred from the same places as Black people. For Jesse Gonzales, reading books became his escape from the harsh realities:

⁵ "The Election is Over," *Hobbs Daily Flare*, 9 April 1948, p. 4.

⁶ "No Negro Problem in Hobbs," *Hobbs Daily Flare*, 9 April 1948, p. 4. Emphasis original.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Attending high school in Hobbs was a new experience for me... I was called *pepper belly*, *wetback*, *beaner*, *spic* and other names – all new to me. I could only attend one theater in town. For many years I could not go to Jackson’s Drug Store, the favorite student hangout. When I was allowed to go in, I had to sit in the back of the store. I could not openly date Anglo girls. When I went to neighboring towns in Texas, I was not served in some restaurants nor welcomed in motels. I was able to escape the pain of day-to-day living in the new world that reading opened up for me...⁹

Abusive language assaulted from all corners. The president of the School Board, who was also the owner of the local radio station, was quoted as saying “over my dead body will a nigger be a cheerleader at Hobbs High.”¹⁰ This one example does not begin to capture the barrage of racial slurs and insults encountered during the course of the current research.

Colorism

Colorism -- discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone – permeated every aspect of a person’s life. Being Black “meant that you were to enter White person’s house through the rear, never through the front door.”¹¹ Charles Becknell remembers that many Blacks “were told not to drink coffee because it was thought to make the skin darker, and the darker the skin, the harsher the treatment from White society.”¹² James Arthur Smith describes one of his mentors, Coach Gray, as being part Black and also part Native American. Smith believes that one reason he was sent to the integrated high school to teach was due to his light-colored skin. However, Gray was not allowed to coach despite his proven skills. This cut Gray to the quick, Smith recalls. He was so hurt by the racial snub that he would not allow his sons to play high school sports given the circumstances.¹³

Arthur Smith speaks fondly of a White school classmate named Sarah Curry. He says he fell in puppy love with Sarah beginning in the 8th grade. “Our parents thought we wanted to have sex and have kids – we just wanted to be friends!” he exclaims. A mutual friend explained the situation this way, “Our parents were rednecks.” With his wife’s blessing, he and Sarah maintain a special bond to this day. They both feel certain that had the racial climate been

⁹ Gonzales, Jesse and Lee Geomets, “Fields and Dreams,” *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*, Doña Ana County Historical Society, Volume IV, No. 1, (Las Cruces: January 1997). Emphasis added.

¹⁰ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), pp. 76 - 77.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹³ Personal communication with James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

different back then, they would have become romantically involved as they got older, perhaps even married.¹⁴

Emphasizing the taboo against inter-racial romances at the time, Smith recalls an incident in Roswell, where a Black high school football player was openly affectionate with a White cheerleader. Smith was amazed to witness that his arm was around her waist as they walked toward the team buses, while she carried his helmet and cleats. He learned later that the player was whisked away to Phoenix by his family once it was learned that his girlfriend was pregnant.

Ku Klux Klan Vicinity Hobbs

When asked the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) during an interview, James Arthur Smith responded that he had heard about a KKK presence elsewhere, most notably Roswell and perhaps Portales, but not in or around Hobbs. He remembers clearly the photograph of a brutally murdered Emmett Till in his family's *Jett* magazine that he ended up taping to his bedroom wall as a young man. He does not remember hearing about the Tulsa massacre at the time.¹⁵ According to long-time Portales resident and educator Geni Flores, the KKK met on Pine Lodge Road, east of Roswell. Although she feels certain there was KKK activity in and around Portales as well, she has not uncovered any evidence.¹⁶ In December 1961, a sign nailed over a state historic marker in nearby Lovington, NM warned: 'Nigger Don't Let the Sun Set On You in This Town – KKK.' Signed by the notorious Ku Klux Klan, the local police nevertheless dismissed the ominous threat as "a prank."¹⁷

Willie Stargell and Hobbs (1950s)

At times it seemed as though there was no escaping the relentless crush of daily racism. Colorism even within the Black community itself flared up at regular intervals. In his poignant autobiography, major league baseball star Willie Stargell recounts a bewildering and painful encounter with Black fans in Hobbs:

Negroes were always assigned to a separate section in each ballyard. In this one instance, in Hobbs, NM the Negro section was situated behind our dugout, to the left of where I was fielding ground balls at first base during practice. Just then I heard my name called, followed by a list of racial insults. The shouting had come from the Black section. I walked off the field

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Personal communication James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

¹⁶ Personal communication with Geni Flores. Written responses to research questionnaire (Fall 2020).

¹⁷ "Ku Kluxer Sign in County Seat," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 21 December 1961, p. 1.

deeply hurt. I didn't know what to do. I felt so alone, so unwanted, so intimidated.¹⁸

Although sports offered a potential respite or safe haven from discrimination, prejudice persisted. A high school in Andrews, TX canceled a football game with Hobbs "because Black players would be playing with Whites." Another Texas school agreed to play Hobbs in football only "if the bleachers were segregated."¹⁹

Unfair Employment Practices

A pervasive scarcity of meaningful employment opportunities meant that young people fled Hobbs in search of jobs elsewhere. Even after school integration and inclusion in public accommodations, Hobbs employment and housing inequities endured well into the 1960s and early 1970s:

The Hobbs Negro community needs young people if the community's standard of living is to be upgraded. But the capable Negro youth isn't staying, despite promise of a better life that has come with integration of schools and public accommodations. Still lacking is the promise of steady, profitable employment and adequate housing.²⁰

The exclusionary employment system created a vicious circle for those just starting out. A young Black person couldn't find a job, and therefore couldn't afford decent housing. He or she couldn't apply for a loan because they weren't gainfully employed. One observer put it this way in August 1964:

Credit at the bank is usually needed to finance improved housing. With few exceptions, the Hobbs Negro has little luck at the bank simply because his credit is not backed by the promise of steady employment.²¹

Discrimination Against School Educators and Staffs

Maintaining separate educational systems had consequences for administrators, teachers, and staff in addition to student disadvantages. Black educators were restricted to Black schools, not

¹⁸ Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), p. 64.

¹⁹ Romo, Rene. "Tracing a Difficult Path," *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

²⁰ Wittrup, Burton A. (Associated Press Writer), "Hobbs Integration: 'We Can't Keep Our Young People Here,'" *Roswell Daily Record*, 2 August 1964, p. 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

by law, but by practice. After integration, Black educators who migrated successfully into mixed-race schools were few and far between. Those who succeeded were told that they must exceed the credentials of their White counterparts. To that end, Principal Ralph Littleton encouraged each of his instructors at Booker T. Washington to earn Master's degrees before integration was implemented. "I didn't like it, but I know how to deal with it," stated Littleton, "I knew how to manipulate my way through the segregated part and get along with it."²² Despite Littleton's best efforts, and the successful careers of some, the double standard meant that many fine teachers were destined for underemployment. "Having grown up in the *village*," recalls Charles Becknell, "for the first six grades I never saw an Anglo teacher." After the schools were integrated, he continues, "from the seventh grade through junior high, from high school to undergraduate school, and through graduate school, I never saw another Black teacher."²³

Police Mistreatment

In April 1962, the City of Hobbs was threatened with a lawsuit stemming from the slaying of Curtis Rice, a 28-year-old Black youth by policeman Dosie Slade. Slade testified he shot Rice after Rice "lunged at him with a knife." The newspaper account reported that "sentiment in the Colored Section of the city is running high." Interviewees told *The Flare* reporter that they felt the shooting of Rice was "uncalled for" while others were quick to say they were already "afraid of Slade" before the incident. The father of the slain youth revealed that he would seek legal representation in Albuquerque, because he did not believe he could get a fair representation in Hobbs. Mr. Rice told the reporter that since Slade was in the police car, he could have simply driven off or radioed for help. "He didn't have to kill my boy," mourned the father, "he could have shot him in the leg."²⁴

Charles Becknell recalls "I learned to fear white policemen at an early age... This fear was reinforced when I was around 10 years of age... [One of my uncles] Robert Baker, more affectionately known as 'Bo Peep,' had been beaten almost to death by the Texas Highway Patrol on the outskirts of Andrews, TX. His only crime was being Black and refusing to say *Sir* to White police officers."²⁵ A long-time Carlsbad resident, who grew up in a small town in Texas, describes very similar sentiments: "We were scared of the police... We watched for the police like they was rattlesnakes."²⁶

²² "Doors Opened up for Hobbs' Blacks, *Hobbs Daily News-Sun*, (12 January 1992), p. 1.

²³ Becknell, Charles E. *Voices from the African American Village: It Takes a Village to Define a Community* (New York: Page Publishing, Inc., 2019), p. 8.

²⁴ "City May Face Damage Suit Over Slaying," *Hobbs Flare*, 13 April 1962, p. 1.

²⁵ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 23.

²⁶ Huff, Bill. Oral history interview. Available on-line at: drive.google.com/file/d/1ybH50DO2aY-MtEcTerO6PS5iladr_edP/view?usp=sharing. Courtesy of Samantha Villa, Library Director, New Mexico State University (Carlsbad).

Inadequate Schooling

School problems underwent considerable discussions at City Council meetings. One meeting focused on an accusation from the Black community that “fists had been used to beat children over the head in the colored schools.” They stated that the “need for high school education in the colored section was urgent” and that they would “ask for high school facilities or at least a teacher with high school teaching qualifications.” The article noted that several “colored people” present believed “separate schools would be better in Hobbs.”²⁷

It is difficult to describe the depth and breadth of the daily slights and discriminations endured by non-Whites. Well into the 1960s, more than a decade after the schools were integrated, Hobbs restaurants, bars, theaters, cultural events, club memberships and recreational sites remained segregated. At its crux, discrimination breeds false feelings of inferiority. “I grew up with the assumption that to be Black and different was to be inferior,” writes Charles Becknell. “I also grew up believing that to be Black was a badge of dishonor and that equaled second-class citizenship. Second-class citizenship meant that you were to say *Yes sir* and *No sir* to white males, regardless of their age... Black men and boys, regardless of age, were frequently referred to as *boy*.”²⁸ In his *Voices from the African American Village*, Becknell expressed gratitude to his forebears for the indignities they suffered with grace:

To the fathers who suffered humiliation, having to say, ‘Yes, sir’ and ‘No, sir’ to someone much younger because their skin was White and required to enter the back door, we say ‘Thank you.’ We thank you for holding on to your dignity. Your voices deserve to be heard, and your sacrifices need to be appreciated.²⁹

“We do not seek to live in the past,” declares Becknell, “but we do need to remember and appreciate the foundations laid and the price paid.”³⁰

Entertainment

Long-time Hobbs resident James Arthur “Jeep” Smith recalls that nearly every activity outside of the Black neighborhood was segregated. An African American might be allowed in a skating rink or a restaurant accompanied by other Whites or as part of a classroom excursion, but would never be allowed in otherwise. Palmer, one of the first Black cops hired by Hobbs, once

²⁷ “Colored People May Ask City to Move Their Section,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 28 April 1939, p. 1.

²⁸ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M.: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 23.

²⁹ Becknell, Charles E. *Voices from the African American Village: It Takes a Village to Define a Community* (New York: Page Publishing, Inc., 2019), p. 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

detained Smith for responding to a jeering White carload after Smith was not allowed admittance to the main skating rink. “Palmer ran a tight ship!”¹ Smith remembers.

Although venues were largely segregated (either officially or by local custom) the newspapers were chock full of activities and events that appealed to all audiences. Whites were openly invited to predominantly Black gatherings, but the opposite was often not true. The Ebenezer Baptist Church was a popular destination for religious, civic, social, and artistic events. Joe May, “acclaimed as the greatest Gospel singer of this generation,”² for example, performed there in January 1953. Judging by the advertisements in regional newspapers this and other gatherings attracted predominantly Black audiences from surrounding towns in both New Mexico and Texas.

Roller Skating

The Crow family owned a Black roller-skating rink in Old Hobbs.³

Black Press

James Arthur Smith’s family subscribed to *Sepia*, *Jet*, and *Ebony*. He remembers that a Mr. Dement sold *Jet* magazines “out of a sack door-to-door”⁴ in the Black neighborhoods.

Scout Movie Theater

Although most theaters in town were off-limits, Smith recalls that at least one movie theater, the Scout on Broadway Avenue, would show movies to all-Black audiences after the main showing concluded at 10:00 pm on Saturday nights only. The White patrons would be ushered out, and the Black patrons already seated in the balcony or patiently waiting outside would be seated in the main theater downstairs. He recollects enjoying the Black cowboy singer Lewis Jordan.⁵

The Light That Failed Movie

The local showing of Rudyard Kipling’s *The Light That Failed* movie created quite a stir, because regional locals, including those from Hobbs and Roswell, were filmed as extras. The following

¹ Personal communication with James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

² “May to Sing at Ebenezer Baptist Wed. Singer Joe May,” *Lovington Leader*, 13 January 1955, p. 1.

³ Personal communication with James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

newspaper article ran on the front page 26 April 1940. Special theater arrangements were made at the ordinarily segregated venue:

Hobbs colored people, who were engaged in filming of Rudyard Kipling's 'The Light that Failed,' last June when the picture was being shot north of Santa Fe will have a chance to see themselves in action through cooperation of the Civic Welfare Association, colored group, and J. A. Sanders, manager of the Reel Theatre, where the picture is currently showing. Sanders said today that some 48 local colored persons were used in the film, part of a Lea County contingent of 115 who were in variations of the scenes. They were used in battle scenes, dressed and acting the part of savage Blacks in the story which has an African setting. Through cooperation with Sanders the CWA secured the setting aside of a special section in the balcony tomorrow night, beginning a 6 o' clock, so the colored group here could see how their friends look on the screen."⁶

Radio

Although extensive additional research remains to be done regarding availability and program formatting related to different Hobbs audiences, certain productions crossed the color lines. In an era pre-dating television, a Joe Louis boxing match, for example, was a time for all aficionados to gather around the family radio or at a friend's house for the evening broadcast. Charles Becknell remembers those matches with fondness, and urges others to share their memories with today's younger generations:

Unless we pass the culture on, young African American boys and girls will never know what it was like before TV. How we sat around the radio and listened to Gillette Blue Blades' fight of the week and cheered for Joe Louis, our hero. He carried the pride of the entire Black community into the boxing ring.⁷

It is difficult to overemphasize how music broadcasted over the airwaves sustained listeners and bridged cultural chasms. Writes Tyson Ledgerwood, Hobbs Elementary Fine Arts Coordinator:

It was the radio waves and the music of Berry Gordy, Smokey Robinson and Diana Ross that effectively reached across the racial divide. Their music trained the ears of all young Americans to hear our common melody...The Motown artists collectively taught us to set goals, right wrongs and 'reach out' to each

⁶ "Colored People to See Current Film," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 26 April 1940, p. 1.

⁷ Becknell, Charles E. *Voices from the African American Village: It Takes a Village to Define a Community* (New York: Page Publishing, Inc., 2019), p. 8.

other... It was the Motown greats who helped create the modern America... It was the musicians like Stevie Wonder who lived in a crumbling society of 'separate but equal' yet built a soundtrack of tolerance, justice and understanding. It was the music that changed America.⁸

Large-scale Celebrations

City-wide, county-wide, and statewide events, celebrations and commemorations surely drew large and diverse crowds, but it is unclear as to whether Black residents participated in the planning or the events themselves. Was seating at the early traveling circuses segregated? Were rodeo events divided in any way by skin color? Did county fairs allow African American food booths? Municipal and state Centennial celebrations must have been memorable affairs, but were Black residents represented in the commemoration or the planning or the audiences? Soliciting participant remembrances will help determine the extent to which cultural diversity has been embraced and celebrated.

The Sunshine Club

J. C. "Sunshine" Butler was a professional clown, and he owned the Sunshine Club. Smith remembers seeing Ray Charles, B. B. King, Ike and Tina Turner, James Brown, and many others there. He clearly remembers that ardent Sunshine Club patrons including his own step-father armed themselves in a nighttime parking lot stand-off to defend the club against a White out-of-town buyer. Smith remembers being surprised and that a group of White supporters sponsored Fats Domino in 1957 or 1958 at the high school auditorium as one of the first racially-integrated events in Smith's lifetime.⁹

⁸ Ledgerwood, Tyson. Elementary Fine Arts Coordinator, Hobbs Municipal Schools. Editorial available online at hobbsschools.net/department/FineArts/Dance (Fall 2012).

⁹ Personal communication with James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

Venerated Buildings, Structures, and Landscapes

Churches

The following list of churches, compiled by Kolanji Mwanza for the Historic Preservation Division, will require additional research:

Christ Holy Temple Church of God in Christ
Community Church of God in Christ
Ebenezer Baptist Church
El Bethel Church of God in Christ
Lane Chapel CME Church
Little Zion Baptist Church
Pentecostal Temple
Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Roxana Street Church of Christ
Scharbauer Street Church of Christ
St. John Baptist Church

“I thank God that I had Ebenezer Baptist Church in my life,” wrote author and educator Charles E. Becknell. “In addition to my mother, Ebenezer helped to keep the unpleasant experiences in balance.”¹

A 25 May 1937 *Hobbs Daily News* front-page news item applauded the construction of a new church in the Black neighborhood. Volunteers were acknowledged and local donors were named in the account:

Erection of a church in one day for a service in the evening is a feat that will be attempted in Hobbs Thursday. The church is to be the new colored church in the Flats. Wives of the members will serve lunch to the 30 workmen who have volunteered their services in erection of the building. Materials and funds for the structure were contributed. Contributions so far were announced Monday night by Rev. C. A. Clark, pastor of the First Methodist Church as follows: Lawrence Lumber Company, \$25; Elam Lumber Company, \$25; Acme Lumber Company, \$25, Fox Rig Lumber Company, \$25; B. B. Scott, \$25; Woman’s Missionary Society of Methodist Church, \$25; Mage Hardin, \$10, Rev. C. A. Clark, \$10. The Steam Electric company will wire the building and provide all wiring materials.²

¹ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 3.

² “Colored Church to be Erected Thursday for Services in Evening,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 25 May 1937, p. 1.

The companies donating materials and services were presumably Black-owned businesses or were owned by individuals supportive of the construction of a Black church at a time when different ethnic groups largely operated within separate realms.

Clubs

The weekends found Hobbs citizens “dancing to a frenzy” at the Sunshine Club on Main, later called the X-Club. On the other side (Old Hobbs) there was the Cozy Inn run by Albert Mitchell... and the Chicken Shack, operated by J. C. Spriggins. During the period Hobbs had an Army base, big name bands often came to Hobbs... You could see “Ray Charles, B. B. King and Percy Mayfield... as they performed live.”³ The Sunshine Club is where many of the Blues Singers played... “BB King, Count Basie, Ike and Tina Turner and many more. On Main Street, the real Historic District in Hobbs.”⁴ The Sunshine Club was named after a gentleman called ‘Sunshine’ Butler, the owner and proprietor... Blacks could not patronize bars uptown, so Mr. Butler opened an establishment that lured some of the up and coming Black artists to Hobbs.”⁵ Many Black artists were touring on what was called the ‘Chittlin’ Circuit.’ This was a string of Black nightclubs throughout the South where Black artists could play and move on to the next town. Charles Becknell remembers “Little Anthony and the Imperials, Fats Domino, Bobbie Blue Band and James Brown coming to Hobbs to name a few.”⁶

Works Projects Administration (WPA) Projects

Aside from the WPA-stamped sidewalks, the Hobbs Public Library appears to be the city’s only New Deal site. Additional research is needed to understand the influences and impacts of the New Deal on Hobbs. Were Black workers involved with the construction projects? As library employees or library cardholders? Was segregation disallowed at New Deal sites due to Federal funding? The interaction between New Mexico’s New Deal sites and its Black residents has not yet been fully explored.

As additional research is undertaken and oral histories are collected, other buildings, structures, landscapes and sites venerated by the Black community will be identified.

³ Rising, Evelyn. “Lea County Black History,” *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 244.

⁴ Email correspondence from Helen Houston, Hobbs resident (18 February 2017).

⁵ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 34.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Neighborhoods

Once African Americans arrived to Hobbs, settled by 1907 and formerly established in 1937, they either gravitated to or were relegated to a certain part of town. Later, real estate covenants barred Black residents from moving into predominantly White neighborhoods. Historically known as the “New Hobbs” township, this area was later called the “Flats” and even later “Harlem Heights.” Over time, it appears that these names were resisted by those residents who lived there for being demeaning.

An article citing Horace Weathers, “colored Hobbs policeman,” suggests that the nickname ‘Flats’ had changed to ‘Harlem Heights’ by the 1950s:

Horace Weathers, colored Hobbs policeman has swapped his uniform for one of the Sheriff’s departments, and is wearing a [deputy’s] badge. He is stationed in Harlem Heights, formerly known as the ‘Flats’ in Hobbs.¹

A survey of the town in 1954 revealed that although there was “no zoning ordinance, most Negroes lived in the southeastern quadrant of town.” Their homes were described as being small, many without inside plumbing, on unpaved streets. Survey informants shared that the majority of the houses were owner-occupied rather than being rentals. This study documented that “other residential areas in Hobbs had restrictive covenants in their deeds,”² making it impossible for Black residents to buy property in other parts of town.

Evelyn Rising, in her *Lea County Black History*, writes that because there were “codes that denied blacks the rights and privileges to live in certain neighborhoods in the county,” most of the residents lived in what was known as “Old Hobbs – the area around Byers, White, Gypsy, Dunnam, Roxana and Humble Streets.” Dal Paso Street was the dividing point in Hobbs, “the Whites on the West side of the street and the Blacks on the East side of the street.”³

Comparing his upbringing to those living in Artesia, Carlsbad, Clovis, and Roswell, he remembers “We had no paved streets and we had no sidewalks. The skating rink and the swimming pool were off limits. As a result, I never learned to skate or swim. The only way we could eat in a restaurant was to go around back where a table was set up in the kitchen

¹ “Via the Grapevine – No Deputy at Tatum,” *Lovington Leader*, 12 April 1956, p. 6.

² Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 200.

³ Rising, Evelyn. “Lea County Black History,” *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 240; Email correspondence from Helen Houston, Hobbs resident (18 February 2017).

specifically for Blacks. There were separate water fountains for Blacks and Whites, as well as separate bathrooms, and signs were placed in plain view to enforce the separation.”⁴

Basic amenities were late in coming to the Black neighborhood. Excavations for the approximately one mile of piping for the Hobbs Water company to provide domestic water, for example, was not undertaken until November 1938. “This is the first time that water facilities have been made available to the colored section,” noted the *Hobbs Daily Sun News*, “and considerable enthusiasm was noted as digging for the mains began.”⁵

Prior to the introduction of water, and in the absence of fire hydrants, residents coped with putting out structure blazes by themselves. This description of a bucket brigade in October 1930 captures a dire circumstance:

A bucket brigade was formed in the negro section of New Hobbs yesterday afternoon about 2 o'clock to combat a blaze... the duplex building in which the fire started was completely destroyed. A hundred buckets and wash tubs were used by the colored people in an effort to save the structure...⁶

One year after domestic water was acquired, the neighborhood residents requested an extension of the city's sewage system to include them. In what appears to be lackluster cooperation from city councilors, the *Hobbs Daily News Sun* reported the following:

After some discussion during which acting-mayor Jobe and several councilmen pledged the city's 'entire cooperation' to whatever help could be given the colored section, it was decided that the negroes would try to dig their own sewer extensions and make arrangements for purchasing the pipe.⁷

Even after the city water supply was provided to the neighborhood, it would be years before fire hydrants were installed. Residents often took matters into their own hands, including the provision of non-municipal adult education opportunities. In 1936, the *Hobbs Daily News* announced the opening of the self-proclaimed New Hobbs Negro School:

In order that adult colored people in New Hobbs may have the opportunity to further their education, Professor Martin has opened a subscription school, he announced last night. Efforts to give a balanced program of subjects for the adults will be

⁴ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 29.

⁵ “Provide Water for Colored Section,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 14 November 1938, p. 1.

⁶ “Firemen Battle Blaze in New Hobbs to Save Entire Negro Section,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 8 October 1930, p. 1.

⁷ “Council Considers Colored Requests for Sewer, Fire Plugs,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 4 April 1939, p. 1.

made by Professor Martin. All colored people interested in entering the school are asked to get in touch with Martin at the New Hobbs Negro School.⁸

When Frank Wells appeared before City Council with “a plea for recreation facilities and provisions in the colored section of town,”⁹ the commissioners responded that they would try to open the swimming pool at the HAAF for use of the colored children and to provide other recreation.

Despite infrastructure inadequacies, a lack of recreational amenities, and other obstacles, the neighborhood and its residents felt like an extended family to Charles Becknell and others who lived there. Citing an African adage that “It takes a village to raise a child,” he fondly remembers his neighborhood as a village – “the *village* really did exist... people in the *village* looked out for each other and each other’s children.”¹⁰ Long-time Hobbs resident and one of Becknell’s classmates, James Arthur Smith also recalls many instances when Black families helped other Black families with whatever was needed. “It takes a neighborhood,”¹¹ he says. One year, he recalls, the ladies in his neighborhood volunteered to purchase and sew tiger logo appliques on their children’s band uniforms.

Lemma White, retired educator, was interviewed for the *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* book edited by Evelyn Rising:

When the oil boom hit in the late ‘40s, the Black community slowly began migrating to the south side. On the south side, Hobbs Blacks built up their own community. If you needed a haircut you were referred to John Henry Morris and Lloyd Echols, called the senior barbers, and Junior Tenner, known as the junior barber.

Ann Sewall set up a barber shop in her garage at 811 S. Eighth Street. Mrs. Carter did hair by the light of an oil lamp. Other hair stylists were Betty Johnson and Dorothy Johnson who ran their business from a shop in Old Hobbs. On the south side, Jewel Wortham and Beulah Toussaint, pressed, curled and finger-waved hair for \$4 or \$5. Rubelia Mitchel-Patterson, Lena Herring and Geneva Henry (705 S. Jefferson) also became well-known professional beauticians.¹²

⁸ “Open Night School for Colored Adults,” *Hobbs Daily News*, 9 December 1936, p. 1.

⁹ “City Orders --,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 23 May 1951, p. 2.

¹⁰ Becknell, Charles E. *Voices from the African American Village: It Takes a Village to Define a Community* (New York: Page Publishing, Inc., 2019), p. 8. Emphasis original.

¹¹ Personal communication with James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

¹² Rising, Evelyn. “Lea County Black History,” *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 240 - 241.

Poet and English professor Peter Mladinic writes in *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* that the neighborhood sported several destinations for teenagers. “There was a Black cab stand, several grocery stores, a Black laundromat, cleaners, barbershop, and beauty parlor. There were also Black plumbers. There were two sides of Black town – Old Hobbs and New Hobbs.” Interviewee Mr. Atkinson stated, “Our side was larger because we were on the Southside, from Marland and Dal Paso, back. The dividing line was Duncan.” On the north side was “a nightclub, the Cozy Inn Bar, the Chicken Shack, and the Rice Hotel.” Continued Mr. Atkinson, “When we did go downtown, we had to go through to the back in restaurants.” He recalled that Blacks could shop at Wackers, Woolworths, J. C. Penny’s, C. R. Anthony’s, and Dunlap’s.¹³

Mr. Charles Becknell compares the “barbershop in the Black *village*” to a “community ‘man cave’” --

Young and old would bring their sons to the barbershop for a haircut. This was a tremendous bonding experience between father and son as both sat waiting their turn in the shop. The barbershop was a source of cultural communication that kept the men in the community informed on numerous topics... The barbershop was a special place in the *village*. Young boys were schooled on what it took to be a man.¹⁴

In her essay “Lea County Black History,” Evelyn Rising records that the main hub of activity in the South side took place on Main Street:

The community had great cooks who could make your mouth water with Southern fried chicken, slow-cooked greens and red beans and corn bread that would melt in your mouth. One restaurant that was frequented by all was The Fountain run by the Hawkinses. Amos Henry... also ran a restaurant on Main Street.

The Center, which was the prime hangout for teen and young adults, had a restaurant in its facility, run by Precious Foley... People from neighboring towns came to Hobbs to purchase Foley’s homemade fried pies. Effie Thomas operated a barbecue café on Main Street, called Betty’s Place... the very first Black restaurant was also on Main Street and was run by the Rev. and Mrs. Horton... A gentleman by the name of Daddy Bunkey also

¹³ Mladinic, Peter. *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 53.

¹⁴ Becknell, Charles E. *Voices from the African American Village: It Takes a Village to Define a Community* (New York: Page Publishing, Inc., 2019), p. 15. Emphasis original.

had a place on Main Street, and the Weathers Café, not too far away, was run by Horace Weathers and his Dutch wife, fondly called 'Mama Dutch.' On Skelly Street, was Helen Mullins' restaurant, now the home of Dorothy Collins.¹⁵

Noted educators include Lois Bridges, Mrs. Mary P. Tieuel, Wendell Gray, Myrtle Farquhar, Lial Collins, Eloise Valley, Shirley Jones and Hardy Ray Murphy. "Head Start's main center on Snyder Street is named after Tieul, and Farquhar Street is named after Myrtle."¹⁶

At one point in 1939, consideration was given to moving the entire neighborhood away from the foul stench of the new sewage treatment plant, but the motion was tabled for further consideration.

A motion to ask the city to move the colored section away from the sewer disposal plant was considered at last night's meeting of the Civic Welfare Association but the motion was tabled until further consideration had been given all its phases. Meeting at the Colored Methodist church, the members of the group said that it was apparent the disposal plant would always stink and that before the plant was built some of the aldermen had promised that if it offended the colored people the city would see to it that their section was moved.¹⁷

It is unclear how this situation was ultimately resolved.

Please note: There are more than 100 digitized newspaper articles dating between 1900 and 1960 that refer to the "colored section of Hobbs" or "the dark section" or "the Flats" or "Harlem Heights." This small sampling, arranged in chronological order, is included to provide a brief glimpse into time and place:

(1948) District Attorney G. T. Watts filed a petition in District Court on November the 9th, seeking to enjoin J. H. Line and Hazel Line, owners of the Cavern and Savoy hotels from operating. The two hotels, built from barracks buildings are located on Maryland Street and are both operated in conjunction with the other. The petition states that the defendants... maintain and conduct said hotels as houses of assignation and prostitution and permit prosecution to be practiced in each of the hotels to the extent that such practice constitutes a nuisance... Heretofore, bonds have been forfeited

¹⁵ Rising, Evelyn. "Lea County Black History," *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), pp. 243 - 244.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹⁷ "Colored People May Ask City to Move Their Section," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 28 August 1939, p. 1.

by Negro porters charged with procuring, and girls were given light sentences.¹⁸

(1948) The council approved the moving of two liquor licenses to new locations. The Derrick Liquor ask[ed] permission to move to the Levy Bldg., to the building formerly occupied by El Comedor, and R. H. Williams asked to move the license *from colored town*, known as Charlie's G. I. Snack to a location at 1200 East Broadway across from Bennets Courts.¹⁹

(1951) The colored friends of James Dickerson who is to be sentenced on October 8 by Judge Carl Hatch, gave him a going away party last Saturday and Sunday, that rivals anything ever held in Lea County. *It was held in the colored section of Hobbs.*" The party lasted two days and two nights. 300 invitations were sent out to places in Texas and Oklahoma as well as New Mexico... Invitations asked the guests to leave their guns home. Old Dick, who was departing from *the gay life of Harlem Heights* had the center table and played tap for everybody. He is to be sentenced on charges of possessing marihuana.²⁰

As one reads through the newspaper articles of the day, it is striking how often nicknames are used in reference to the 'Harlem Heights' residents. Historians have noted that enslaved Blacks who weren't given surnames, often chose their last names after emancipation. Many took the last names of their previous slaveowners. Nicknames were one way to further distinguish one person from another, especially if they shared the same last names. Charles Becknell explains nicknames this way:

A nickname was a special honor that was based on what a person was or had done. It made a definite statement about a person. In some cases, a nickname was given to focus on a problem or deficiency that one had. In my community (Hobbs) there was a young man who walked with a limp; his nickname was Jackleg. Another person was small in stature and we called him Flea. These names were not given to ridicule another person, but rather to say, 'In spite of your deficiencies... you are special.' By recognizing the deficiency in this way, the problem is out in the open and no one had to feel uncomfortable about it. Regardless of the shortcoming, the person is accepted. In the Black community, a nickname is like a badge of honor, and

¹⁸ "D. A. Moves to Close Two Hotels in Hobbs," *Hobbs Daily Flare*, 14 November 1948, p. 1

¹⁹ "Council Votes to Vacate Streets," *Hobbs Daily Flare*, 5 October 1948, p. 1. Emphasis added.

²⁰ "Via the Grapevine -- Biggest going away party ever," *Lovington Leader*, 25 September 1951, p. 5. Emphasis added.

those who receive one are special people – members of the club. It established camaraderie and respect.²¹

With this in mind, a partial list of guests invited to the 1951 weekend-long ‘going away’ party for Hobbs resident James Dickerson, becomes a showcase for colorful monikers:

Big Lip Jake Wortham, Baby Boy and his gang from Post, Texas... Big Gun and his gang from Quanah, Texas... No Teeth Albert Hall and his gang from Odessa, Little Fox and... Dangerous Blue... Old Marshall Kin and his bodyguard Kirk... Old Max Sanders, better known as ‘Jug Man,’ Bull J. T. Evans, Scarface J. D. and his gang... Pokeno... Old Tooth Shirt, Old Man Grif and Iron Head Spriggins from Roswell.²²

Growing up in a predominantly Black neighborhood sustained its residents like an independent village, where self-reliance including communal childcare was the norm. Remember the song lyric, *the night has a thousand eyes*, Charles Becknell remembers that Black community in Hobbs did too. “It seemed as though everyone was watching. As kids, we could not get into mischief because eyes that you never knew were watching would see you doing something out of the ordinary, and report you to your parents.”²³ Student-turned educator Johnnie Mae Patterson remembered that she and her classmates could not mess up at school, “Because you mess up at school, and you had heck to pay at home. So, I mean the whole community was closely knit, and everybody watched out for everybody.”²⁴ The Black neighborhood had its own heartbeat and character, special destinations and unique attributes.

At the same time, it exacerbated feelings of separation and “otherness.” Author Charles Becknell describes the duality this way: “When did I first realize that I was Black and different? ...Maybe it was when I looked around my community and saw only people who looked like me. The question that often came up in my mind was, ‘*Why are we here and they are over there?*’”²⁵ Race and racism played a significant role in Hobbs. As Charles Becknell succinctly recalls, “Everyone and everything had a *place*.”²⁶

Educator Lemma White concurs. “You know,” she remembers, “this was a compact community”--

²¹ Becknell, Charles E. *Voices from the African American Village: It Takes a Village to Define a Community* (New York: Page Publishing, Inc., 2019), p. 36.

²² “Via the Grapevine -- Biggest going away party ever,” *Lovington Leader*, 25 September 1951, p. 5.

²³ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 35.

²⁴ “Doors Opened up for Hobbs’ Blacks,” *Hobbs Daily News-Sun* (12 January 1992), p. 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

We were here and the rest of Hobbs was over there. I mean, it wasn't that we couldn't go to town or do other things, but we were in this little set community, and our school was here.²⁷

With the exception of a few extracurricular activities including some debate competitions or musical events, the neighborhoods and the schools within the neighborhoods proceeded along parallel yet very separate paths. For many residents like Becknell, Lemma White, and others, segregated southeast Hobbs felt like a village, an isolated village.

Segregated Public and Private Places

Segregated schools were legally sanctioned, and segregated churches were commonplace. 'Whites only' membership spaces thrived. Public facilities, with very few exceptions, were also off-limits to Blacks living in and visiting Hobbs. Visitors to New Mexico's segregated cities, including Hobbs, had to navigate landscapes that may or may not have been clearly delineated for new arrivals. Not every discriminatory restaurant was signed as such. Locals knew which grocery stores and retail outlets welcomed them and which did not. Prior to (or in the absence of) printed guide books, James Arthur Smith remembers that Black people learned their way around unfamiliar circumstances by word of mouth, and, in some cases, secret handshakes. Verbal networking allowed newcomers to avoid confrontations, join fraternal societies who welcomed them, find shelter, or a place to eat. Prince Hall Masons greeted one another with a secret handshake.¹

Writing in 1954, researchers Williams and Ryan recorded that few hotels and motels accepted Black guests except during spring training season for the Big-League teams. Some hotels would only accept Black athletes if accompanied by the entire team. Although most would not, some hotels and motels would accommodate high school athletic teams with bi-racial personnel. On at least one occasion, Fats Domino came to Hobbs and performed at the Sunshine Club. "After the performance they had to leave town because he and his band could not find a motel in Hobbs that would rent to them because of their skin color."² The restaurants frequently displayed the sign, 'We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone,' and informants in the community said that "only a few restaurants would serve Negroes in the company of white patrons, and then only in special rooms apart from the general dining room."³

²⁷ "Doors Opened up for Hobbs' Blacks," *Hobbs Daily News-Sun* (12 January 1992), p. 1.

¹ Personal communication with James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

² Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 34.

³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 200.

Public Transportation Buses

The town had no local buses, but in buses passing through Hobbs, “Negroes occupied the back seats.”⁴

Privately-owned Recreational Facilities

Recreational facilities which were privately owned, such as a swimming pool, a bowling alley, and a roller-skating rink, were segregated. One theatre had separate seating for Blacks, while the other two were did not allow Blacks. Three drive-ins made no distinction.⁵

Skating Rink

A 1948 newspaper announced the opening of the new skating rink managed by Mr. and Mrs. Russell Price, located behind the Union Bus Terminal. The advertisement stipulated that “colored people may skate this Thursday and thereafter every Monday and Thursday.”⁶

Aquamarine Swimming Pool

In 1964, two Black mothers were discouraged from enrolling their children in Red Cross swimming lessons by members of the local Red Cross chapter, the owners of the Aquamarine swimming pool, and the bi-racial Mayor’s Committee on Human Relations. Mrs. Stell, who managed the pool, told the local newspaper that although the mothers came to the pool with their children and asked “in a very nice and courteous manner” why “as citizens and contributors to the Red Cross,” they were not permitted to enroll their children in the Red Cross swimming classes. Stell explained that according to the pool owners, the question was not one of racial prejudice, but of business and finance instead. She explained that “if Negroes were admitted to the pool, we would lose 75 per cent of our business.” She added that “it costs \$60 per day to operate the pool – and it takes a lot of people at 40 cents each to meet the cost of operations...” She said they “would have to close Aquamarine pool if they were required to admit Negroes.”⁷ The Red Cross, the bi-racial committee, the manager, and the owners of the pool encouraged the mothers to seek out other alternatives.

(White) Membership Only

⁴ Ibid., p. 201.

⁵ Ibid., p. 201.

⁶ “Announcing,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 20 September 1948, p. 15. Emphasis added.

⁷ “Calm, Reason Reign in Race Incident Here,” *Hobbs Flare*, 25 June 1964, p. 1.

The Hobbs Country Club, dance halls, and other social venues opted for membership clauses to effectively exclude non-Whites. In the case of the Country Club, a membership committee oversaw the selection of prospective affiliates. "Members Only" was the only signage needed to effectively segregate the town. Frequently, newspaper announcements regarding the club house galas, lounge acts, dances, and other occasions concluded with the phrase "members only permitted to attend."⁸ As a caddy, Charles Becknell shagged golf balls and carried golf bags "for the rich and elite at the Hobbs Country Club." He "could not use the bathroom at the Country Club because that was against the rules." Consequently, he walked about 200 yards from the caddy shack to an open ditch to relieve himself.⁹

Black Hospital

"The large brick house was the Hospital for Black and the small brick house is where the Doctor lived. Both properties are occupied. On Marland Street."¹⁰

Everglade Cemetery (Segregated)

Racial segregation during New Mexico's Jim Crow period extended even beyond life itself. Researcher Levi Hill notes that "Hobbs had the only cemetery in the county where Blacks were allowed to be buried."¹¹ In silent repose near a pumpjack and other oilfield equipment, sits Everglade Cemetery south of town. Records indicate that the last interment took place here in 2011, where the last of nearly 1,200 people of African descent are buried. Nellie Armitage is one of several volunteers working to identifying the forgotten dead.¹²

She has researched Mary Jimmie Hurd, born into slavery in Texas in 1857, who lived to be 107 or 108 years old. She has recovered information about a small child who was somehow buried at an all-White cemetery and then reinterred at Everglade after complaints about "a Black child in a White cemetery." An alumnus of the segregated Booker T. Washington school, Armitage approached the Sadler & Son Monument office with her obituaries research, a list of names, and the knowledge of almost 500 known but unmarked gravesites. David and Cindy Sadler both agreed that the individuals they began to read about needed to be memorialized in stone. They

⁸ "Club House Opening is Set for Tonight," *Hobbs Daily News*, 14 February 1938, p. 9; "86 Join New County Club: Only 14 of 100 Original Memberships in Club Remain to be Sold," *Hobbs Daily News*, 25 May 1937, p. 1.

⁹ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 38.

¹⁰ Source?

¹¹ Hill, Levi. "Bob Williams and the Forgotten People," in *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), pp. 65-68; "Aspire to Success," Award Application, sponsored by the Monument Builders of North America (MBNA), 136 South Keowee Street, Dayton, OH 45402. Everglade Cemetery project Entry Form available at monumentbuilders.org/pdf/aspire_award_winners/2010_Winner_Sadler_Son_Monument_Works.

¹² Ibid.

agreed to donate a marker for each researched individual with their name, date of birth, and death date engraved on the stone. The unmarked child's grave has a new memorial. As of 2011, 80 markers had been donated so far.¹³

Hobbs Army Airfield (Segregated Housing and Social Activities)

With an eye toward economic development and jobs creation in the aftermath of the Great Depression, many towns and cities lobbied to be selected as military sites during the early 1940s. The City of Hobbs touted the wide-open natural environment and ideal year-round flying conditions as features suited to the Army's aviation needs. The 1 October 1940 issue of the *Hobbs Daily News-Sun* reported that the Hobbs Chamber of Commerce met to discuss a strategy for generating interest in a training base and urged city businesses and citizens to demonstrate their support for the effort. The attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, and the subsequent declarations of war hastened the Army's need for training bases, and on 18 December 1941, Major John Armstrong, commander of the Roswell Army Air Field, visited Hobbs to conduct a preliminary investigation of potential sites around the city and to discuss the matter with city political and business leaders. Army staff and personnel from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Albuquerque District made additional visits to the proposed training site. On 16 February 1942, the AAF announced its decision to build the airfield in Hobbs. They cited the favorable climatic and topographical features of the area, as well as the close proximity of the Texas & New Mexico Railway line and a state highway.¹⁴

The air field was active between 1942 and 1948 with its primary mission being the training of B-17 pilots and four engine mechanics. The air field also graduated a class of bombardiers and, following the war, the base stored P-51 and A-26 aircraft and ferried them to National Guard units throughout the country. At the height of its operations, the Hobbs Army Air Field was a self-contained community with over 350 buildings and structures situated on more than 3,000 acres. The base was comprised of (1) the cantonment, including living quarters for officers and enlisted men, a hospital, training and recreation facilities; (2) the Sub-Depot with warehouses, quartermaster offices and storerooms, and gasoline and oil storage; (3) the ordnance depot; and (4) the flight line, including maintenance hangars and landing field.¹⁵

In keeping with the segregated nature of the United States armed forces during World War II, at the opposite end of the base, "set off from the other barracks by a small stretch of open space, was housing for the African-American, or 'Colored,' troops – the 342nd Aviation Squadron – who were mechanics that specialized in B-17 engine exchanges, as well as the 1013th Quartermaster

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Dodge, William A., Ph. D. "The History & Archaeology of the Hobbs Army Air Field," Project No. 277-07, Van Critters Historic Preservation, LLC (January 2008), p. 3-4.

¹⁵ Dodge, William A., Ph. D. "The History & Archaeology of the Hobbs Army Air Field," Project No. 277-07, Van Critters Historic Preservation, LLC (January 2008), p. 3-4. This paragraph is quoted from the source verbatim.

platoon.”¹⁶ The aviation squadron included mechanics and five men who were qualified to fly test hops following repairs. The recreation areas were segregated as well.

Military personnel at the airfield included not only enlisted men and officers, but members of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). There were two units of African-American enlisted men, referred to in the vocabulary of the day as ‘Colored Troops.’ Civilians also made major contributions to base operations – at its height, Hobbs Army Air Field “employed almost 1,000 civilians in clerical jobs, supply and motor pool positions, and as mechanics.”¹⁷ Base officers, cadets, WAACS, and African-American troops each had their own mess halls and sports teams.

Northwest of the quartermaster’s office was the mess hall for the Black troops, and just to the west (bordering 18th Street) were their barracks, supply building, recreation hall, administration building, and the lavatory.¹⁸

The United States military in World War II mirrored most facets of contemporary culture, and the social and professional status of minorities was no exception:

People of color tended to be relegated to supporting roles, sometimes made so inconspicuous by their separation from the mainstream White culture that they felt ‘invisible.’ With a few exceptions, during World War II, the last war in the United States fought with an entirely segregated military, this metaphorical invisibility continued. The war would contribute to a shift in attitudes, however, that was in no small part influenced by the role that Black troops played in the war effort.¹⁹

One such ‘invisible’ but critical role that African Americans were typically charged with was as quartermasters, also known as the main supply officers. As such, they faced unprecedented challenges during World War II. As the supply lifeline of a unit, the quartermaster and his officers were responsible for managing the food, clothing, equipment, petroleum, and general supplies necessary to operate the Hobbs Army Air Field. “They needed to procure, store, and distribute these supplies, and they needed to be competent and honest administrators in order to fulfill their tasks.”²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹⁷ Dodge, William A, Timothy L. Sawyer, and Citters K. Van. *“Keep ‘em Flying” -- The Story of the Hobbs Army Air Field.* (Albuquerque, N.M: Van Citters, 2008), pp. 21-23, 34.

¹⁸ Dodge, William A., Ph. D. “The History & Archaeology of the Hobbs Army Air Field,” Project No. 277-07, Van Citters Historic Preservation, LLC (January 2008), p. 5.

¹⁹ Dodge, William A, Timothy L. Sawyer, and Citters K. Van. *“Keep ‘em Flying” -- The Story of the Hobbs Army Air Field.* (Albuquerque, N.M: Van Citters, 2008), p. 34.

²⁰ Dodge, William A, Timothy L. Sawyer, and Citters K. Van. *“Keep ‘em Flying” -- The Story of the Hobbs Army Air Field.* (Albuquerque, N.M: Van Citters, 2008), p. 32.

The “Colored” USO, chaired by the ever-present Rev. F. W. Wells, became an integral adjunct to the Black section of town, providing social and recreational services in addition to other amenities. Locals helped furnish the squadron day room, provided Christmas gifts to the Black servicemen, and ensured they felt welcome and a part of Hobbs. Black USO servicemen, in turn helped with everything from providing recreational facilities and showers for town residents.²¹

Stores and Other Black-Owned Businesses

Black residents could make purchases “on credit from the Hicks Grocery, which was located on Main Street... Other businesses included a cleaner, located on the corner of Main and Sixth Streets,”²² the Robinson and Bates Garage at Main and Dal Paso. Buster Kerr also ran a garage on Jefferson Street.

Bars and Restaurants

While integration in the schools took place in 1957, three years after the 1954 Supreme Court decision, segregation was still firmly entrenched in other enclaves through the mid-1960s. “Blacks still had to go ‘in the back’ in places like Drake’s Café, Whites, Winslow’s and the Polar Bear. All in all, blacks had limited access and restricted service in such places.”²³ Jackson’s Drug Store, the most popular after-school destination for White students remained off-limits to Blacks until the civil rights movement finally took hold.

Peter Mladinic recounts the following incident regarding segregated restaurants in his *Ethnic Lea* book chapter: After a Hobbs-Carlsbad football game in 1955, the Carlsbad team went to the Harden Hotel. “When the manager refused to serve the Black players, the football coach said, ‘If they don’t eat, we don’t eat,’ and they all walked out.”²⁴ He recorded a Mr. Atkinson’s remembrances this way: “We had a dance at the Sunshine in the 50s and Fats Domino was headlining. This shows there was no tension between black and white kids... It was some of the coaches and adults who harbored racist attitudes, and upheld segregation.” Later, Atkinson remarked that “Carlsbad, Clovis, Roswell and Las Cruces changed quicker than Hobbs.”²⁵

Segregated Schools

²¹ “Colored Day Room,” Hobbs Daily News Sun, 10 December 1942, p. 7; “Three Groups Seek Presents for the Soldiers Christmas,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 16 December 1942, p. 1.

²² Rising, Evelyn. “Lea County Black History,” *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 244.

²³ Mladinic, Peter. *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

According to one source, Black students were welcomed at any of the Hobbs public schools until 1933, when one man who had a daughter qualified to be a teacher petitioned the Black community to have a separate school:

The first segregated school in Hobbs was constructed about 1933 as the result of a petition circulated among the small Negro community by one man who had a daughter qualified as a teacher. The school board at that time had told the Negroes that their children were welcome in any school in the town.²⁶

Booker T. Washington

The staff of Booker T. Washington's 1950 Yearbook bemoaned the lack of available records regarding the school's early history. "This historical sketch would be more interesting to you the readers," they wrote, "if the school had available records of its growth, unfortunately we have no such records." They gathered "from reasonably reliable sources" that the first Booker T. Washington school was built in 1929 on the 1400 block of East Skelly Street, and that Mrs. T. C. Martin was hired as the first teacher. Other sources state that the first teacher was Mrs. Hazel Mullins Horton, who also served as the principal, and that her successor was Mrs. T. C. Martin. The school began with 30 students, grades 1 through 8. Later, the school served Blacks grades 1 through 12, and Mrs. Kaffie was added to the staff in 1938. In 1940 the school was moved to Humboldt Street, and Mr. L. E. Pigford was elected principal. In 1948 Mr. Littleton succeeded Mr. Pigford. In 1950 the Yearbook staffers documented that Booker T. Washington had a staff of thirteen and more than 350 students. "We are anxiously awaiting the completion of a new unit," they wrote, "which includes adequate facilities for all high school classes and gymnasium activities."²⁷

The segregated school at Hobbs, Booker T. Washington, enrolled 303 students in 1949, with an average daily attendance of 247 students. Nine teachers taught grades one through 12 in eight classrooms. A 1949 survey of the school noted that aside from a nurse, there were no other visiting instructors (ex. music, Spanish, vocational). There was no lab equipment. There was no gym facility. Black students from Lovington were bused twenty miles each way daily.²⁸

Although legally mandated to be on par with the White schools, there were inequalities at every level, large and small. "I vividly remember that when I received my first-grade book, one

²⁶ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 202.

²⁷ Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM); Rising, Evelyn. "Lea County Black History," *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 241.

²⁸ "New Mexico's Segregated Schools," sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949).

of the pages was torn” writes Charles Becknell. “I asked Ms. Porter, ‘Why is my book torn?’ She replied, ‘These books are sent to us after the White children finish with them.’”²⁹ Pages were torn, pages were missing, and often textbooks needed to be shared. Although separate but equal was the law of the land, separate was never equal. “Black schools did not receive funding equal to White schools. Black teachers were not paid the same as White teachers. Facilities and supplies in Black schools were woefully lagging behind White schools.”³⁰

Despite the physical shortcomings, students recalled their days at Booker T. Washington with fondness. Annie Mae Wimbish, a custodian who worked at Booker T. Washington for 24 years, held on strongly to the school’s legacy. “Booker T. means a lot to us. You can't take history away from us... This is where our ancestors went to school. ... It's hard to explain how much it means to me.”³¹

Reference librarian Johnnie Mae Patterson recalled that in the 1940s, a lack of space required some Black students to attend classes at a Baptist church and at another building on Main Street, rather than on campus. Still, Patterson said she believed she received an education “as good as, if not better than” the education her four children received at the integrated Hobbs High. “It wasn't so much the materials. It was the teachers; they saw to it that we learned. There was no dilly-dallying and messing around,” Patterson said. “It was like a family. Everybody knew everybody.”³²

In the fall of 1953 a small group of Black parents took their children to one of the schools for Whites and asked that they be registered there. The school administrators replied that “under the law of the state they were maintaining a segregated system.” The parents returned home, “and nothing further was done during the school year.”³³

By 1954 there was still one school for Blacks serving the community in all grades, with a Black principal and a staff of sixteen teachers. The building was relatively new, well equipped, with a large gymnasium, and “was the equal of any *but the most modern in the system.*”³⁴ It served approximately 400 students and was located in the center of the Black neighborhood, some six

²⁹ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

³¹ Romo, Rene. “Tracing a Difficult Path,” *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 202.

³⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 202. Emphasis added; Romo, Rene. “Tracing a Difficult Path,” *Journal Southern Bureau* (16 May 2004). Available on-line at abqjournal.com/education/175842education05-16-04.

blocks from another elementary school serving an adjoining white area. It is worth clarifying that the phrase “was the equal of any but the most modern” means that inequalities existed. Booker T. Washington did not have a cafeteria, for example, which meant that hot meals were unavailable. Black children from Tatum, Eunice and Lovington were also bused to the school, although most lived within a few blocks of their town’s public schools. “The children from Tatum had to get up at 4:30 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. in order to catch the bus to Hobbs. There were only a few students to be picked up. The bus stopped in Lovington, picked up more Black students and proceeded to Hobbs... The students who were bused could not participate in after-school activities, because the bus left for Tatum at 4:00 p.m. If they did participate, their parents would have to drive from Tatum to Hobbs to pick them up... For years that bus ran from Tatum to Hobbs and back, like a slave ship carrying its cargo to and fro.”³⁵

Less than a week after the Supreme Court's historic decision, the Hobbs school board decided to integrate its two junior highs and lone high school by the following fall.³⁶

Desegregation versus Pro-Segregation

During the period between the end of segregation in Hobbs and the beginning of integration, the City faced internal dissension fomented by one main character. Although in 1954 the Superintendent told the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) that “no other decision” besides integration “is possible under the law,” a local pro-segregation faction led by Rev. William Thomas ‘Bill’ Carter fought hard over a period of more than a year to keep the racial *status quo* intact.¹

The Superintendent concluded his June 1954 remarks to the PTA by observing that:

the teaching of citizenship is one of the primary functions of the public schools, and that one of the most effective ways of teaching citizenship is to teach respect for law and order. One of the most effective ways to teach respect for law and order is to obey the law of the land. It is now the law of the land that separate schools for Negroes are unconstitutional.²

³⁵ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 32.

³⁶ Romo, Rene. “Tracing a Difficult Path,” *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004; Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 31.

¹ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 206.

² *Ibid.*, 206.

One potentially volatile dynamic that had not surfaced in any of the other segregated New Mexico communities percolated to the surface in Hobbs: “A religious group opposed to desegregation on the grounds that it violated the teachings of the Old Testament.”³

Rev. William ‘Bill’ Carter

Described as a “big, hearty, self-educated man,” Carter had once served time on a Texas chain gang. Later, he became an oilfield worker who – according to his own testimony – “drank, gambled and caroused mightily” until the death of one of his children brought on an “apocalyptic conversion.”⁴ Despite his humble upbringing, or perhaps because of his past, he became one of the most controversial figures in Hobbs civic life.

Rev. Carter knew what hard times were. “I had my first pair of shoes when I was 9 years old, I’ve been cold and hungry plenty of times, and I’ve had somebody to take care of since I was that high. Life hasn’t been easy.”⁵ Carter was born in Henderson County, TX on 9 September 1905. The oldest of 13 children, he attended school through the seventh grade. “I never went to school for more than three months at a time,” he recalled, often “having dropped out of school to keep the family going.”⁶

After serving jail time for an altercation with a man holding shotgun, Mr. Carter served a variety of positions with the oilfields, pipelines, and telegraph companies. He married, had children, and – by his own admission -- gambled excessively. “In April 1910, I surrendered to the ministry. God had been calling me about two years, but I had been fighting it tooth and toenail.” In November of that year, he started preaching in what was then a grocery store in Crossroads, in northern Lea County. Mr. Carter was ordained 11 June 1941. In September 1943 he was called as a missionary by the Southeastern Baptist Association.

“I don’t hate the Negro,” he declared at the height of his congregation’s efforts to maintain school segregation, “I don’t have hate for anybody. If I felt in my heart that I did, I’d have to call a prayer meeting and git it out. But... I’m not going to dispute God’s laws. I think He had a reason for doing it the way he did.”⁷

³ Ibid., 212.

⁴ Rosenfeld, Albert. “New Mexico’s Fading Color Line: Albuquerque Shows the Way,” Abrams, Nathan, ed. *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59: “A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion,”* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1955), p. 209.

⁵ Jameson, Vic. “Rev. Carter Had Rough Life,” *Clovis News Journal*, 29 August 1954, p. 18.

⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

⁷ Ibid.

In addition to garnering the support of his Baptist congregationists, Rev. Bill Carter appealed to some of the White oil workers who threatened to sell their trailer homes and move to Texas if the schools were desegregated.⁸

July 1954

In July 1954, around 400 attended a meeting on 'Segregation in Hobbs' at the Rock Chapel. Rev. Bill Carter presided. The group voted to retain an attorney and took up a collection towards the fee. Parishioners donated \$179 and more than 100 volunteers offered to circulate petitions. The petitioners sought like-minded individuals who wanted to maintain "complete segregation" in the Hobbs schools.⁹

August 1954

In early August 1954, in order to comply with the Supreme Court decision dissolving the "separate but equal" doctrine, the Hobbs School Board decided to allow students in the district to choose the school they wished to attend. This privilege applied to "colored children as well as White."¹⁰ By 8 August 1954, Carter's petitioners had collected the names of more than 8,000 adults protesting the end of school segregation in Hobbs.¹¹

Late in August 1954, Rev. Carter was interviewed by the Associated Press. He told the reporter it was not a "Carter group," but rather it was "8,000 people," and that he was standing by his convictions and the will of God.¹²

Picking up on Carter's devotion to God, Rev. Mitchell S. Epperson, pastor of the Northminister Presbyterian Church, asked Carter in a letter to the *Albuquerque Journal*, "How can a man, dedicated to God, take orders from such people?" He was referring to Carter's backers, many of whom Carter had identified as White oil field workers. "I have had many friends among oil field workers," Epperson's letter continued, "but it never occurred to me to regard them as my spiritual advisors."¹³ The Rev. Epperson, also serving as president of the Albuquerque Ministerial Alliance, charged Carter with being "guilty of social heresy of the worst sort" and of trying to ease his conscience by finding religious sanction for "racial bigotry and intolerance" in

⁸ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 207.

⁹ "Hobbs Segregation Committee Will Circulate Petitions for Segregation in Schools," *Lovington Leader*, 23 July 1954, p. 1.

¹⁰ "Colored and White Students May Choose Any School Without Racial Distinction," *Lovington Leader*, 8 August 1954, p. 1.

¹¹ "Colored...", *Lovington Leader*, 8 August 1954, p. 8 (continued from p. 1).

¹² Romo, Rene. "Tracing a Difficult Path," *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

¹³ "Blast is Leveled at Hobbs Pastor on Desegregation," *Albuquerque Journal*, 22 August 1954, p. 1 and p. 3.

the Bible.¹⁴ Epperson, representing the Baptist Convention, wrote elsewhere that it was most unfortunate that the one articulate voice in the state of New Mexico against public school desegregation should be that of a minister. Epperson called Carter's position

absurd and grossly inconsistent with all for which the Church stands. It is nothing short of preposterous that you would try to ease your conscience by finding religious sanction for your racial bigotry and intolerance in the Bible story of what happened to the sons of Noah.¹⁵

Epperson called on Carter not to predict trouble but rather to "prophesy an easy transition to this core Democratic and Christian way of life in our nation."¹⁶

Carter reiterated that his stance was based on the Bible. "They figure I got it in for the Negro. I have no personal animosity for the Negro. Only God put the curse on the Negro -- I didn't,"¹⁷ Carter explained. Further amplifying his stand, Carter said that the Supreme Court has:

no power to trifle with the laws of Almighty God. From all indications the government or Supreme Court did this thing more to appease Communist Russia and to stop propaganda rather than to think of hardships placed on the southern Negro and southern white man... We know the Supreme Court has ended segregation but it did ask that where it exists that there be a time of waiting until the Supreme Court could hand down a decision on how and when to do it which will be handed down in the latter part of October. The Hobbs School board did not wait.¹⁸

Throughout the emotional public discourse, which took place in the newspapers, on the radio, and in public meetings, Carter consistently defended his belief that "God willed segregation." He also reiterated his contention that "when a law is enforced that jeopardizes a group of people it should be done away with." Carter often prophesied that the town was going to "explode into riots" if integration proceeded.¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵ Romo, Rene. "Tracing a Difficult Path," *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Romo, Rene. "Tracing a Difficult Path," *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004; "Carter and Group Discuss Plans for Martial Law," *Lovington Leader*, 29 August 1954, p. 1.

Prior to the school integration issue being brought to the forefront, long-time Hobbs resident James Arthur Smith remembers that the congregations belonging to the Ebenezer and Rock Chapel churches used to sing together. “Kids are kids,” reflected Smith, “and they got along.” However, once Rev. Bill Carter formed the Segregation Committee, the congregations became fractured. Carter, during an interview, told a journalist that “he wouldn’t send his daughter to high school with niggers.” Arthur remembers that the relationships between the two congregations “evaporated” after that interview.²⁰

In mid-August Rev. Carter declared that if some peaceful settlement was not reached by 28 August “he was getting out of it.” He said that he had agreed to be “moderator” for the Segregation Committee “only if they could reach some peaceful settlement.” He further stated that he had “tried to keep peace thus far,” but that some of the men on the Segregation Committee were getting “pretty hostile.”²¹ While at least one member of Carter’s congregation “quit over the minister’s campaign,” Carter seemed to have the staunch support of the remaining flock. The statewide New Mexico Baptist Convention, however, distanced itself from Carter's stance, publicly announcing it supported the Supreme Court's opinion.²²

The school board convened publicly on at least two occasions rather than meeting privately with the Segregation Committee. They wanted to allow others to speak out. Approximately 600 residents gathered one evening in the high school gymnasium. “A small group of Negroes came to observe and stayed in spite of many bitter remarks flung at the school officials by persons in the audience.”²³ In a proactive effort to quell any upcoming unrest, District Attorney Pat Hannagan summoned the Rev. Bill Carter and several of his committee members to let them know in person that they “would be held responsible” if anything “such as a riot” occurred in the coming weeks. Carter bemoaned “how badly” he was treated, and spoke of plans to contact Governor Mecham to demand that he declare martial law in Hobbs.²⁴

Carter described his meeting with District Attorney Hanagan as being “communistic in the way it was handled.” He reported that “pistol-toters” were in the crowd at the meeting “with their guns loose for action.” When he was told by Hanagan that he would be responsible for any violence, Carter responded with, “So, if a Negro stabs me in the back, I am guilty, am I right?” Without providing any context, he concluded by declaring “The Negroes are a defeated and hopeless race.”²⁵

²⁰ Personal communication with James Arthur Smith. Telephone conversations and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

²¹ “Carter Wants Settlement or He Will Quit,” *Lovington Leader*, 19 August 1954, p. 1.

²² Romo, Rene. “Tracing a Difficult Path,” *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

²³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico,” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 210.

²⁴ “Carter and Group Discuss Plans for Martial Law,” *Lovington Leader*, 29 August 1954, p. 1.

²⁵ “Martial Law to be Asked by Hobbs Group,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 27 August 1954, p. 1; “Carter and Group Discuss Plans for Martial Law,” *Lovington Leader*, 29 August 1954, p. 1.

District Attorney Hanagan said the reason he called the State Patrolman, Deputy, and Hobbs police to the meeting with the Segregation Committee “was that he wanted them to understand the laws they might be called upon to enforce.”²⁶ Hanagan released the following public statement after meeting with the Segregation Committee:

This office, together with other law enforcement agencies is charged with the duty of the enforcement of the laws and to maintain peace in this area and although this office *has and will maintain a neutral attitude in respect to the desegregation of [the] schools of this area*, it is felt that in order to avoid any misunderstanding or disputes and, possibly, violence, that all should be advised of the laws pertaining to this issue and the possible consequences which will attach if any of these laws are violated.²⁷

The article went into a lengthy description of each law that could be potentially violated if parents chose to picket, riot, conspire, or failed to send their children to school.

For days afterward, Carter vociferously claimed that he was being held “hostage” by D. A. Pat Hanagan as a guarantee against rioting. Hanagan had warned Carter and his group against state law dealing with unlawful assembly, conspiracy, rioting and any other violence. “I have been made a hostage,” Carter said, “and if any violence occurs, I will be the first one arrested. In other words, if a Negro stabs me, I can’t object.” Carter’s group voted to ask Gov. Edwin Mechem to declare martial law in Hobbs. But Mechem, reached in Clovis, merely said “no comment.”²⁸

The editor of the nearby *Lovington Leader* chimed in at the last moment, praising Carter’s Segregation Committee as being “all good honest people, all hard-working people who have been good citizens of Lea County for many years,” explaining that they “are not a bunch of radicals but family men.”²⁹ The editor then acknowledged the “colored people of Hobbs” saying he could “call most of them by their first names.” The editor continues:

These people don’t blame the White man because they are Black. They know we had nothing to do with their color. The only thing they want is a chance to better their race in the fields of education. They want their children to be educated, a chance they themselves never had. They aren’t going to cause any trouble. They don’t want trouble and all those TV people and

²⁶ “Advises Carter He’s Responsible for any Trouble That May Occur as a Result of Heading Group,” *Lovington Leader*, 29 August 1954, p. 1.

²⁷ “Hanagan’s Statement,” *Lovington Leader*, 8 August 1954, p. 8. Emphasis added.

²⁸ “Negro and White Students Register Without Incident: Harsh Words Traded in Desegregation Issue at Hobbs,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 28 August 1954, p. 1.

²⁹ “There Will Not be a Riot in Hobbs,” *Lovington Leader*, 29 August 1954, p. 2.

Time magazine who are standing by for their big story, are going to be downright disappointed [*sic*]. The people of Hobbs aren't going to have any riot, and they aren't going to get their big story.³⁰

On the much-anticipated first day of enrollment, children of all ethnicities and skin colors signed up for the same schools for the Fall 1954 - Spring 1955 term without incident. The *Albuquerque Journal* described the momentous occasion this way:

Thus, the children made the first step toward breaking down a racial barrier which has existed in the 'Little Texas' section of New Mexico, but there continued to be rumbles of possible disturbances over a complete desegregation policy ordered by the Hobbs school board. They did so as a flurry of harsh words were traded by authorities and a group led by a Baptist preacher, Bill Carter, who has claimed ever since the Hobbs school board ruled out segregation that the move would lead to violence.³¹

It was reported that the School Board anticipated enrolling some 50 "Negro" children in senior high school, 75 in two junior high schools, and 275 in grades one through six. They were to sit side-by-side with an estimated 3,600 to 5,100 White pupils in a town of about 15,000 the following Monday when schools re-opened. "Trouble? No. None has been reported and we are just following the usual procedure in enrolling all pupils,"³² said Charles L. Mills, superintendent of the schools during a turbulent time.

September 1954

The remaining six New Mexico segregation holdouts (Artesia, Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Hobbs, Clovis, and Roswell) had each acquiesced to the Supreme Court decision by September 1954. The changeover was peaceful in every circumstance, despite the dire predictions emanating from Hobbs. Wrote one reporter, "New Mexico's only segregation sore spot healed up quickly this week at Hobbs, where the prophets of the noose and tar barrel were shouting the loudest." The Rev. William Carter, who was doing most of the forecasting of trouble "pulled in his horns sharply after a stern warning from the law that he could be held responsible for inciting to riot."³³

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³¹ "Negro and White Students Register Without Incident: Harsh Words Traded in Desegregation Issue at Hobbs," *Albuquerque Journal*, 28 August 1954, p. 1.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ "Backstage in New Mexico," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 5 September 1954, p. 11.

January 1955

Not ones to surrender easily, the self-proclaimed Hobbs Segregation Committee backed two pro-segregationist Board of Education candidates in the opening days of 1955. Rev. Bill Carter offered to do all he could to elect J. B. Caldwell and H. C. Whitley.³⁴

February 1955

As the segregation issue flared up again with the upcoming School Board election, newspaper and radio advertising, direct mail appeals, and the distribution of handbills attempted once more to re-impose racial separation within the schools. An unusually large turnout for the School Board elections in February 1955 decisively overwhelmed the pro-segregation faction, and served as a harbinger for the conclusive and permanent end to school segregation:

An overwhelming vote at Hobbs – in which pro-segregation forces were decisively beaten – topped the nearly 100 small school board elections around New Mexico Tuesday... Victorious at Hobbs were incumbent candidates Dr. Demarious C. Badger, who polled 1,166 votes, and Carl P. Randolph, 1,094. Both terms are for six years to fill two spots on the five-man board.

The candidates of the Hobbs Segregation Committee, which has bitterly opposed the Supreme Court order ending segregation in the nation's schools, gathered less than half as many votes as the winners. Segregation candidate J. B. Caldwell [service station operator] gathered 478 votes, while his running mate, H. C. Whitley [Gulf oil employee] got only 441. The total vote in the Hobbs election was 2,154, about three times as many votes as have ever been cast in previous school elections.³⁵

The nearby *Carlsbad Current-Argus* newspaper regarded the School Board's unprecedented election turnout and outcome this way:

Given a chance to express their opinions, voters turned out in record numbers and defeated the two candidates who were pledged to work for segregated schools. We don't believe this question has been tested so clearly before the bar of public opinion anywhere else in the nation since the Supreme Court decision. The school board election results were even more

³⁴ "Segregation Issue Raised Again at Hobbs," *Alamogordo Daily News*, 5 January 1955, p. 9.

³⁵ "Hobbs School Board Voting is Spotlighted: Pro-Segregation Forces Decisively Beaten Yesterday (AP) *Roswell Daily Record*, 2 February 1955, p. 1; "School Election in Hobbs Heated," *Albuquerque Journal*, 1 February 1955, p. 5.

remarkable in view of the makeup of Hobbs. Most of the residents of this neighboring Lea County city are Texans by birth, with a scattering from Oklahoma and Kansas. By and large the Hobbs citizenry is rooted in the south, where segregation has been a way of life for two centuries. Hobbs has spoken clearly. Hobbs will go along with the Supreme Court.³⁶

Desegregation and Sports

Some New Mexico schools made scheduling changes in anticipation of sports desegregation. In 1953-54, for example, Booker T. Washington in Hobbs and the segregated Lincoln-Jackson High of Clovis were allowed to compete against white schools in regular and post-season basketball.³⁷ A tiny school in numbers, but titanic in talent, the Booker T. Washington basketball team compiled a 13-9 season record in the small school division, with three of those wins in the district tournament. In 1954-55, the first season after integration, "Hobbs became a team to be reckoned with in state basketball circles."³⁸ Booker T. Washington and later Hobbs High had Bill Bridges, a fast-developing African-American up from the junior varsity, who was poised to become a legend. Bridges stands as an "exquisite example of the value of diversity and the flaws of the 'separate but equal' concept." Had he stayed at Booker T. Washington, "strapped with a short schedule against small schools and with virtually no media coverage, it is unlikely that he would have become a famous and well-paid professional player."³⁹ Thanks in large part to integration, Hobbs High won the championship in Bridges' initial varsity season (1955-56) for the first time in school history. "Hobbs, defeating Carlsbad for the fourth time this year...took the lead, 79-77, with three minutes to play on a follow-up shot by Bill Bridges in a hair-raising finale," wrote Hobbs *Sun-News* sports editor Art Gatts. The final score: Hobbs 89, Carlsbad 82. "Bridges' rebound and put-back was surely one of the most important plays in his young career, spotlighting the Eagles' rise from obscurity to statewide dominance."⁴⁰ Booker T. Washington's merger with Hobbs High created the "longest high school basketball dynasty in New Mexico, a legendary NBA player, Bill Bridges, and better basketball throughout the state."⁴¹

Integration in Other Realms

³⁶ "Hobbs Speaks Clearly," *Carlsbad Current-Argus*, reprinted in the *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, 21 February 1955, p. 4.

³⁷ Moffett, Ben. "On Martin Luther King's Birthday, Remembering the End of School Segregation in Hobbs and New Mexico, 1954," 21 January 2014. Available on-line at nmsportsblog.com/2014/01/21/martin-luther-king-day-post.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Moffett, Ben. "On Martin Luther King's Birthday, Remembering the End of School Segregation in Hobbs and New Mexico, 1954," 21 January 2014. Available on-line at nmsportsblog.com/2014/01/21/martin-luther-king-day-post.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Numerous additional personal interviews will need to be collected to fully understand the ramifications of school integration in all of its different realms. For athletes, it meant greater opportunities and larger audiences. For many students, integration caused barely a ripple. Others remember tense and hurtful incidents. For James Bridges, a former Hobbs resident, he remembers being bused to Heiser Junior High School:

All the students were out to make fun of us when we got off the bus... It seemed like it was a million of them... When we got off the bus, they'd make fun of us, they'd talk about us, and there was nothing you could do. It made you feel a lot of fear.⁴²

The taunting motivated Bridges to skip the bus and walk to school. Bridges said there were fights over racial slurs and added that, "apart from being in sports together, Black and White students largely kept to themselves."⁴³ Charles Becknell remembers that once the schools were integrated, he and his friends "had to walk through a White neighborhood. With the exception of a few people who drove by and yelled out, 'nigger,' we had very few problems." He recalled that those who rode the bus experienced more difficulties, because for the first few weeks, "hostile White students yelled 'nigger, go back where you came from, we don't want you here,' and a few obscenities when they got off the bus at the school." What really stood out for Becknell was that the teachers and administrators stood by and did nothing. Recalled Becknell ruefully, "We were not wanted, and we knew it."⁴⁴

Several social and civic organizations were integrated before the schools followed suit, particularly those managed by municipalities or philanthropic groups:

Little League

Recreational programs sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, such as the Little League baseball teams, were integrated two or three years before the schools "with very little parental protest over integration or heckling from patrons at the games." The Little League was credited in Hobbs, as in some other regional towns, with "improving human relations through participation in sports."⁴⁵

Legal Actions Assisting with Integration

In addition to (and in many cases because of) strong Black community leaders and influential non-Black supporters, a series of legal actions helped integrate Hobbs and mediated inequities

⁴² Romo, Rene. "Tracing a Difficult Path," *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 56.

⁴⁵ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 201.

over time. The 1954 U. S. Supreme Court decision to integrate public schools, the 1955 state Public Accommodations law, and the 1963 addition of a penalty clause to this law all helped initiate change. New Mexico's Fair Employment Practices law and its penalty clause also promoted fairness. At principal Ralph D. Littleton's request, City administrators in December 1962 formed the Hobbs Inter-Racial Council to "seek peaceful solutions to existing problems between Negroes and Whites in Hobbs."⁴⁶

Sometimes, positive social change was achieved by Hobbs parents simply showing daily empathy for one another. The following sentiment, although perhaps uncommon in some quarters at the time, was expressed enough that the transition from segregation to integration was largely peaceful and without major incident:

One white mother, a Southerner recently come to Hobbs, stated that she saw no reason to object to having her little girl go to Washington School. She had been to the school and talked with some of the teachers and was impressed with their courtesy and their interest in the children who were playing in the gym and on the playing field. She thought that if the White parents in this district would teach their children not to abuse the Negro children and call them unpleasant names, everything would work out all right. *However, she said that she was in a very small minority among her friends* because she did not object to desegregation.⁴⁷

Civil Rights Era

After the achievement of educational integration, it took a concerted civil rights movement in Hobbs to achieve social integration and equality. Many contend that this broader quest for racial fairness continues to this day. Religious leaders were often at the forefront and remain so today. In addition to Rev. Wells, other courageous ministers who helped in the civil rights struggles were Rev. Houston, pastor of the Methodist Church, and Brother Anderson of the Church of Christ. Noted ministers who also made a difference include "Rev. H. R. Johnson; the Rev. Hudson; the Rev. Josie; Elder Brooks, Elder Kelly, organizer of El Bethel Church of God in Christ; Elder Henderson; the Rev. H. R. Watkins, longtime minister of Pleasant Green Baptist

⁴⁶ Wittrup, Burton A. (Associated Press Writer), "Hobbs Integration: 'We Can't Keep Our Young People Here,'" *Roswell Daily Record*, 2 August 1964, p. 9; Romo, Rene. "Tracing a Difficult Path," *Journal Southern Review*, reprinted in the on-line *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 May 2004.

⁴⁷ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Response to the Supreme Court Decision: Hobbs and Clovis, New Mexico," *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, p. 212. Emphasis added.

Church and president of the New Mexico and Central Arizona National Baptist Convention; and the Rev. James W. Ward.”¹

Peaceful Protests

In a headline proclaiming “Sit-down Protest Hits NM,” the *Alamogordo Daily News* described the 27 March 1960 peaceful demonstration at the McLellan variety store lunch counter. Although Blacks were allowed to shop at the store, they were not allowed to dine in. “About 10 Negroes, male and female and ‘of college age,’ took seats at the lunch counter of the McLellan variety store in Bel Aire Shopping Center yesterday afternoon... the woman working at the lunch counter told them they could not be served there but that she could sell them take-out orders... After about 15 minutes, the group left... announcing, ‘We’ll be seeing you.’”² As a participant in the sit-down, Charles Becknell recalls the incident this way:

During the summer of 1960, five of my friends and I were riding around one Sunday afternoon. We decided to enter McClellan Department store and order a hamburger at the lunch counter... We sat down and the waitress came over and we told her that wanted to order a hamburger. She responded, ‘I’m sorry, we don’t serve colored people here.’ A friend of mine said, ‘We didn’t order colored people, we ordered a hamburger.’ We all had to laugh at that one.³

Becknell shakes his head over the fact that the paper reported that the people who tried to integrate the lunch counter did not look as though they were from Hobbs. He also remembers that some of the Black leaders in the community gave them a stern talking to about their *place*.⁴

Coast-to-coast civil rights protests during the 1960s caused a national soul-searching and a questioning of accepted circumstances. The *Hobbs Daily News Sun* printed the results of numerous surveys attempting to gauge the pulse of America’s race relations. “Despite continuing Negro-Caucasian tensions across the country,” reported one source, “Caucasian attitudes toward Negroes have changed significantly during the past two years. In 1963, 51 per cent of all White people objected to the idea of having a Negro family move in next door to

¹ Rising, Evelyn. “Lea County Black History,” *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 245.

² “Sit-down Protest Hits NM,” *Alamogordo Daily News*, 28 March 1960, p. 1; Cooper, George M. “The Modern Civil Rights Movement in New Mexico, 1955 - 1975,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 207.

³ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 79.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

them. Today this number has diminished to 37 percent.”⁵ The results of the survey revealed that despite the overall evidence of “greater White tolerance and understanding of Negroes,” White prejudice against social contacts between the races had not improved. For example, “the percentage of Whites throughout the country who would object to their teen-age daughter dating a Negro has risen from 90 to 92 per cent since 1963.”⁶

Surveys confirmed that integration on the job, with transportation and in housing were the core areas in which White attitudes had softened most. By 1965, polls showed that a majority of Whites held “no objection” to personal contact with Blacks in restaurants, restrooms, or clothing stores.⁷

Urban rioting, especially in Northern cities during the mid-1960s, caused a backlash. “Exceptional events at the riots have shocked the White community back into old ways of thinking about some supposed racial characteristics” including those who agreed that “Negroes have less native intelligence, and are careless about family life.”⁸ A resurgence of false stereotypes again perpetuated the myth of White superiority.

Systemic Racism Persists

Those who harbor the false notion of White supremacy have always perpetuated unfounded suspicions regarding people of color. On 30 July 2019, a demographer produced a detailed 15-page report that showed that the Hobbs Police Department made a majority of “pedestrian stops” in the city’s heavily Black and Hispanic south end, and that “non-Whites were far more likely to find themselves detained by officers in such stops.” The entire police department was placed under the supervision of a federal judge and two appointed monitors after a class action lawsuit revealed “racially discriminatory policing.” The report concluded that the manner in which some Hobbs Police Department officers unjustly targeted minorities in the south and east Patrol Areas by making “highly discretionary stops and contacts” was an effort to “satisfy their superiors’ pressure for them to aggressively make stops and arrests.”⁹

⁵ Harris, Louis. “Caucasian Attitude Toward Negro Race Shows Change,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 3 November 1965, p. 7.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Proctor, Jeff. “Albuquerque Police Department: Racial Discrimination Claims Against Hobbs Police Draw Unexpected Rebuttal,” *New Mexico in Depth* (27 February 2020). Available on-line at nmindepth.com/2020/02/27/racial-discrimination-claims-against-hobbs-police-draw-unexpected-rebuttal. For a copy of the report, please visit documentcloud.org/documents/6788642-Hobbs-Plaintiffs-Expert-Investigation-Report.

Biographies Hobbs

Biographies

Research is currently underway regarding the following individuals: Lawrence Pigford, Cornelius 'Pat' Patterson, Myrtle Attaway Farquhar, Rob Evans, Ralph Tasker, Ralph D. Littleton and others. Each contributed to positive and far-reaching impacts for the Black community.

Professor Ralph D. Littleton was a well-known fixture in the Black community. "He waged war and rectified wrongs, not with weapons or threats, but with an eloquent speech and a quiet mannerism. He was so effective in getting things done, Littleton became the first Black elected to the Hobbs School Board and County Commission." He never slowed down and was effective in bringing the dental clinic as well as St. Mary's south clinic to Hobbs. His house, located next to Henry's Beauty Shop, remains "a monument to the community and the people of south side," and a reminder that "a great Black man once lived there."¹

Often leading the fight was the Rev. F. W. Wells. "Wells, no doubt, was a leader. He was not afraid to take a stand, where he felt there was an injustice... Wells pastored one the first Black churches in the community and for more than half a century, he waged community battles from this pulpit to the courthouse." He was often described as being "the Martin Luther King, Jr. of Hobbs."² Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, he "served as pastor of that church for 62 years. Recalls Charles Becknell: "Reverend Wells was a remarkable man who was not only my pastor, but my friend, mentor, and spiritual advisor until the day he died. There will never be another like him. He was a leader and on the forefront of racial change in the Hobbs community."³

Tommy Lee Hamilton

Tommy Lee Hamilton was interviewed for the Lea County Museum Press about a decade ago. "Every New Mexico governor of the last 50 years has known Tommy. And thanks to an uncanny ability to get along with anyone, Tommy served as a bridge between the Black and White communities during the Civil Rights Era... Carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, landscaping, auto repair, barbecuing and building and painting a home were among Tommy's talents... Tommy started working for Me-Tex Supply Co. in 1945 for \$1 an hour."⁴ Note: Charles Becknell is Tommy Lee Hamilton's oldest son.

¹ Rising, Evelyn. "Lea County Black History," *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 243.

² *Ibid.*, 245.

³ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), pp. 39-40.

⁴ Trout, Richard. "Tommy Lee Hamilton: Friend to All – Hobbs man served as a bridge between black, and white communities," *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 255.

Living Histories

Charles Becknell, Sr. (personal communications, and two published books).

Juanita Wimbish has no qualms or regrets about growing up in Hobbs. “There was security and a lot love for children who lived here. It was like a large family with everybody caring for one another.” She said she “owes her life to these great Black men and women who instilled in her a basic foundation and gave her the educational tools she needed.”⁵

Spiritual Mentor Awardees

The Spiritual Mentor Award was given to Jonnie Mae Watkins for her untiring devotion to service throughout the community. The Education Award was given to Elma Lois Bridges, who began her 40 years of service as an educator, teaching at the Booker T. Washington Elementary School in 1956. The Community Achievement Award was given to Lemma Jean Thomas White, who became the First African American Magistrate Judge in the state of New Mexico. The Oldest Citizen Award was given to Mrs. Alice McDade, who is 101 years old. Lovey Mae Wright who was born in 1929, the same year Booker T. Washington School opened its doors, received a special award for having the most grandchildren. At 80 years of age Lovey Mae has 102 grandchildren.⁶

⁵ Rising, Evelyn. “Lea County Black History,” *Ethnic Lea: Southeast New Mexico Stories* (Lovington, New Mexico: Lea County Museum Press, 2011), p. 246.

⁶ Hill, Levy. “‘Still Standing Banquet’ Honors History Makers,” in *Statewide Focus*, Issue 2, Quarter 2 (October/November/December). Sponsored by the New Mexico State Office of African American Affairs (2010?).

James Arthur “Jeep” Smith

James Arthur “Jeep” Smith was born to a sharecropper in Scottsville, ten miles outside of Marshall in East Texas. He was delivered by a midwife in 1943. The Hobbs Airfield brought James Arthur Smith and his family to Hobbs in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1961, he received a full athletic scholarship in track to Texas Western in El Paso, TX. He was one of the first three African Americans allowed to live on campus to be near the training facility. He remembers hearing the “N” work “a lot.”⁷ The Baptist Student Union provided a safe haven for him and his Black classmates. As an aside, although Smith recommends watching the movie *Glory Road*, which recounts the 1966 NCAA championship Texas Miners basketball team coached by Don Haskins, he believes that the relaxed racial relationships depicted in the movie have been romanticized and are not realistic. “The races were never able to mix that way on our campus or in the dorms at that time,” he recalls. He retired from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1999. His many passions include teaching remedial reading, and serving as an active Jehovah’s Witness church member with his wife Adele. The author is deeply grateful to Arthur Smith for sharing his time and remembrances during the course of the current research.

Zeak Lovell Williams

Zeak Lovell Williams was born in 1944 to Zeak and Jimmie Lee Williams, Sr. Hobbs. He was a lifelong resident. In 1988, during a time when the city commission circulated mayoral duties among the five commissioners, Williams became the city’s first black mayor. He served two nine-month terms during his tenure. Williams was also known as “The Fastest Man in New Mexico” after running the 100-yard dash in 9.3 seconds at the 1962 state track and field championships.

Hobbsian Charles Becknell’s experiences with discrimination led him to believe that racism must be confronted, “no matter where it comes from and whenever it rears its ugly head. We cannot eliminate all of the racism at one time. We have to dismantle racism piece by piece and eliminate the tentacle of racism before it grows to a larger monster that will ultimately consume us all.”⁸ We must defeat racism, Becknell believes, because racism “can destroy a

”⁹

⁷ Personal communication with James Arthur “Jeep” Smith. Phone calls and letters (Summer and Fall 2021).

⁸ Becknell, Charles E. *No Challenge, No Change: Growing Up Black in New Mexico*. (Rio Rancho, N.M: Jubilee Publications, 2003), p. 69.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

SELECTED IMAGES

HOBBS, NM



Figure 109. Boarding house for oil workers

Q. Were the boarding houses for oil workers segregated?



The Commercial Cooking Class
Mrs. C. Harris & Mrs. B. O. Evans, Teachers



The Cabinet Making Class
Mr. L. M. Toussaint, Teacher

Figure 110. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook (1950)

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM).



FIRST GRADE, Mrs. Mary Porter Tieuel, Teacher.
 1st row: Dorothy Jean McHenry, Mary Louise Bookman, Wilma Jean Hilliard, Janice Hill, Maria Morgan, Constance Hodge, Clarice Benford, Betty J. Richardson. 2nd row: Edward Coleman, Georgie Mae Moseley, Billy Fred Fagan, Ethel Turner, Annetta Hornsby, Spirling Evans, Bobbie Jean Wilson, Isaacs Hare, Billie David Clay. 3rd row: Thomas Dewey Carter, Joe Earl Thompson, Wilma Grace Stewart, Zeak Williems, Willie I. Williams, Judith Wilson, Willis Hatchett, John Stevenson and Bennie A. Shells.



FIRST GRADE: Miss Charlotte A. Gibson, Teacher.
 1st row: Lemmie Johnson, Alma Berry, Earline Stewart, Lavella McDowell, Caroline McBride, Cyella Linthicum, 2nd row: Kenneth Cartwright, Willis Jeffrey, Floyd Swings, Jacqueline Love, Jimmy Bridges, Willie Tennison, Nadine Simon. 3rd row: Howard Hatchett, Eddy Thompson, Ronnie Powell, Willis Hatchett, Cecil Perry, Bobby Hornsby, and Donnie Evans.

Figure 111. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook (1950)

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM).



FOURTH GRADE - Miss Eleanor Critz, Teacher:
 1st row: James Vann, Jester Haynes, James Hilliard, Mary Brooks, Bradshaw Murphy, Barbara Wright, James Petties. 2nd row: Gloria Daniels, Ruthie McAenzle, Arthur Brantly, Annie Basped, Clayborn Jackson, Billie Jackson. 3rd row. Rosie Gaffaney, Mildred Williams, Vera Williams, Kelly Berkley, Eli Fields, Bobby Glynn.



FIFTH GRADE: Miss Eleanor Critz, Teacher:
 1st row: Bobby Meeks, Aubrey Demming, Mary E. Hodge, Donald Durham, Bonnie Hicks, Virgil Coleman. 2nd row: Maudie Basped, Charles Weight, Jewell Vernoy, Bobby Anderson, Willis Nesbit. 3rd row: Joe Smith, Robert Alexander, Willie Roddy, Gerald Montgomery, Alice Glynn.

Figure 112. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook (1950)

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM).

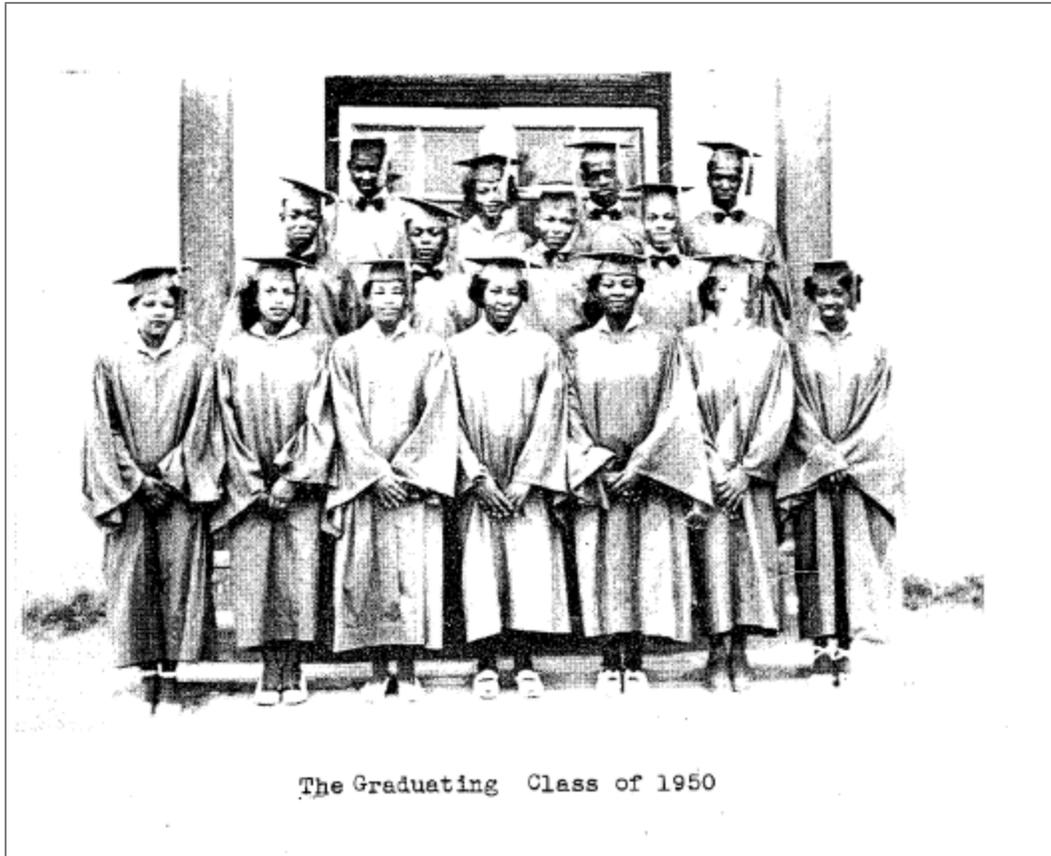


Figure 113. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook (1950)

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM).



Eighth grade: Mr. Lial Collins, Teacher.
1st. row: Gladys Vernoy, Lewis Owens, Freddie M. Hillard,
Londell Butler. 2nd. row: Jossie Block, Billie M. Spencer
Ruthie G. Sanders, Gussie M. Williams, 3rd. row: Nelson
Shanklin, Loretta Roddy, Roosevelt Hillard.



The Spanish Class
Miss. Marjorie Hutchinson, Teacher.

Figure 114. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook (1950)

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM), n.p.



SECOND GRADE - Mrs. Eloise Valley, Teacher:
 1st row: Marilyn Cartwright, Robert Powell, Alice Johnson, Eddie Smith, Margaret Craven, Terry Williams, Ollie B. Barnes, Allen Smith, Jackie M. Lewis. 2nd row: Johnnie Jones, Lloyd Fagan, Betty Tennison, Nathaniel M. Benson, Dorothy Demming, J. D. Craven, Barbara Woods, Harold Evans. 3rd row: Charles Johnson, Bobbie Jones, Beulah Carter, Joe Allen, Willie J. Simon, Ruth Jackson, Thomas Haynes, Lola Shoals, Novice Benford.



SECOND GRADE - Miss Ora Harrison, Teacher:
 1st row: Henry Ross, Wanda Clark, S. J. Jackson, Lois Berry, Harold Smith, Jo Cartwright, Arthur Bryant, Ira Barnes. 2nd row: Lanelle Hilliard, Leonard Hare, Lillie Bapsed, Ezelle Smith, Gloria Clay, Charles Erwin, Ruby Simmons, John Washington. 3rd row: Willie King, Virgil Sanders, Willie Duskworth, Walter Thompson, Ivy Smith, Charles Cox, Hubert Haynes, Ira Barnes.

Figure 115. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook (1950)

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM).



SIXTH GRADE: Mrs. Myrtle Farquhar, Teacher:
 1st row: Curtis Battles, Thomas Clay, Ronald Haynes, Joe Clay, Mildred Thomas, Herbert Rice, Robert Turner, K. P. Ross. 2nd row: Yvonne Weathers, Ora Carter, Billie Hilliard, Floretta Brown, Amanda Brown, Hershell Payne, Verda Washington, Dorothy Richards. 3rd row: Dorothy L. Craven, Dorothy Harris, Helen Fagan, Annie Simon, Albert McDade, Jr., Gwendolyn Hicks, Dorothy Woods, Alma Mayfield; 4th row: Francis Carter, Maggie Fields, Billy Bridges, Ed Harris, McCoy Shoals, Avertis Williams, Harvey Edwards, Alice R. Hilliard.



SEVENTH GRADE: Mr. Lial Collins, Teacher:
 1st row: Cleveland Brown, Sarah McBride, Henry Durham, Shirley Clark, Harold Jackson, Velmarie Demming, Willie Jones, Pearlle Simmons. 2nd row: Willie Davis, Ethel Williams, Geraldine Weeks, Mamie Gaffney, Alice Johnson, Andra Payne, Edith Norris, Clifford Simmons. 3rd row: Nadine Allen, Erma Stevenson, Myrell Jackson, Rutelia Berkley, Jessie Session, Ethel Benford, Helen Weeks, Wilfred Dixon.

Figure 116. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook (1950)

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM).



THIRD GRADE - Miss Marjorie Hutchinson, Teacher:
 1st row: Hershell Garrett, Joyce Clay, James Smith, Alice Johnson, Joel Gay, Katie Stevenson, Alfred Hicks; 2nd row: Verna Evans, Joe Jones, Bobbie Barlett, Harrison Stevenson, M. T. Finney, James Bagan, Verda Hilliard. 3rd row: Hollis Clay, Charles Becknell, James Bridges, James Smith, Lillian Simpson, Charles Washington, Ellen Hatchett.



THIRD GRADE- Miss Josie Petties, Teacher:
 1st row: Shirley Clay, Claud Brooks, June Woods, Leland Reed, Darnetta Bridges. 2nd row: Earline Johnson, T. Earl Smith, Flossie Fields, Archie Jones, Billy Washington, Le Roy Finney. 3rd row: Doris Doss, Marvin Evans, Willie Woods, Minerva Rice, Rufas Eagan.

Figure 117. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook (1950)

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM).

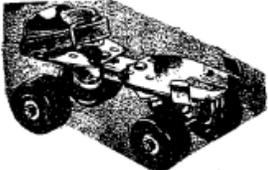
<p>Open All Night 6:30 P.M.-6:00 A.M.</p> <p>SPRIGGINS</p> <p>CHICKEN SHACK</p> <p>HOME of SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN & SEA & FOOD</p> <p>MOTTO: "To Serve The Best." PROPS: Mr. & Mrs. SPRIGGINS</p>	<p>THE SUNSHINE CLUB</p> <p>FEATURING —</p> <p>NAME BANDS FLOOR SHOWS WHISKEY & MIXED DRINK WINES & BEER</p> <p>PROP. SUNSHINE BUTLER</p>
<p>Greetings — Mrs. Jack Housh</p>	<p>Greetings — Mr. Lewis A. Williams</p>
<p>LET'S GO SKATING</p> <p>LEE'S</p> <p>ROLLER RANR</p>  <p>WE FURNISH CHICAGO SKATES BEST MADE</p> <p>522 E. BYERS</p>	<p>"RICE HOTEL"</p> <p>620 E. BYERS</p> <p>PROP. AIBERT MITCHEL</p>

Figure 118. Booker T. Washington High School yearbook sponsors (1950)

Yearbook Sponsors: The Sunshine Club

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM).



Figure 119. Booker T. Washington Border Conference champions (1952)

Border Conference Champions 1952

Source: Booker T. Washington High School (Hobbs, NM) *Tiger Yearbook* (1954), n.p.

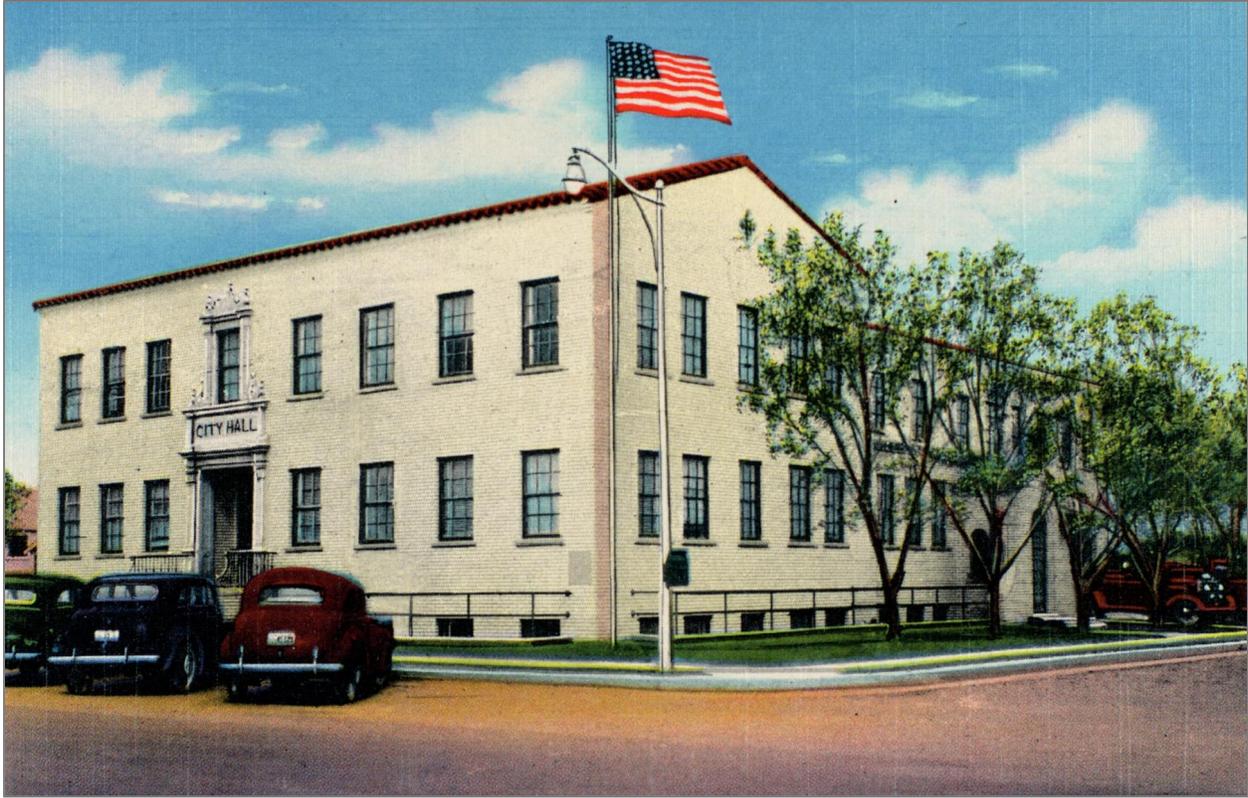


Figure 120. Linen postcard City Hall (Hobbs)

City Hall, n.d. (Hobbs, NM)

The Citizen's Welfare Association in 1939 requested to the City Council that "one colored person be employed at the new City Hall, that streets in the colored section be dragged, and that a street light be erected" at a specified location within the neighborhood.

Source: Available on-line at [ebay.com/itm/Postcard-NM-Hobbs-City-Hall-Vintage-Linen-A1/114668700001](https://www.ebay.com/itm/Postcard-NM-Hobbs-City-Hall-Vintage-Linen-A1/114668700001)



Figure 121. Downtown Hobbs (1 September 1930)

Source: Image No. 02230728

Location: Hobbs, NM

Date: 1 September 1930 (postmark and written)

Notes: Recto – Waffle Studio

Collection Number: Ms0223

Collection Name: Thomas K. Todsén Photographs

MEET YOUR FRIENDS AT
C. L. STANLEY'S
**BILLIARD
PARLOR**

Billiard and Snooker Tables

SAM'S PLAY HOUSE

In Connection With Six Domino Tables

**A PLACE FOR CLEAN, WHOLESOME
AMUSEMENT**

Upstairs Over Rex Theatre

NOTICE

THE SUNSHINE CLUB
1422 East Main St.

Opens at 12:00 Noon
Monday Thru Saturday.

Serving
Beer, Wine, Whisky and
Mixed Drinks of All Kinds.

Figure 122. The Sunshine Club classified advertisement

Source: "The Sunshine Club: 1422 East Main St.," Classified Advertisement.

Hobbs Daily News Sun, 28 February 1952, p. 14;

"Meet Your Friends at C. L. Stanley's Billiard Parlor," *Hobbs News*, 4 October 1935, p. 5.

First Grades



Top: MRS. TIEUEL

Bottom: MISS GOLDEN

Figure 123. Booker T. Washington High School (1954)

Source: Booker T. Washington High School (Hobbs, NM) *Tiger Yearbook* (1954), n.p.

Future Homemakers of America



MYRLE JACKSON
F. H. A. Queen

"We are the Future Homemakers of America. We face the future with warm courage and high hopes."



Figure 124. Booker T. Washington Future Homemakers of America (F. H. A.)

Source: Booker T. Washington High School (Hobbs, NM) *Tiger Yearbook* (1954), n.p.



Figure 125. Harden Hotel

Harden Hotel (Hobbs, NM)

Located between McKinley and Houston Streets

Architect: Gustavus A. Trost

Original Client: John J. Harden, Oklahoma City

Constructed in 1930

Destroyed by fire in 1969

Note: In 1955, the manager of the Harden Hotel restaurant refused to serve the Black Carlsbad football players, so the entire team walked out.

Photo source: Available on-line at [pinterest.com_pin_341147740504726205.jpg](https://pinterest.com/pin_341147740504726205.jpg)

We Wish To Announce
THE EAST SIDE CAFE
In Connection with
THE EAST SIDE TAXI COMPANY
TEL. 735-M
BEST MEALS IN TOWN
Meals Delivered and Open 24 Hours per Day
LOCATED AT 1118 EAST MAIN STREET
(In Harlem Heights)
George Hern, Business Manager—Jessie Bailey, Owner

Figure 126. "In Harlem Heights"

The East Side Café in Connection with The East Side Taxi Company

"Located at 1118 East Main Street (In Harlem Heights)"

Source: Classified Advertisement. *Hobbs Daily Flare*, 9 October 1948, p. 2.

<p>TEMPERATURE Friday High, 2 p. m. — 95 Low, 5:30 a. m. — 71 Saturday Low 4:30 a. m. — 72 Expected High — 95-98</p>	<h1>The Lovington Leader</h1> <p>Serving Lea County and Surrounding Territory for 46 Years</p>	<p>OLDEST PAPER IN LEA COUNTY</p>		
<p>VOLUME 46—NUMBER 39 SUNDAY, AUGUST 8, 1954 PRINTED THREE TIMES EACH WEEK 5c PER COPY</p>				
<h2>HOBBS SCHOOL BOARD STRADDLES FENCE IN SEGREGATION DECISION</h2>				
<h3>Trustees Ignore Petition For Anti-Peddling Law</h3>	<h3>Chamber Plans Church Campaign For September</h3>	<h3>Foresee Difficulties In Handling School Traffic</h3>	<h3>Nella Frier Was Named Miss Lovington</h3>	<h3>Colored and White Students May Choose Any School Without Racial Distinction</h3>
<p>The town trustees refused to discuss a petition for an ordinance leading to the declaration as a "public nuisance" the practice of door-to-door peddling without the prior invitation or request of the individual homeowner. The petition was presented by the mayor during last weeks trustee meeting in what seemed to be a joking manner and half apologetic fashion inasmuch as he prefaced his remarks with the statement that he had something to</p>	<p>discuss. Authorizing and directing the Chief of Police and his subordinate officers to abate such nuisance, and providing penalties. Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Tucuman, New Mexico.</p> <p>Section 1: Soliciting without invitation a nuisance.</p> <p>The practice of going in and upon private residences in the</p>	<p>Police Chief Joe Price told the town trustees that with the starting of school, traffic control could very well become a "problem" due to the reduced number of men on the force.</p> <p>In response to questions by Mayor Underwood during the regular meeting of the trustees, Price also stated there are a minimum of locations where a traffic patrolman must be stationed to safeguard the children on their way to and from school.</p> <p>After discussion, Underwood announced that additional</p>	<p>Southeast N. M. has a pretty home in the news.</p> <p>Temporarily Miss Nella Frier Friday night was crowned as "Miss Lovington of 1954" at a gala water carnival and ceremonies at the Lovington Country Club. Her runnerup was Miss Lela Ponder. The beauty contest each year climaxes a summerlong program of swimming lessons at the club's pool.</p>	<p>The Hobbs School Board has decided to allow students in the district to choose the school they wish to attend. This privilege will apply to colored children as well as white. There will be no distinction, according to Melvin C. Neal, attorney for the school.</p> <p>The announcement made by the school follows:</p> <p>School officials announced yesterday that the Hobbs School Board had adopted the following policy with reference to the distribution of elementary pupils in the Hobbs elementary schools:</p> <p>"The present zone lines providing for the zoning in the areas around the various elementary schools are retained. Elementary school pupils will be permitted, upon request by parents or guardians, to enroll in any elementary school in the school district. The children</p>

Figure 127. "Hobbs School Board Straddles Fence in Segregation Decision"

Source: "Hobbs School Board Straddles Fence in Segregation Decision," *Lovington Leader*, 8 August 1954, p. 1.

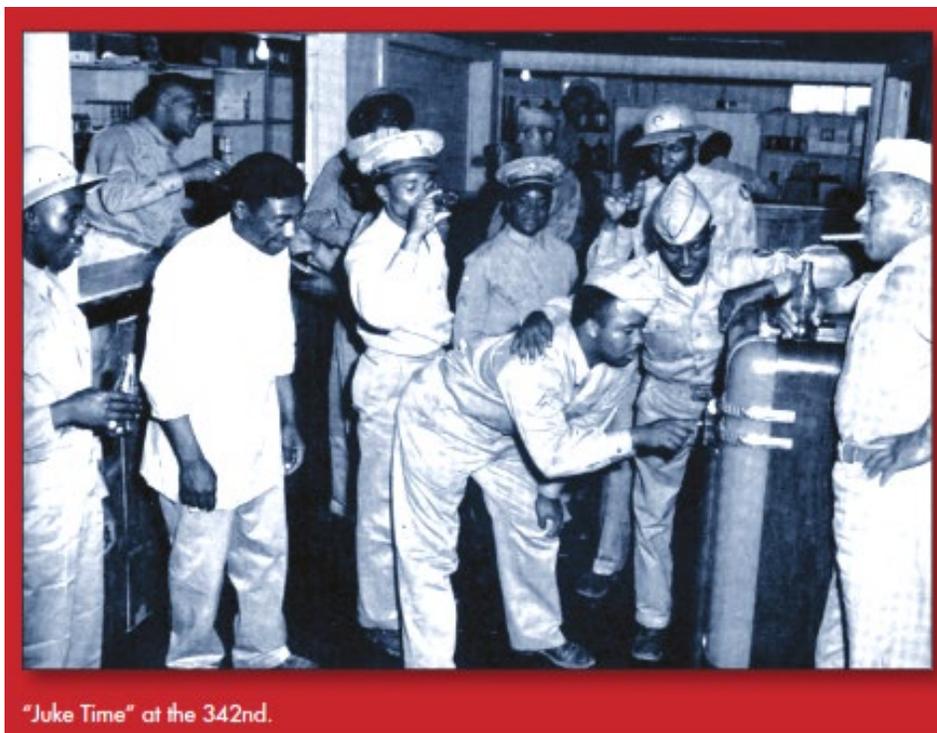


Figure 128. U. S. Army Air Forces Yearbook

Hobbs Army Airfield 342nd Aviation Squadron Activities

Source: Dodge, William A., Ph. D. "The History & Archaeology of the Hobbs Army Air Field," Project No. 277-07, Van Critters Historic Preservation, LLC (January 2008), p. 17.

HOBBS ARMY AIRFIELD

BUILDING NAME	March 1943 Building No. †	January 1944 Building No. ‡	Foundations Existing Aug. 07		Notes
			Yes	No	
E.M. Barracks	407	406		X	
E.M. Barracks	408	407		X	
E.M. Barracks	409	408		X	
E.M. Barracks	410	409		X	
E.M. Barracks	411	410		X	
E.M. Barracks	412	411		X	
E.M. Barracks	413	415		X	
E.M. Barracks	416	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	417	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	418	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	419	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	420	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	456	457		X	
E.M. Barracks	457	458		X	
E.M. Barracks	458	459		X	
E.M. Barracks	459	460		X	
E.M. Barracks	463	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	464	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	465	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	466	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	467	Same		X	
E.M. Barracks	531	530		X	Colored
E.M. Barracks	532	531		X	Colored
E.M. Barracks	533	532		X	Colored
E.M. Barracks	534	533		X	Colored
E.M. Barracks	535	534		X	Colored
E.M. Barracks	536	535		X	Colored
Recreation	421	Same		X	
Recreation	429	Same		X	
Recreation	Not listed	434		X	
Recreation	453	454		X	

Figure 129. "Colored" barracks for enlisted men

Table listing segregated 'Colored' barracks for enlisted men.

Source: Dodge, William A., Ph. D. "The History & Archaeology of the Hobbs Army Air Field," Project No. 277-07, Van Critters Historic Preservation, LLC (January 2008), p. 54.

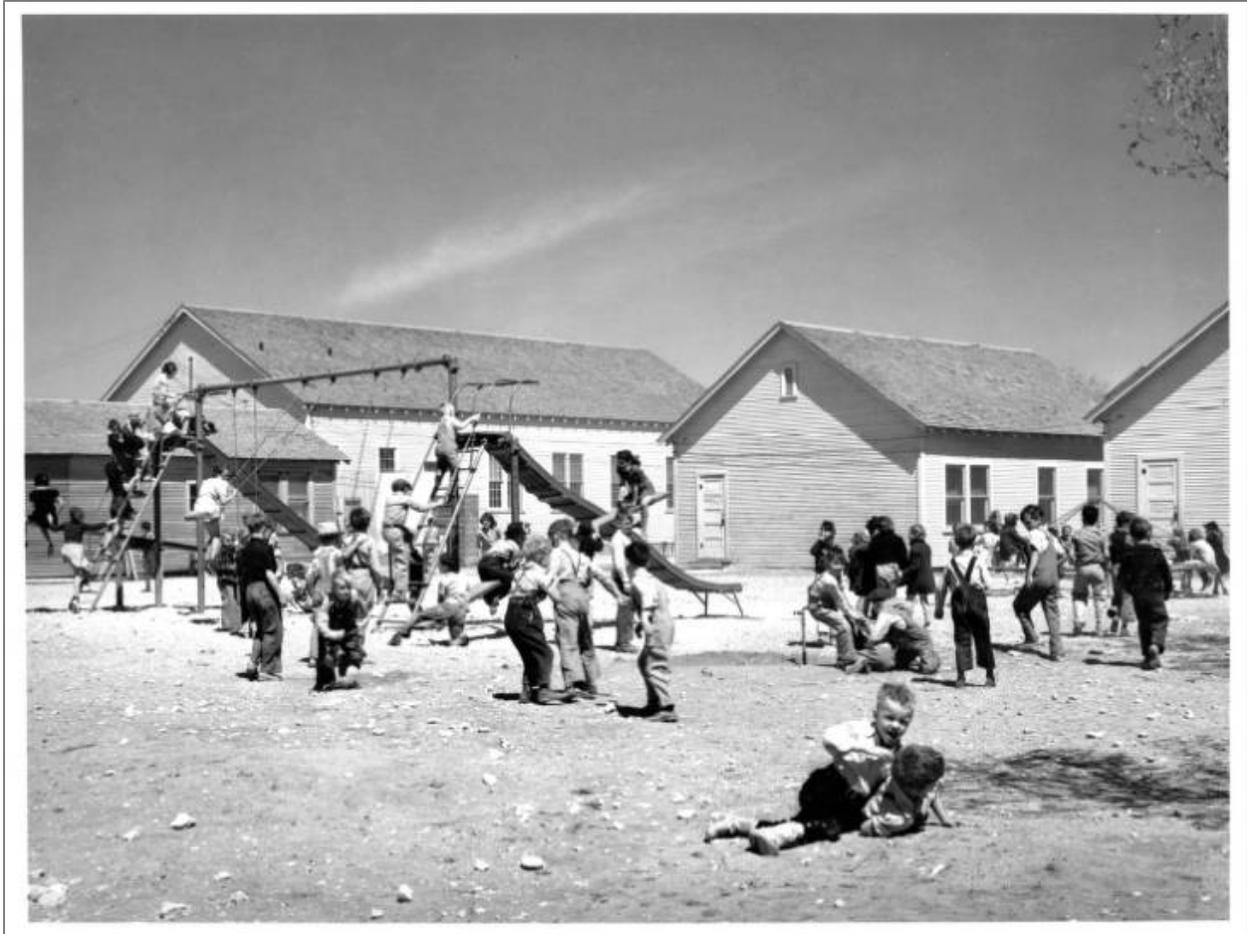


Figure 130. Recess time at (segregated) grade school

Schools in Hobbs were segregated by race until the mid-1950s.

Source: Picture 990-036 Box 1. Hobbs, NM. March 1940.

Available on-line at the Center for Southwest Research: elibrary.unm.edu/cswr.



Figure 131. Housing for oil workers

Q. If African Americans were hired to work with the oil companies, was the housing for oil workers segregated?



Figure 132. Gospel singer Joe May

“Joe May, who has been acclaimed as the greatest Gospel singer of this generation, will be heard in concert at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, 1222 East Midwest in Hobbs”

Source: “May to Sing at Ebenezer Baptist Wed. -- Singer Joe May,” *Lovington Leader*, 13 January 1955, p. 1.



LAWRENCE E. PIGFORD (A. B., M. A.)

"The measure of a life is not its duration, but its donation." In eight brief years, Lawrence Pigford's contribution to Hobbs was far greater than that of many who have attained the age of threescore and ten. His devotion to his ideals, his genuine love for all humanity, and the glowing radiance of his smiling personality inspired everyone he met. Let us strive, through the deep sense of our loss, to remember our greater gain in the privilege of having known and loved him.



Figure 133. Lawrence E. Pigford (A. B., M. A.)

Source: Booker T. Washington High School (Hobbs, NM) Yearbook (1954), p. 3.



Figure 134. Linen postcard Broadway Street

Broadway Street Looking West, c1943 (Hobbs, NM)

Source: Available on-line at [ebay.com/itm/Hobbs-NM-c-1943-Linen-Postcard-BROADWAY-LOOKING-WEST-/352635594801](https://www.ebay.com/itm/Hobbs-NM-c-1943-Linen-Postcard-BROADWAY-LOOKING-WEST-/352635594801)

Fifth Grade



MRS. FARQUHAR - - Teacher

Figure 135. "Mrs. Farquhar -- Teacher"

Source: Booker T. Washington High School (Hobbs, NM) *Tiger Yearbook* (1954), n.p.

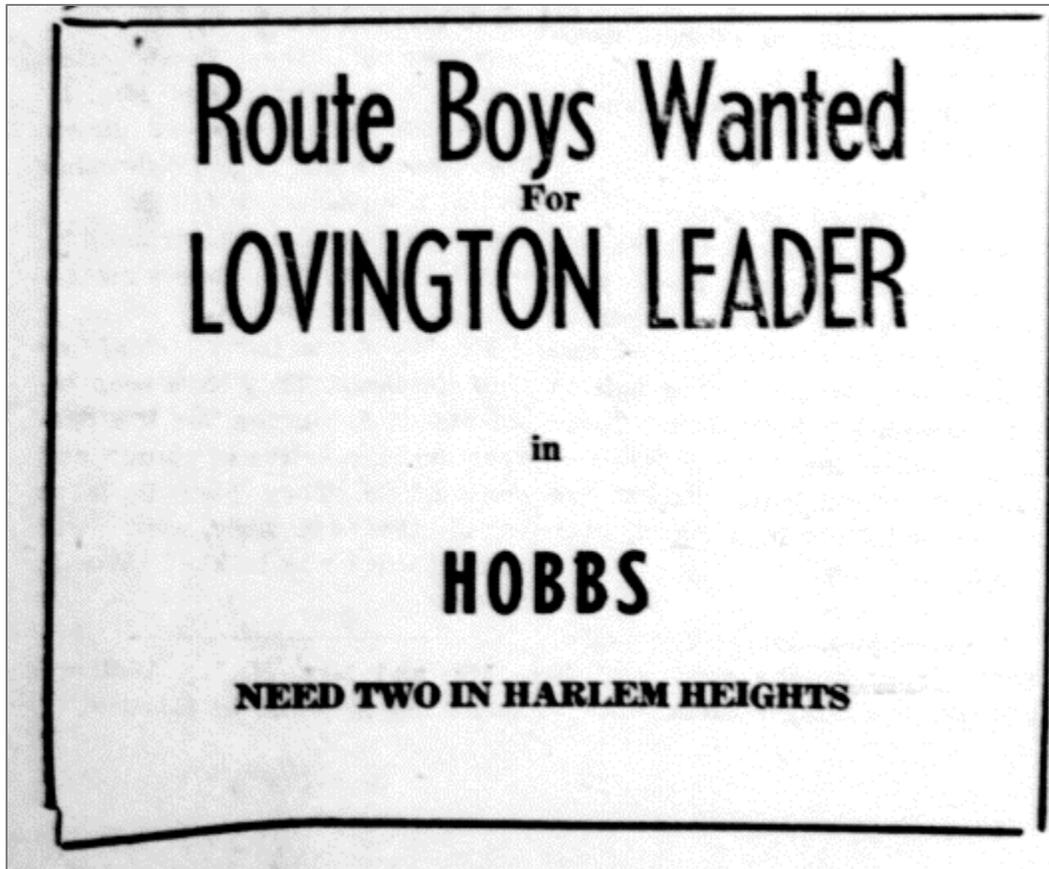


Figure 136. "Need Two in Harlem Heights"

Classified advertisement looking for newspaper carriers for predominantly Black Hobbs neighborhood.

Source: "Route Boys Needed for Lovington Leader," *Lovington Leader*, 2 October 1951, p. 8.

		James Atkinson "Jack Leg"
		Ora Carter "Creep"
		Joe Dean Clay "Sleepy"
		Thomas Ray Clay "Rusty"
		J. C. Gamble "Tippy"



Fine Furniture

WELCH FURNITURE CO.
204 E. Bdwy.
Dial - 3-3824

"Let us be your guide to
fine home comfort."

Figure 137. Yearbook Nicknames

(Nicknames) "Jack Leg" "Symore" "Creep" "Sleepy" "Rusty" and "Tippy"

Source: Booker T. Washington High School (Hobbs, NM) *Tiger Yearbook* (1954), n.p.



Figure 138. Booker T. Washington High School band

“Hardy Ray Murphy, right, served as director of junior high and high school instrumentalists who made up the Booker T. Washington School band in 1953. The group, which was photographed a year before Hobbs’s schools were integrated, rehearsed in Booker T. Washington School’s auditorium – a converted military barracks.”

Source: “Doors Opened up for Hobbs’ Blacks,” *Hobbs Daily News-Sun* (12 January 1992), p. 17.



Figure 139. Everglade Cemetery

**Segregated African American Everglade Cemetery (Hobbs, NM)
Research and Restoration Project (On-going)**

Source: "Aspire to Success," Award Application, sponsored by the Monument Builders of North America (MBNA), 136 South Keowee Street, Dayton, OH 45402. Everglade Cemetery project Entry Form available at monumentbuilders.org/pdf/aspire_award_winners/2010_Winner_Sadler_Son_Monument_Works.

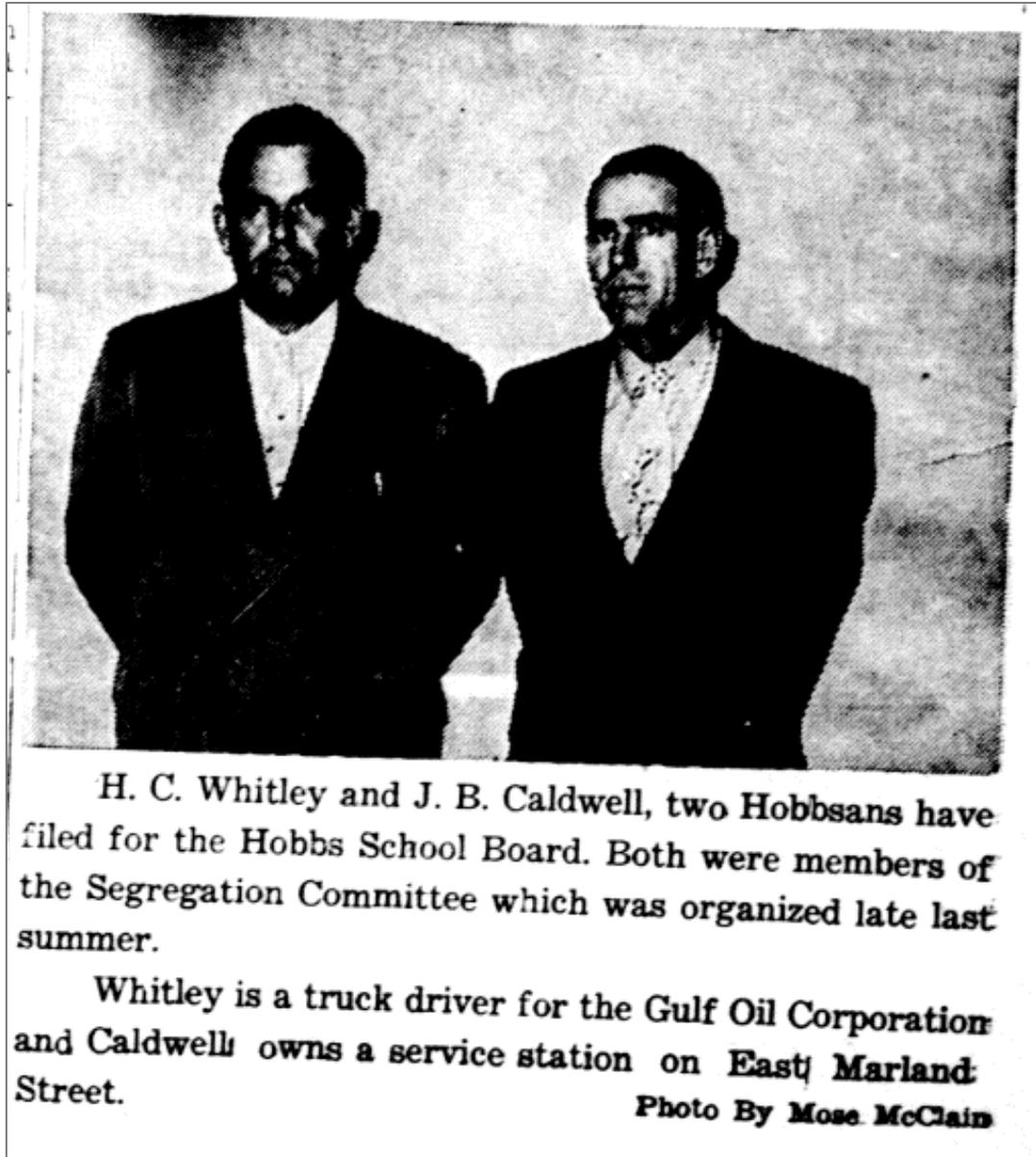


Figure 140. Two members of the Segregation Committee

“Both were members of the Segregation Committee which was organized late last summer.”

Source: Photo and caption. Segregationists filed for Hobbs School Board. *Lovington Leader*, 9 January 1955, p. 1.



Figure 142. Booker T. Washington High School Faculty

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM), n.p.



Figure 143. Booker T. Washington High School Faculty

Source: Yearbook Committee, inaugural edition of Booker T. Washington High School's yearbook, *The 1950 Tiger* (Hobbs, NM), n.p.



Figure 144. Scout Theater, Hobbs

“Construction started on the Scout Theater in 1939 and it opened in 1940.”

Q. Which building is the Scout Theater?

The Scout Theater hosted special viewings for Black patrons

Source: Hobbs Public Library. Available on-line at: <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/14502>



THE PROOF—Leader reporter, Wayne Winters holds a pint of burbon whisky he purchased from a Hobbs bootlegger Sunday night. Winters, as a stranger, had little difficulty making the buy in the colored section of Hobbs.

Figure 145. Whiskey purchase "in the colored section of Hobbs"

Source: "Sunday Liquor Purchases Easy in Hobbs,"
Lovington Leader, 16 June 1955, p. 1.

PATRONS		
	<i>City Cleaners</i>	
816 E. Broadway		Telephone 3-5022
	<i>Yoakum</i>	
124 E. Broadway	TIRE CO.	Telephone 3-4261
	<i>Cozy</i>	
601 E. Byers	INN BAR	Telephone 3-4280
	PAYLESS FOOD	
601 E. Marland	MARKET	Telephone 3-4552
	<i>Mr. & Mrs. A.A. Kemnitz</i>	
	<i>Mr. Edward Laughlin</i>	

Figure 146. Yearbook sponsors

Source: Booker T. Washington High School (Hobbs, NM) *Tiger Yearbook* (1954), n.p.

WHITE OBJECTIONS TO CONTACT WITH NEGROES (%)

OBJECT TO:	1965	1963	1965	1963	1965	1963
Working next to a Negro on job	10	27	7	24	24	31
Sitting next to a Negro on bus	13	20	8	15	38	47
Sitting next a Negro at a lunch counter	17	20	11	14	47	50
Sitting next to a Negro in a movie theater	20	23	14	17	50	54
Own children going to school with Negroes	20	23	13	17	53	55
Using the same restroom as Negroes	28	23	18	27	55	56
Trying on same suit or dress that Negro has tried on in store	31	32	24	27	61	57
Having a Negro family as your next-door neighbor	37	31	30	46	71	71
Having your own child bring a Negro friend home for supper	42	41	33	33	53	76
Close friend or relative marrying a Negro	55	34	82	81	96	91
Your own teen-age daughter dating a Negro	92	90	90	89	100	97

Figure 147. White Objections to Contact with Negroes (%) published in the Hobbs Daily News

White Objections to Contact with Negroes

Source: Harris, Louis. "Caucasian Attitude Toward Negro Race Shows Change," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 3 November 1965, p. 7.

WHITE STEREOTYPES OF NEGROES						
AGREE THAT:	1965	1963	1965	1963	1965	1963
Negroes tend to have less ambition	58	66	51	61	80	81
Negroes smell different	51	60	48	35	86	78
Negroes have looser morals	53	55	48	50	77	80
Negroes laugh a lot	50	68	41	65	70	81
Negroes have less native intelligence	41	34	36	35	65	60
Negroes keep untidy houses	35	46	33	44	53	57
Negroes breed crime	31	35	30	33	50	46
Negroes care less about the family	32	31	29	27	46	49

Figure 148. White Stereotypes of Negroes (%) published in the Hobbs Daily News Sun

White Stereotypes of Negroes

Source: Harris, Louis. "Caucasian Attitude Toward Negro Race Shows Change," *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 3 November 1965, p. 7.

Venerated Places Black Communities Hobbs

NAME	TYPE	LOCATION
Ann Sewall's Garage	Black barbershop	811 S. Eighth Street
Washington Heights	Nursery School	Verify location
Owned by Rev. Horton and wife	First Black restaurant (Name?)	Verify location
Coles Cafe	Restaurant	E. Skelly Street
Crow Family	Roller rink	Old Hobbs verify location
East Gate Lodge No. 8	F. & A. M. Prince Hall	Verify location
'Colored' USO	United Services Organization	Verify location
Sunshine Club later X-Club	Jazz club on the 'Chittlin' Circuit'	1422 E. Main
Dorothy Collin Home	Green Book safe haven	Skelly Street
'The Flats,' 'Harlem Heights,' etc.	Neighborhood	Verify boundaries (SE corner)
Booker T. Washington	Segregated school	Verify both locations
S. Dal Paso Street	Cultural dividing line	Runs North-South
Charlie's G. I. Snack	Bar or Liquor Store?	Verify location
Cavern, Savoy, Johnston	Hotels	Verify relevance and locations
Skating rink	Blacks allowed Mon and Thurs only	Behind Union bus terminal
Black Hospital and Dr.'s Quarters	African American Hospital	Verify location on Marland St.
McLellan Variety Store	Site of civil rights sit-in	Verify downtown location
Booker T. Washington	Segregated school	Verify both locations
S. Dal Paso Street	Cultural dividing line	Runs North-South
Charlie's G. I. Snack	Bar or Liquor Store?	Verify location
Adyelott	Grocery store	612 S Dal Paso (verify relevance)
Skating rink	Blacks allowed Mon and Thurs only	Behind Union bus terminal
The Center	Black social hub (Precious Foley)	Verify location
The Fountain Restaurant	Black social hub (Hawkins)	Verify location
Everglade	Segregated cemetery	Verify location

Table 5. Venerated Places Black Communities Hobbs

Venerated Places Black Communities Hobbs: Churches

Christ Holy Temple	Church	2006 E. White St.
El Bethel Church of God in Christ	Church	622 S. Jefferson
Community Church of God	Church	1020 West Park
Methodist/Lane Chapel	Church	1201 E. Skelly
Ebenezer Baptist	Church	1222 E. Midwest
Pleasant Green Baptist	Church	915 S. McKinley
Methodist/Lane Chapel	Church	1201 E. Skelly
Christ Holy Temple	Church	2006 E. White St.
El Bethel Church of God in Christ	Church	622 S. Jefferson
Community Church of God	Church	1020 West Park

Table 6. Venerated Places Black Communities Hobbs: Churches

HOBBS

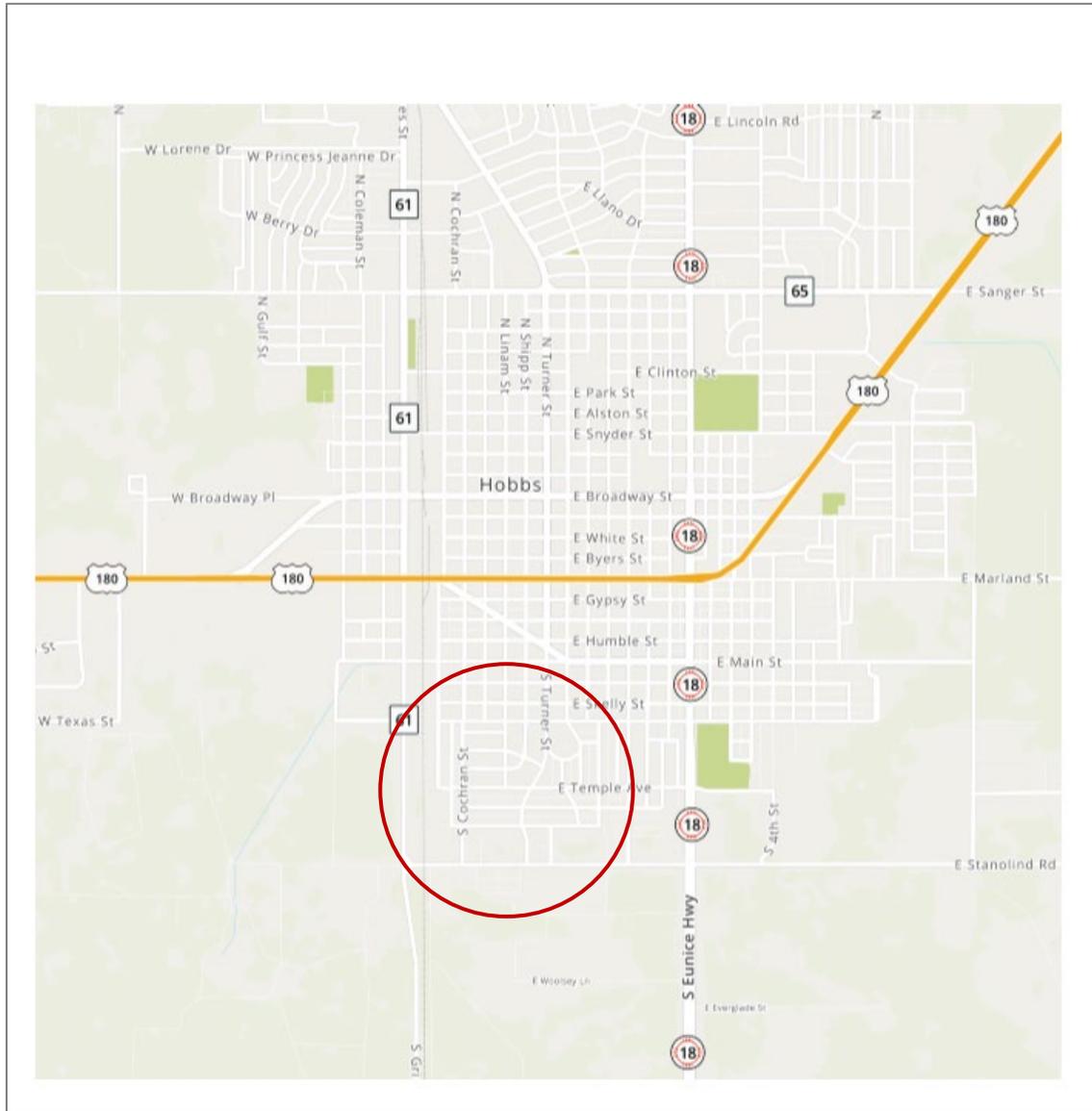


Figure 149. Map depicting the historically Black neighborhood in Hobbs

Suggestions for Additional Research Hobbs

Which pre-World War II businesses were Black-owned? Discriminatory?

What more is known about the Lovely Ladies Federated and Art Club? What other Black women's social clubs were active in Hobbs and elsewhere throughout the state?

How successful were the fraternal orders (ex. Prince Hall Lodge) in achieving social betterment?

How did New Mexico's 1948 Right to Work Amendment affect Black workers?

What more is known about the history of the Civic Welfare Association?

What is the history of the New Mexico Colored Democratic Central Committee?

What is the history of the NAACP statewide and in Hobbs?

Were Black families treated fairly within the local legal system? Were there Black attorneys prior to the 1960s? When were the first Black jurors allowed to serve?

Coles Café appears to have been a popular destination and meeting place for Black residents. What is known about the owners?

What role did the "Colored USO" play within the Hobbs community?

What radio formatting and programs were available to residents prior to the 1950s?

Did the local police historically discriminate against people of color, or was the policing generally deemed fair by all residents?

What more is known about the experiences of the locals hired as extras for the filming of Rudyard Kipling's *The Light That Failed* movie?

Was the Black experience commemorated during the Hobbs municipal centennial? How about during other citywide and statewide celebrations?

What is the history of the Sunshine Club, including performances? Were audiences mixed?

Are there known *Negro Motorist Green Book* sites in the vicinity?

Are there any connections between the properties listed in the National Register and the African American experience? The WPA buildings?

Which individuals are credited with bringing about peaceful integration in the schools and elsewhere?

Who is buried at the segregated Everglade Cemetery?

How did the presence of the Hobbs Army Airfield impact Black culture?

What successful strategies were employed by civil rights activists in Hobbs? Sit-ins? Boycotts? Demonstrations?

LAS CRUCES



Figure 150. Map of New Mexico highlighting the city of Las Cruces

LAS CRUCES

After a series of Indian raids against white settlers, the government sent four black regiments and their white commanders to protect the settlers, defeat the Indians, and then gather them onto reservations. Fort Selden, approximately 20 miles north of Las Cruces, was the station for many black infantry regiments from 1867 to 1891, when the fort was decommissioned.¹ According to research conducted by Barbara Richardson in her *Black Directory of New Mexico*, none of these soldiers settled in Las Cruces, but a number of soldiers stayed on and worked as cowboys on area ranches.²

Researchers Robin M. Williams and Margaret W. Ryan provide us with the following snapshot of the town of Las Cruces as they found it in 1954 during their extensive fieldwork assessing the process of school desegregation. It describes a small, agricultural town near the New Mexico Agricultural and Mechanical College (currently New Mexico State University). The town's cultural diversity and the importance of the nearby White Sands Proving Ground are noted:

The town of Las Cruces is situated in the midst of a rich, agricultural plain north of El Paso, Texas. The irrigated lands furnish one of the major sources of income for the town which until recently was only a trading center for the region. To the south of Las Cruces a few miles is the New Mexico Agricultural and Mechanical College, one of the largest educational institutions in the state. To the east rises a range of saw-toothed mountains, dominating the fertile fields below.

The Spanish influence in Las Cruces is evident in the narrow streets through much of the business section and the older residential areas, in the prevalence of adobe homes and buildings, many of them flush with the sidewalk or the street. One sees as many Spanish-Americans as Anglo-Americans and hears as much Spanish as English spoken on the streets and in the shops.

The population of Doña Ana County is estimated at 25,000, of whom about 6,000 are Anglo-Americans recently arrived to work at the White Sands Proving Ground north of Las Cruces. The town itself has about 16,500 inhabitants, of whom slightly

¹ Billington, Monroe Lee. *New Mexico's Buffalo Soldiers, 1866-1900*. (University Press of Colorado: Niwot, Colorado. 1991), p. 205. Cited in Moody, Terry and Clarence Fielder, "More to Explore: African-American Experience in Southern New Mexico," available on-line at newmexicohistory.org/2000/10/29/african-american-experience-in-southern-new-mexico.

² Barbara Richardson (compiled by). *Black Directory of New Mexico*. Panorama Press: Rio Rancho, New Mexico. 1976. pp. 66 - 67.

more than half are Anglo-American, slightly less than half Spanish-American, and about 2 per cent are Negro.³

Early African American Settlement

This reconstruction of the early migration of African-Americans to Las Cruces has been gleaned from early census records dating from 1900-1920, city directories, and several church documents. Migration stories have been passed down as family lore, and have been recorded in oral histories or shared during interviews with Las Cruces historians. Euola Cox, Barbara Richardson, Terry Moody, and Clarence Fielder deserve special recognition for their work in this area.

For many migrants, New Mexico felt like an alien country that one needed to travel through just to get to somewhere else. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles the decades-long migration of nearly six million Black citizens who fled the South in search of a better life. In her masterful *The Warmth of Other Suns*, Robert Pershing Foster leaves segregated Louisiana and heads west nonstop until he reaches El Paso, TX “the unspoken border between the Jim Crow South and the free Southwest.”⁴ She recounts that migrating Blacks tended to travel where they knew others, recreating familiar environs -- New Mexico culture seemed foreign. The mining jobs in New Mexico could not compete with the burgeoning labor needs in California. Foster crossed into New Mexico, but “had no reason to stop there” except to sleep.⁵

This attitude changed during the 1890s once the Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad was constructed. After that, day labor and service jobs opened up for many African-Americans in the region. When the railroad was extended to El Paso, African-Americans who earned their income from the rail service moved to Las Cruces, some taking positions in local hotels as chefs, waiters, porters, and maids. Some African-Americans made their home in Las Cruces as servants of newly-arrived White (mostly Southern) families. A few Black families came to farm land for White landowners or became tenant farmers. Several entrepreneurs established businesses. Emory Douglas Williams is typical of this early migration pattern. In 1896, Mr. Williams, who had tuberculosis, moved from St. Louis, Missouri to Las Cruces, bringing his wife,

³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁴ Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Random House, 2010.

⁵ Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. “Black in Santa Fe,” *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.

Annie. She nursed her husband back to health inside a tent she erected on the banks of the Rio Grande.⁶

After regaining his strength, Mr. Williams opened the Star Barbershop behind the Murillo house at 818 North Mesquite. Williams also invested in property, including a farm on Idaho Street, north of Wyatt Drive, and Annie farmed their 640 acres of highway frontage.⁷

Between 1900 and 1912, African-Americans continued to move into Las Cruces, where they engaged in a variety of livelihoods. A Mr. Batties, for example, established a trash collection and janitorial service. His was a prosperous venture that employed many young local boys.⁸ With his team of horses, he also cleared the land along Alameda Boulevard where present-day Alameda Junior High School is located.

In the early 1900s, Daniel Hibler moved from Waco, Texas to Las Cruces to work as the chef for the Don Bernardo Hotel, on North Main Street, owned by the Freudenthal family. His wife, Ollie, also worked as a maid for the Don Bernardo Hotel.⁹ In 1909, Ollie gave birth to a baby girl, Gertrude, the first black child born in Las Cruces.¹⁰ "Our family were sort of aristocrats," said Ms. Gertrude Fielder, smiling, "That is, for a few years, we lived on a little farm northwest of town during the summer and moved into town during the winter." She drove "the horse and buggy to town to deliver milk from the cows."¹¹ The 1910 census lists 54 blacks living in Las Cruces, many of them newcomers.¹²

⁶ This section is culled from several sources, including: Euola Cox and Barbara Richardson, Editors, *Noteworthy Black Women of New Mexico, Past and Present*. (Published for International Women's Year Conference: Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1977); Mary M. Steeb, Michael Romero Taylor, Anthony C. Pennock. *The Las Cruces Historic Buildings Survey*. Doña Ana County Historical Society: Las Cruces, New Mexico, 1982. pp. 37, 118 - 121. Barbara Richardson (compiled by). *Black Directory of New Mexico*. (Panorama Press: Rio Rancho, New Mexico. 1976), pp. 66 - 67. Cited in Moody, Terry and Clarence Fielder, "More to Explore: African-American Experience in Southern New Mexico," available on-line at newmexicohistory.org/2000/10/29/african-american-experience-in-southern-new-mexico; Charlotte K. Mock. *Bridges: New Mexican Black Women, 1900-1950*. (New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women: Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1985).

⁷ In 1920, the Williams are listed as residing on the Old Fuller Road. In 1940 their residence is 1101. S. Alameda Street. 1920 Census Records, Doña Ana County. Microfiche; Las Cruces City Directory. 1940. Branson Library, New Mexico State University.

⁸ Barbara Richardson (compiled by). *Black Directory of New Mexico*. Panorama Press: Rio Rancho, New Mexico, 1976. pp. 66 - 67.

⁹ Kilcrease, Delia. "Sentiments of Black History Preserved," *Las Cruces Sun-News*. 23 February 1986, n.p.; 1910 Census Records, Doña Ana County, Microfiche, Branson Library, New Mexico State University.

¹⁰ Kilcrease, Della. "Blacks in Las Cruces – Sentiments of Black History Preserved," *Las Cruces Sun News*, front page *Sun Life*, 23 February 1986. Gertrude was Clarence Fielder's mother. Mr. Fielder became a beloved and respected historian and caretaker for the Phillips Chapel church. Personal communication between Terry Moody and Clarence Fielder, and Clarence Fielder and the author.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

¹² 1910 Census Records, Doña Ana County. Microfiche. Branson Library, New Mexico State University (Las Cruces).

According to a 1922 census, Doña Ana County recorded a population of 65 Blacks and 12,817 Whites.¹³ A number of Blacks had migrated from Texas, and other newcomers came from eastern and southern states. Many came to work as waiters, cooks, truck drivers, laborers, porters, and ranch hands. Typical of these newcomers were George and Louise Anderson, originally from South Carolina. They moved to Las Cruces, where George worked as a manager of a farm. W. D. Slater, his wife Stella, and their son came from Louisiana, to rent their own farm. Mr. A. (name not known) and Noele Toney, and their nephew, Brian, arrived from Florida. Mr. Toney worked as manager of the Park Hotel. J. B. Levy, age 74, originally from Tennessee owned Levy Barbershop. John Hughs, age 35, originally from England, came with his wife Ellen from Louisiana. Mr. Hughs owned Hughs Barbershop.¹⁴ In 1940, Ellen worked as a cook for Dr. McBride.¹⁵

The Las Cruces African-American community continued to grow, with many families moving from Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. The U. S. census reports that 78 Blacks (43 males, and 35 females) were living in Doña Ana County in 1920.¹⁶

Many of the adults continued to serve as laborers, domestic workers, and ranch-hands. In 1912, Pleasant H. Billingsley moved his family from Marion, Oklahoma, to escape the boll weevil infestation, and found work as a custodian at the Post Office and the Masonic Temple. Anna took over as custodian after her husband had died. In 1920, Pleasant, his wife Anna, and their children Patience, Evelena, Merdest, Mabel, Ambrose, and Smith lived on Lee Street. Later their residence is listed East May Avenue. Jerry Smith worked as a horse wrangler for a cattleman in New Mexico, and transported his chuck wagon around the state at roundup time.¹⁷

Other families listed in the 1920 Census include Amos. J. Brooks, who owned a grocery store and ice cream parlor on North Church Street. His wife, Georgia, was a teacher for Black children at the East Mesa School. For a while, W. T. (Bill) Anthony was the only blacksmith in Las Cruces. He owned the Valley Welding Service, on the corner of Hadley and Church Street. William de

¹³ Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States taken in the year 1920. Volume III: "Composition and Characteristics of the Population by State." William C. Hunt, Supervisor. (Government Printing Office. Washington, D. C., 1922), p. 668.

¹⁴ Later, John would have his barbershop in the Old Herndon Hotel. In the 1920s they resided on 942 N. Mesquite Street. Fielder, Clarence. "Blacks in the Mesilla Valley." Presentation to the Oral History Club, Las Cruces, New Mexico. July 6, 1995. 1920 Census Records, Doña Ana County. Microfiche. Branson Library, New Mexico State University.

¹⁵ Personal conversation between Terry Moody and Clarence Fielder.

¹⁶ 1920 Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States taken in the Year 1920. Vol. III: "Population 1902, Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States." William C. Hunt, Supervisor. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census. (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), p. 668.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Groff owned a tailoring business and lived with his housekeeper, Ms. Mary Edmond, on Water Street.¹⁸

The federal Homestead Act also brought a number of African American to the Las Cruces area during the 1920s, where they established homesteads approximately six to ten miles north of Highway U. S. 70, east of Las Cruces. Homesteaders included John Henry Sweet, George Holsome, Edward Strait, Robert Anderson Pettes, Jasper Williams, E. Daily, L.E. Hibler, Marshall Edwards, and the Coleman, Hester, Hughs, Owens, Joner, Steward, and Welch families.¹⁹

Jasper Williams filed for 640 acres near Las Cruces. His wife, Clarabelle (aka Clara Belle) was the first Black graduate of what is now known as New Mexico State University. Later, she was hired to teach African American children at Phillips Chapel and Booker T. Washington School after Las Cruces chose to segregate its schools in 1925. Jasper and Clarabelle raised three sons who became physicians, one of whom served also as a Tuskegee Airman.²⁰

When Robert and Ella Pettes moved to Las Cruces they worked as sharecroppers for a farm on El Paseo Road—now El Paseo Street—where Las Cruces High School is now located.²¹ Later, the Pettes family homesteaded 640 acres that proved to be a valuable source of water. In the 1960s, they incorporated their family business into a water development company. The Pettes family also played an important role in establishing the Community Cemetery for African-Americans during the 1940s.²²

In a taped interview archived with the NMSU's Rio Grande Historical Collection, Stella Ramzy Gipson remembers the challenges imposed by trying to farm the desert scrubland east of Las Cruces, especially after the precious seasonal rains failed to materialize. She remembers that the families would drive into town to collect barrels of potable water. As the water was consumed, she remembers that "three inches from the bottom, the water would be too rusty to drink." The men would 'chop' cotton (hoe weeds) and harvest cotton in addition to trying to improve their homesteads. Those families who could afford the seed, maintained family garden plots. They initially lived in tents made out of duck (tightly woven cotton) canvas used to fabricate cotton sacks. Later, her family of seven at the time "laid 'dobies" to construct a two-room adobe home. "We ate in one room, and slept in the other." They would collect the wild rabbits that were accidentally hit by the cars returning home from work after sunset. The skinned and cleaned rabbits would be fried or barbecued. They also shot and ate birds and other small game. They lived mainly on beans, potatoes, and rice, and then "I put them to bed

¹⁸ 1920 Census Records, Doña Ana County. Microfiche. Branson Library, New Mexico State University.

¹⁹ Barbara Richardson (compiled by). *Black Directory of New Mexico*. (Panorama Press: Rio Rancho, New Mexico, 1976), pp. 66 – 67; Mary M. Steeb, Michael Romero Taylor, Anthony C. Pennock. *The Las Cruces Historic Buildings Survey*. Doña Ana County Historical Society: Las Cruces, New Mexico, 1982, p. 119.

²⁰ Las Cruces School Board Minutes 1925 and 1926; O'Brien, Claire. "When Schools Were Segregated: Former Students Remember Booker T. Washington School," *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 17 February 2001, Section C-8.

²¹ Personal conversation between Terry Moody and Grover Pettes, son of Robert and Ella Pettes.

²² Heritage Days Committee. *Las Cruces Historic Cemetery Guide*, Las Cruces, New Mexico, c. 1999.

with buttermilk and cornbread” Stella recalls. When gas was not affordable, they would walk to and from town. The children wore clothing fashioned from gunny (coarse burlap) sacks used to transport onions, potatoes, and other foodstuffs. “If we was out there robbing banks or gas stations, I’d be ashamed to tell you, but I’m not ashamed of the truth,” stated Gipson.

The Gipson family moved into town in 1932. There, Stella was able to find work and enjoy a regular income. She earned \$5/week washing and ironing one hundred white uniforms at the Country Club. She also “janitored” at the White church for 11 years. All this while mothering 11 babies, five of whom lived to adulthood. She emphasized several times during the interview that the town of Las Cruces was always good to her. When their house in town burned, local mostly White residents donated replacement doors and windows. A White Lutheran family ‘adopted’ her family, providing birthday presents, cash, Christmas tidings, canned goods, fuelwood, and other necessities. “I won’t beg... I’d rather set up here and do without than beg,” said Stella. She expressed deep gratitude for the many years of neighborly assistance.²³

Between 1920 and 1930 the Black population in Doña Ana County increased nine-fold, from 78 to 649 individuals.²⁴ This figure held fairly steady through 1970, when 700 African Americans resided in Las Cruces.²⁵ In 1980 there was a modest increase to 810, with an additional 400 arriving in 1990 for a total of 1,211 African American Las Cruces at that time.²⁶

²³ Oral history interview with Stella Ramzy Gipson (1979). Audiotape (RG-T0076) archived with the Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University (Las Cruces). Gipson died in Las Cruces on 4 July 2014 at the age of 86.

²⁴ Charles E. Hall (Specialist in Negro Statistics). “Negroes in the United States, 1920 –32.” Prepared under the supervision of Z. R. Pettet, Chief Statistician for Agriculture. (United States Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1935), p. 776.

²⁵ U. S. Bureau of Census. Census of Population: 1970. Vol. 1: “Characteristics of Population. Part 33. New Mexico.” (U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington, D. C., 1973). Table 35.

²⁶ U.S. Bureau of Census. Census of Population and Housing: 1980. Census Tracts, Las Cruces, N. Mex., (U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington, D. C., 1983), p. 6, Table P-3; U.S. Bureau of Census. Census of Population and Housing: 1990. Population and Housing Characteristics for Census Tracts and Block Numbering Areas. Las Cruces, N. Mex., (U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D. C., 1993), p. 9, Table 3.

Neighborhoods

The Black community historically lived in a mixed African American and Hispanic neighborhood close to downtown Las Cruces in what is now known as the Downtown Mesquite District. Some members of the community farmed homestead acreage in an area north of I-70 some six to ten miles east of town.

In 1954, researchers Williams and Ryan described the downtown neighborhood this way:

The area to the northeast of the town center, with its dusty roads and small box-like adobe houses, is home to the Negro community and to many Spanish-Americans in the lower economic levels. A few Anglo-American families also live in this area...A number of informants also said that the Negro community was old and settled, that the families were respected and accepted in the civic life of the community. However, it was indicated that they usually kept to themselves for their informal associations, except in the case of immediate neighbors in the bi-racial area.¹

In 1957, state legislation was initiated to enable towns to accept federal help in planning for rehabilitating “run-down” parts of towns. After the “slum and blight areas” were removed, the towns would be eligible for federal loans to “rebuild where needed,” in accordance with the program submitted by municipal authorities. T. E. Springer, attorney for the Home Finance Agency for the federal government, said a typical city would not need to invest cash into the program. He said the city performs the planning, and the federal government oversees the contract without dictating what the plans should entail. The *Roswell Daily Record* reported that by March of 1957, Las Cruces had already received a \$72,000 loan for planning, and that Las Cruces was the first town in the state to try the program. Las Cruces Mayor James Neleigh reportedly told the House Committee during the course of the legislative consideration that Las Cruces was named several years beforehand as having “the worst housing in the state.” He said that municipal officials had been wanting to do something about the situation, but until the present program they had “no money with which to operate.” The House committee was told at the time that Las Cruces planned to start by rehabilitating 25 city blocks. The plan as presented was to build homes costing in the neighborhood of \$4,000 or so, and to then move people from the slum areas into the new homes. Backers of the plan told legislators that it would be a matter of “salesmanship” and parley, with attempts to sell “slum-dwellers on the advantages of moving into better – but still low cost – quarters.” Everett Boyd of the National

¹ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

Association for the Advancement of Colored People told the Committee that the NAACP strongly endorsed the idea of improving housing, but felt that it was “possible the program might be used to the disadvantage of minority groups.” He said there were known cases in which “Negroes or other minority peoples” were “forced to move out of a section,” and were then “not allowed back in” when the neighborhood was rebuilt.²

Later that same year, as the NAACP planned for Las Cruces to host its annual State convention, the conference leaders pledged to oppose the proposed urban renewal and development programs throughout the state unless the “relocation of persons displaced under the program” was accomplished “without regard to race.”³ The NAACP then called on President Eisenhower to “issue an order forbidding racial or religious segregation in all housing built with federal assistance.”⁴

As part of the unsympathetic urban renewal effort, some 25 blocks of the historic downtown were razed without consideration for architectural or cultural value. Additional research will be necessary to understand the full ramifications of the demolition, including how residents who lost their homes responded to the undertaking.

Black Employment Opportunities

We have already seen that early African American settlers in Las Cruces worked with the railroad, or as domestic and manual laborers, as cooks, teachers, barbers, a blacksmith, as religious leaders, and as farmers. By 1954, researchers Williams and Ryan observed that:

Other than the Negro school teachers, of whom there were four in 1954, and the Negro ministers, there were no other professionally-employed Negroes, and there were very few in the skilled trades. Most were employed in unskilled labor, even those whose education would have fitted them for better jobs.¹

² “Federal Aid for Clearing Slum Areas Moves Step Nearer to NM,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 3 March 1957, p. 7.

³ “NAACP Votes to Hold Its 1958 State Convention in Las Cruces,” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 15 October 1957, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

¹ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

One informant told the researchers that one young Black man, a graduate of the New Mexico Agricultural and Mechanical College in journalism, “was employed as a dishwasher in a local restaurant.”²

The following is a list of businesses known to be operating during the period between 1942 and 1946. It is not known which businesses may have hired Blacks, were owned by (or discriminated against) people of color: Georges, The United, Inc., Riesel’s, El Elcanto, The Budget Shop, Ben Franklin Store, The Myers Company, Hot Spot Stores, Farmers Compress Company, Westside Laundry, J. M. Pritchett (Blacksmith), Popular’s Dry Goods Company, Sprouse-Reitz Company, Medina’s Variety Store, E. B. Mott Company, J. N. Green Furniture Exchange, The Valley Locker Coop, Inc., K and W Concrete Tile Products, The Lyles Store.³

The state NAACP called attention to the fact that “membership in the Brotherhood of Firemen and Engineers is closed to persons of Spanish and Mexican descent, and Negroes,” and called on that union to “join the ranks of the democratic trade unions.”⁴ The state NAACP also urged industry leaders in New Mexico to “avail themselves of the talents and skills to be found among Indian and Negro youths and youth of other minority groups” and to set up company-sponsored training programs for them.⁵

Entertainment

It is evident from the newspaper accounts of the day that Whites, Latinx, and Blacks most often lived, worked, prayed, and entertained themselves in largely separate spheres. The following newspaper excerpt states explicitly how separate most activities were:

The colored people of Las Cruces have recently organized a Sunday school and are now trying to buy a lot and build a church. To this end they gave a concert Thursday evening by local talent, and will from time to time give local entertainments *among their own people* to raise the necessary money.⁶

² Ibid.

³ Available on-line. National Archives Identifier 83222829 (1942-46).

⁴ “NAACP Votes to Hold its 1958 State Convention in Las Cruces,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 15 October 1957, p. 7.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Earlham Notes,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 20 May 1910, p. 1.

City Armory

Apparently, the City's Armory hosted numerous occasions for the benefit of the entire Las Cruces community. In 1919, a special occasion including musical entertainment and refreshments was attended by various citywide church denominations. The proceeds, amounting to about \$125.00, were to be used for "aiding the Colored people of Las Cruces in erecting a house of worship."⁷

"Negro Singers Well Received" headlined an article recounting a successful Armory event staged by the "Colored Baptist church." A skit demonstrating a rope tug-of-war allowed the preacher to announce that for the first time in the history of town, the "colored people of Las Cruces" were "pulling together." The evening opened with the entire audience singing "America," and ended with an act called, "Free at Last." Ms. W. M. Barnes, Ambrose Billingsley and Smith Billingsley starred in the vocal selections. Among the most popular were "Jilted," "Swing Your Lady Round," and "Po' Little Lamb," described in the article as "old-fashioned jubilee songs" that "brought long and hearty applause." The greatest credit was given to the young preacher W. E. Harris for "getting up the entertainment, training the cast, and managing the performance from start to finish." Now that "the people of Las Cruces" know what the "Colored Baptist church" can do, the article concluded, "they should be able to put on their next performance with every assurance of success."⁸

Mesilla Dam Amusement Park

In 1922, John C. Robbins, Jr., leased land along the river at Mesilla Dam to create a popular local and tourist summer destination. The Mesilla Dam Amusement Park featured a 40' x 70' screened dance pavilion, bath-houses, diving boards, and a safety cable for river swims. Bathing suits and caps were provided at a cost. Advertisements touted fishing vessels, moonlight boat cruises, music provided by 'The Fountain' orchestra, ample refreshments and supplies from the general store, and safe nighttime parking. The manager was lauded for his "pep, foresight and confidence" in creating such a festive getaway.⁹

While the grand opening was in May, added attractions the following month included boxing and wrestling arenas featuring the Fort Bliss slugger Tommy Murphy versus the local draw Leo Bradley. "Sailor" John Wood was to take on "Soldier" Daniel Mendoza for six rounds, while Henry Guin and Alvin Limbaugh provided the wrestling entertainment. The Harley-Davidson company of El Paso hosted contests, including "picking an egg off the ground while going full speed, pie-eating contest on the machines," and sand, hill and speed races. There was a

⁷ "Benefit Entertainment," *Rio Grande Republic*, 25 July 1919, p. 5.

⁸ "Negro Singers Well Received," *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 13 July 1922, p. 2.

⁹ "Valley to Have Real Amusement Park This Summer," *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican* 18 May 1922, p. 4.

shooting gallery, “*nigger baby throwing*” and other chances to earn prizes. “Pitchers can develop their arms by throwing at the nigger baby,” boasted the advertisements, “who drops into the river – when you hit him.” The good ship “Prohibition” was another popular attraction.¹⁰ Presumably, all visitors were welcome. Whether or not some felt offended, angered, or humiliated by any of the events is not known.

The following year, the *Rio Grande Republican* publicized that Mr. Robbins was getting things all ready for his May 1923 opening. He planned to give a free reception and dance. The bathing houses were being rushed to completion, and a new electric lighting plant was on its way. New power boats were also to be made available for customers. “In fact,” crowed the article, “the amusement company is sparing no effort or expense to make Mesilla Dam a place where visitors *from every section* will delight to spend their holidays and Sundays.”¹¹ Management may have shifted within a few years, for in 1925 it was one B. F. Young who had “constructed a swimming pool with running water,” and “set out” more than “1000 10-ft cottonwoods.”¹²

Fourth of July Celebrations

Much anticipated annually were the Fourth of July Boy Scout celebrations at Dripping Springs east of Las Cruces. There were “patriotic exercises during the day,” and “a big fireworks display at night.”¹³ Harold Morris, a graduate of Booker T. Washington School and a Vietnam veteran, traces his love of uniform back to his Boy Scout days in Las Cruces. First part of a segregated troop, he later joined a White troop once the schools were integrated. He remembers his first hike up “A” Mountain at the base of the Organ Mountains near campus. He didn’t have a knapsack, so he borrowed a cloth purse from his mother. She packed him two baloney and cheese sandwiches, an apple, an orange, and he carried a quart jar of water. He remembers the other boys not really making fun of him, but being concerned when he became winded due to the heavy load and steep terrain. He has fond memories of making it to the top of the mountain.¹⁴

¹⁰ “Motorcycle Races at Dam Sunday” and “Carnival Dance,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 29 June 1922, p. 8. Emphasis added.

¹¹ “Mesilla Dam Amusement Park Will Open About May 5,” *Rio Grande Farmer* 26 April 1923, p. 6. Emphasis added.

¹² “Ten Years Ago (From the Post Files of April 4, 1925)” *El Paso Harold Post* 4 April 1935, p. 4.

¹³ “Las Cruces Boys at Scout Camp – Troops A and B of Las Cruces and Mesilla Park Enjoy Outing at Dripping Springs,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 29 June 1922, p. 1.

¹⁴ KRWG radio broadcast, StoryCorps “Vietnam Veteran Harold Morris,” audio tape of entire interview available on-line at: [krwg.org/post/storycorps – military – voices – harold – morris](http://krwg.org/post/storycorps-military-voices-harold-morris).

Midway Dances

A frequent newspaper advertisement heralded regular Thursday night dances, “for colored people,” at an 80’ x 90’ dance hall located midway between El Paso, TX and Las Cruces, NM in Chamberino, NM. Admission was \$1.00 plus tax.¹⁵

Juneteenth

The Juneteenth Day has been celebrated at Apodaca Park since 1958. Previously, the nearest commemorations were held in Blackdom, Roswell, and Vado. The celebration memorializes the arrival of word of the Emancipation Proclamation to Galveston, Texas on 19 June 1865. The word “Juneteenth” is a variation of the phrase ‘June 19th.’ The event continues to be held in New Mexico on the Saturday closest to 19 June. In addition to celebrating the significant improvements regarding the legal status of Blacks in the United States, the occasion also engenders a renewed sense of community among all participants. In 1972, the festivities were planned by general chairman Herbert Hamilton, Ethel Pennington, Sylvester Jones, Anita Fielder, Irene Trotter and Willie M. Pennington, several of whom were descendants of some of the earliest African American families to settle in Las Cruces.¹⁶ The local branch of the NAACP has hosted barbecue baseball games and other fundraisers in conjunction with the Juneteenth celebrations, with proceeds benefitting various NAACP initiatives.¹⁷

School Pageants

A December 1940 high school pageant production, called *Pearly Gates*, was billed by the *Sun News* as a “negro pageant” with an “all-colored cast” of fifty voices, featuring “negro spirituals and folk songs” to be staged in the Las Cruces union high school auditorium, under the “joint auspices of the associated Colored Churches,” and under the direction of A. E. Washington, a “nationally known dramatic artist.” The journalist predicted that the pageant would “be one of the most elaborate productions of its kind ever presented here.”¹⁸

Social Columns

The daily social happenings were duly reported by the *Sun News*, remarking most often upon the Anglo families in town unless otherwise observant:

The colored people of the town enjoyed a fine party on Monday night in honor of Miss Verna Sears at the home of her aunt, Ms.

¹⁵ “Advertisement,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 11 October 1956, p. 10.

¹⁶ “Planning Underway for ‘Juneteenth’,” *Las Cruces Sun News* 11 June 1972, p. 2.

¹⁷ “Barbecue, Ball Game Scheduled by Local NAACP,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 18 June 1958, p. 7.

¹⁸ “Negro Pageant at High School Monday Night,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 11 December 1940, p. 3.

Lena Jones, given by some young men friends. Refreshments of ice cream and watermelon were served at the close of evening and whist was played and good music enjoyed.¹⁹

Las Cruces Centennial Celebration

A momentous occasion occurred in 1949 when Las Cruces celebrated its centennial anniversary. Local leaders took more than a year to plan the six-day event that included parades, dances, concerts, fireworks, a carnival, dinners and all sorts of competition, including fiddlers and even cow milkers. Everyone was asked to dress in old-fashioned costumes. All the men were expected to grow beards unless they had “shaving permits.” Men with the best beards won prizes on Old-Timers Day.²⁰ It is not known whether African Americans were involved in the planning or participated in the event itself.

Movies

Unfortunately, the otherwise comprehensive assessment of New Mexico’s vaudeville and later movie theater spaces in David Kammer’s Multiple Property Listing in the National Register of Historic Places, “The Historical Development of Motion Picture Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 – 1960” (April 2006) fails to acknowledge or address the practice of discrimination concerning theater access and seating for African Americans. Some informants do remember that the downtown Rio Grande theatre had balcony seating for Black residents.

Newspaper Serials

Several daily and weekly Las Cruces newspaper book serials, often set in the Deep South, reinforced negative stereotypes.²¹ Blacks were depicted as lazy or ignorant, existing only to serve Whites. These serials were most popular during the 1920s and 1930s, gracing the pages of the daily newspapers with relentless regularity. Additional research is needed to document these serials, and to gauge public reaction to their content.

Buildings, Structures, and Landscapes

¹⁹ “Social Items,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 11 September 1911, p. 5.

²⁰ Melzer, Richard. “Roberta Scott: A Farmer’s Favorite Daughter Part II,” *La Vida* column, in the *News-Bulletin.com*. Available on-line at [news-bulletin.com/news/features/roberta scott](http://news-bulletin.com/news/features/roberta%20scott). (January -February 2018).

²¹ Fairbank, Janet A. “The Cortlandts of Washington Square,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Farmer*, 20 December 1923, p. 8.

CCC Camp G-178 (NAID 77142853)

Q. Were local Black residents involved in any way?

Note: Once the archives re-open, research the U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps Papers. Ms 084. Rio Grande Historical Collections. New Mexico State University Library.

WWII Prisoner of War (POW) Camp

Q. Were local Black residents involved with the German and Italian POWs?

During World War II, there were 371,683 German POWs who were captured in Europe and Northern Africa, then shipped to the United States and detained in more than 600 camps across the country.¹

Q. Were there local Black nurses involved with POW care?

Prisoners of war, under rules set by the Geneva Convention, could be made to work for the detaining power. And, with millions of American men away serving in the military, there was a significant labor shortage in the United States. Farms, orchards, canneries, factories and other industries needed German POWs as workers, and Black army nurses were overwhelmingly assigned to POW camps. To them, the assignment could be deeply troubling. Black nurses volunteered to serve wounded American soldiers, not the enemy. "It had taken decades for Black nurses to be admitted into the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, and to be given the task of caring for soldiers in Hitler's army felt like a betrayal."²

By 1944, only 300 Black women were allowed to serve in the entire Army Nurse Corps, compared to 40,000 White nurses. Many were relegated to German prisoner of war camps. Serving at POW camps was considered a second-rate assignment and the camps were isolating and lonely. Black nurses were routinely left out of meetings with White superiors and weren't invited to social functions.³

The interactions between the German POWs and Black nurses were largely civil, but there were reported incidences where Nazi beliefs of racial superiority were on full display:

¹ Clark, Alexis. "When Black Nurses Were Relegated to Care for German POWs," *History Stories*, revised 10 March 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military](https://www.history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military).

² Ibid.

³ Clark, Alexis. "When Black Nurses Were Relegated to Care for German POWs," *History Stories*, revised 10 March 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military](https://www.history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military).

For example, at Camp Papago Park, outside of Phoenix, a German POW declared he hated Black people in front of a Black nurse. When the commanding officer of the camp didn't issue any punishment, the nurse filed a complaint, dated 1 August 1944, to the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses: 'That is the worst insult an army officer should ever have to take. I think it is insult enough to be here taking care of them when we volunteered to come into the army to nurse military personnel...All of this is making us very bitter.'⁴

The unfairness inherent in a segregated military was not lost on those risking their lives despite being denied due rights. In one train depot in Texas, a small group of Black soldiers was denied access to the 'Whites-Only' dining hall, yet saw through a window, a group of German POWs and their American guards sitting at a table together, laughing and eating.⁵

National Register of Historic Places

The following buildings and structures are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Each should be researched to fully understand any connections with Black history:

Phillips Chapel
Rio Grande Theatre
Thomas Branigan Memorial Library
Green Bridge
Mesilla Park Elementary School
Mesilla Plaza
Fort Selden
Fort Fillmore
Nestor Armijo House
Alameda-Depot Historic District
Mesquite Street Original Townsite Historic District
Air Science
Foster Hall
Goddard Hall
University President's House
Hadley-Ludwick House
Barela-Reynolds-Taylor House
Bermudez Home Place

⁴ Clark, Alexis. "When Black Nurses Were Relegated to Care for German POWs," *History Stories*, revised 10 March 2021. Available on-line at [history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military](https://www.history.com/news/black-nurses-world-war-ii-truman-desegregation-military).

⁵ Ibid.

Works Projects Administration (WPA) Sites

The following projects were federally funded during President Roosevelt's administration. Each will be researched to understand the connections between the properties and the Black community:

Alma d' Arte Charter High School
Doña Ana County Court House
Branigan City Library
Court Junior High School
Biology Building Fresco
Branson Library
Dove Hall
Goddard Hall
Kent Hall
Milton Hall
Regulatory Building
Rhodes – Garrett - Hamiel Residence Center

Churches

The American Black church has always been the core institution within the community setting and many of the nation's leaders have come of the Black church. In every instance, these venues served multiple functions in addition to a religious focus, including social and civic centers, educational beacons, and events hubs.

The following list of predominantly Black Las Cruces churches was compiled by Kolanji Mwanza for the Historic Preservation Division. Additional research is forthcoming:

Bethel Second Baptist Missionary Church
Greater St. John Church of God in Christ
Latter Rain Harvest Fellowship
Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
New Life Missionary Baptist Church
Phillips Chapel CME
Seventh-Day Adventist Philadelphia SDA
Church of Christ

Phillips Chapel

The following information is drawn largely from architectural historian Terry Moody's National Register of Historic Places nomination form she prepared for Phillips Chapel, and personal conversations with Terry Moody, and Mr. Clarence Fielder several years ago:

Since its construction by African-Americans and Hispanics in 1911 the chapel has been a focal point for the African American community as a gathering place for community events. Named after the Right Reverend Charles H. Phillips, the first presiding bishop of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, Phillips Chapel CME Church is the oldest African American church in Las Cruces.⁶

In the early 1900s, early African American settlers in Las Cruces and members of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church first worshipped in the home of Daniel and Ollie Hibler. Later, Luella and Cortez Hibler, James Dykes, A.J. Brooks, and Priscilla and John Hibler rented a small frame building at the corner of Campo Street and East Court Avenue, where the African American community worshipped. Services were held there until the present chapel was built. The church's first minister, Rev. T. C. Cook, came from Denton, Texas. As the African American population of Las Cruces grew, a permanent place of worship was needed. Daniel Hibler purchased the land on which Phillips Chapel CME Church was built for \$45.00 and had it deeded to the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America on 1 May 1911.

Phillips Chapel served the Las Cruces African American community as a civic and social center throughout its history. The church held Easter programs, provided Christmas treats, and sponsored Children's Day. Clarence Fielder remembers attending various social activities held at Phillips Chapel when he was a child, and speaks fondly of "youth groups, ice cream socials, and hobo parties where we'd go house to house dressed as hobos and come back to have picnics with the food and goods we collected." Many African-American couples were married in the chapel, and their children "sprinkled" (christened) there. Other activities, such as plays, dramas and Song Fests were held. In recent years, Phillips Chapel has hosted the annual Martin Luther King service in January, sponsored by the Southwest Ministerial Alliance and a Black History Month service in February.

The Phillips Chapel CME Church, an unassuming one-room adobe building located at the northeastern corner of N. Tornillo Street and E. Lucero Avenue, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It has achieved cultural significance as a gathering place for the local African American community since 1911. The chapel also served as a place of education for African American children removed from the Las Cruces public schools between 1924-1934 due to segregation. As such, Phillips Chapel CME Church is one of just a few extant buildings and landscapes representing the period of segregation in Las Cruces.

As the first Black woman born in Las Cruces, Gertrude Fielder in a 1986 interview said that she was proud to still be able to go to 'my father's church,' a small adobe chapel that Daniel Albert

⁶ Moody, Terry. Phillips Chapel National Register of Historic Places nomination form. Available on-line at the National Archives catalog.archives.gov/id/77847257.

Hibler helped build in 1910.⁷ It also served as the first school for 30 – 35 elementary-age children following segregation in this city in 1924. Ms. Fielder recalled that, “Gertrude Terrell and Rev. Jenkin were the first teachers.”⁸

All residents were invited to listen to an evangelical preacher visiting from Dallas, TX in 1942. Wrote Candace L. Bryant to the newspaper, “This meeting is conducted for the colored people of this section, but ALL peoples are invited and are welcome to attend regardless of race or color.”⁹

In addition to Phillips Chapel, several other churches in Las Cruces continue to serve the African American community. In 1913, the Bethel Second Baptist Church was built at 405 E. Hadley Avenue; the original building was replaced in the 1970s. In the 1970s, Mount Carmel Baptist Church was formed at 955 S. Bellamah Loop. The Philathia Seventh-Day Adventist, 1351 N. Tornillo Street, the Church of Christ, and the Greater St. John Church of God in Christ, 1615 N. Mesquite Street, also serve the Las Cruces African-American community.

Phillips Chapel CME Church has served its African-American community in diverse ways over its long history, and for many has represented a safe haven in which to escape a sometimes hostile and alienated daily existence. Since its restoration by a committed group of volunteers, it still functions as a place of community. Friends discuss their families and their lives, meet in worship, and for special events.

Segregated Public and Private Spaces

Cemetery

Many New Mexico cities, including Las Cruces, extended racial segregation beyond life itself – creating separate cemeteries for African Americans and other minorities. Burials at the segregated Community Cemetery in Las Cruces date to 1940, with the last burial taking place in 2001. The community, usually with the help of local schools, has hosted several cemetery clean-ups over the years.¹

Restaurants

⁷ Kilcrease, Della. “Blacks in Las Cruces – Sentiments of Black History Preserved,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, front page *Sun Life*, 23 February 1986.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ “Church of Christ, *Las Cruces Sun News*, 2 August 1942, p. 4. Emphasis original.

¹ Associated Press, “NAACP Wants Neglected Las Cruces Cemetery Restored,” 18 January 2015. Available on-line at abqjournal.com/528120/naACP-wants-neglected-las-cruces-cemetery-restored.

A long-time Las Cruces remembers that when teams from Las Cruces went to still-segregated schools to play games, the Black players were expected to eat in the kitchens or in the White restaurants' back rooms. "She proudly remembers that her White classmates insisted that they eat with their Black teammates in the kitchens or not eat at all."² While it seems that most Las Cruces restaurants did not exclude Blacks, there were some that discriminated. It may have also been a situation where minorities knew where they could eat and where they were not welcomed. All restaurant owners reserved the right to refuse service to any individuals as they saw fit.

Sororities and Fraternities

In a letter to *The Round-Up* editors in 1962, Nelson Williams observed that the doctrine of 'White supremacy,' as exemplified in Mississippi by the refusal to enroll non-whites in the universities, was "mirrored at New Mexico State University" by the "reluctance of many Greek organizations to pledge non-Whites." He characterized the systemic racism as "a cancer in our society" which would "only be cured when those White Americans who call themselves Christians apply their religious concepts in their daily lives."³

The Round-Up editor Mike Waldner responded to the dilemma posed in the Williams letter by agreeing there needed to be change, and then offered the following solutions:

First, the Greeks themselves could act. If this doesn't work, the student government could act by excluding Greeks whose constitutions include anti-non-Caucasian clauses from direct representation in the Associated Student Commission Senate. Greeks with such clauses could also be hit much closer to home by exclusion from the use of campus facilities for fundraising activities such as dances or participation in Spring Carnival.

Editor Waldner continued by declaring that if the student government, "which contains a Greek majority" does not act, then there is always the university administration: "It is within their power," concluded Waldner, "to either compel these groups to comply or disband."⁴

Sports

² Melzer, Richard. "Roberta Scott: A Farmer's Favorite Daughter Part II," *La Vida* column, in the *News-Bulletin.com*. Available on-line at [news-bulletin.com/news/features/roberta scott](http://news-bulletin.com/news/features/roberta%20scott).

³ "Steam and Este[e]m: On Mississippi," Letter to the Editor by Nelson Williams, *The Round-Up*, 9 October 1962, p. 6.

⁴ Editor, Mike Waldner, "Old Skeleton Reveale[d] in Campus Closet," *The Round-Up*, 9 October 1962, p. 2.

Even before the schools were segregated, sports teams were apparently arranged by skin color. NMSU's student newspaper *The Round Up* noted, for example, that "a make-up team of college students defeated the Las Cruces negro team by a score of 14 to 9." One wonders if the opposite outcome would have been reported.⁵

Schools

As with segregated schools elsewhere in the country, those in New Mexico suffered from inferior facilities, overcrowding, understaffing, secondhand equipment, and outdated, often damaged textbooks. The fact that the schools were named after heroes in Black history and culture did not offset the schools' shortcomings.

While similar attempts had been made in the opening decade of the 20th-century (with a majority Hispano legislature)⁶ it wasn't until the 1920s that a now predominantly Anglo legislature successfully passed laws segregating the schools. As the result of a political climate influenced by newly-arrived taxpayers from states where racial segregation was the norm, Las Cruces and at least eight other communities established segregation laws and removed African American children (including college students) from the public schools.

Section 1201 of the NM legislation stated in part:

That where, in the opinion of the County School Board or Municipal School Board and on the approval of said opinion by the State Board of Education, it is for the best advantage and interest of the school that separate rooms be provided for the teaching of pupils of African descent, and said rooms are so provided, such pupils may not be admitted to school rooms occupied by pupils of Caucasian or other descent.

Provided further, that such rooms set aside for the teaching of such pupils of African descent shall be as good and as well-kept as those used by pupils of Caucasian or other descent, and teaching therein shall be as efficient. Provided further, that pupils of Caucasian or other descent may not be admitted to the school rooms so provided for those of African descent.⁷

The Las Cruces School District segregated in 1924. Some thirty-five children were subsequently removed from the Central Elementary School and sent to Phillips Chapel CME Chapel. Gertrude Hibler Fielder, daughter of Ollie and Daniel Hibler, recalled being moved to attend classes with

⁵ "Track and Baseball Sway," *The Round Up*, 27 March 1923, p. 3.

⁶ "The Magnificent Prize Was Won by Progress Editor – The Tenderfoot Breaks into a Funny Strain...The Convention and Negro Schools," *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 5 November 1910, p. 2.

⁷ Soledad C Chacon, Secretary of State (prepared by). *Laws of the State of New Mexico*. Valliant Printing Co.: Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1925. p. 109.

other Black children at the little Methodist church that her father had built. After Booker T. Washington School was constructed, Phillips Chapel continued to serve as a place where baccalaureate services were held when African American students graduated from the segregated Booker until integration occurred in 1954 following the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*.

A rare notation that Phillips Chapel was serving as a school for “colored children” is found in the school board minutes dated 24 August 1924. In reference to the hiring of janitors, the minutes state that “no arrangements [have been] made for [the] care of the colored church.”⁸ A second reference to a separate school for African American children is found in the school board minutes dated 1 June 1925. The board “moved that Mrs. Williams at a salary of nine hundred dollars be elected to fill [the] position as negro teacher.”⁹

After Phillips Chapel began serving double-duty as a church and a school, two small rooms (mere tar paper “chicken shacks” according to Gertrude Fielder and others) were moved to the intersection of N. Tornillo Street (two blocks to the north) and Pinon Avenue.¹⁰ Minutes of a special board meeting held on 21 August 1925 discuss “locating a site for the colored school.” In the 7 September 1925 regular board meeting minutes, a discussion was held concerning the economic feasibility of moving two buildings from Southward School to the new site for the “colored schools,” stating that the proposed cost might exceed the bid. The board agreed to move the buildings “at the least possible expense.” The small structures at N. Tornillo Street and Pinon Avenue, described as “barracks” by other observers, represent the initial effort to construct the segregated Booker T. Washington School, and are no longer extant.¹¹ Phillips Chapel CME Church, under the title of Lincoln High School, continued to serve in the education of young African-American adults until 1934.¹² In 1934, a new Booker T. Washington School was built on Solano Street. The new school consisted of four adobe rooms, and served both the elementary and secondary educational needs for African-American children until integration occurred twenty years later. The original structure of Booker T. Washington has since been replaced by a modern structure.¹³

⁸ Claire O’Brien. “When Schools were Segregated: Former Students Remember Booker T. Washington School.” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 17 February 2001, Section C - 8.

⁹ Delia Kilcrease. “Sentiments of Black History Preserved.” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, Las Cruces, New Mexico. 23 February 1986, n.p.

¹⁰ Claire O’Brien. “When Schools were Segregated: Former Students Remember Booker T. Washington School.” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 17 February 2001, Section C - 8.

¹¹ In December 1925, the board presented a bill for payment from H & K Truck Lines for \$500 to cover the cost of moving the buildings for the “colored school.” In April 1926, the Board moved to pay \$1.00 to Francisco Trejo for labor to repair the colored school buildings. In July 1926, the board voted to pay the balance of \$200 to H & K Truck Lines for moving the buildings. *Las Cruces School Board Minutes, 1925 and 1926*.

¹² Dominguez, Debra. “Church Wrestles with Wilting Congregation.” *Christian Index*. June 2001, pp. 26-27.

¹³ Claire O’Brien. “When Schools were Segregated: Former Students Remember Booker T. Washington School.” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, 17 February 2001, Section C - 8.

Booker T. Washington School

After it was established in 1935, Black students in Las Cruces attended Booker T. Washington at 755 E. Chestnut. In 1949, five teachers taught 137 students (grades one through 12) in two classrooms. A hallway doubled as an overflow classroom. Chemistry and physics were not offered due to the absence of lab equipment. A vacant lot served as the playground. A 1949 survey team found that the school “is better than the average segregated Negro school largely because of excellent parent-teacher cooperation and aggressiveness. “However,” they concluded, “there is no comparison with facilities and instruction offered in the White schools.”¹⁴

As if separate and substandard educational facilities and teaching materials did not pose hardships enough, those who attended the segregated schools in Las Cruces had no official record of attendance to show prospective employers or college admittance officials. “To avoid facing state regulators,” writes historian George M. Cooper, “the Black high school was not even carried on the records as part of the school system.” This created real problems for graduates who wanted to attend college and had “no record of even attending high school, much less graduating.”¹⁵

Discrimination, Prejudice and Persecution

Retired New Mexico State University (NMSU) history professor and African American scholar Clarence Fielder observed that segregation in Doña Ana County was “largely confined to the classroom.” According to Fielder, an increasingly Anglo-dominated State legislature imposed a racial hierarchy that they brought to New Mexico from elsewhere. “They didn’t want their children going to school with their servants’ children, so they segregated the schools,” Fielder said. “Blacks lived all over Las Cruces, the same way with Hispanics, and they had good relations, although you didn’t go to school with them,” Fielder continued. “When you went home in the afternoons, those are the kids you played with out in the street. We didn’t have a swimming pool. We’d go swimming in the irrigation ditches. Those are the kids you palled around with, and that you’d go to the movies with.”¹

¹⁴ “New Mexico’s Segregated Schools,” sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949).

¹⁵ Cooper, George M. “The Modern Civil Rights Movement in New Mexico, 1955 - 1975,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 206.

¹ *Frontera del Norte News* available on-line at fnsnews.nmsu.edu/blacks-in-a-border-county, 22 September 2011; personal communication with Clarence Fielder.

Long-time Mesilla resident J. Paul Taylor remembers discrimination targeting the Latinx population. A playmate once jeeringly asked him, “Is your mother a *Mexican*?” Although just a second-grader, he understood that this question was meant to be “a slant.” A hurt and bewildered but defiant Taylor retorted, “I know my mother is an American!” He said he let the matter drop and was never bothered with that issue again. He also remembers being driven to school as a first-grader, and witnessing the treatment of a little Black girl they frequently encountered upon arrival. “I would hear awful things,” he remembers painfully. They would call her a “kinky-headed little nigger,” and other ugly comments. He distinctly recalls being very confused by the behavior. “Why are they talking to her like that?” he asked himself. Taylor’s early sensitivity to mistreatment based upon skin color stayed with him his entire life. He continues to fight for racial equality as a retired State legislator and life-long educator.²

Jim Crow Las Cruces

Gertrude Fielder mused in a 1986 interview that the early 1900s may have found the diverse cultures in the growing town of Las Cruces struggling for recognition of “individual religious and lifestyle preferences,” however, she recalled, “we all got along fine.” Fielder remarked that “things were running smooth.” When segregation was imposed in 1924, “most of us didn’t understand what was happening,” she remembered, “Blacks suddenly had to provide their own educational opportunities for the next 30 years.”³

By 1954, researchers Williams and Ryan shared the following observations:

Although Las Cruces is smaller than Hobbs or Carlsbad, and the trading center for an agricultural area, the attitudes and practices with regard to discrimination were less strict. Negroes had been accepted as guests in hotels and motels, and most restaurants and drug stores would serve them in spite of the ever-present sign reserving the right to refuse service to anyone. The city swimming pool, opened in 1950, had always been integrated and so were the movies. As one informant said, ‘Las Cruces is more cosmopolitan than most towns in southeastern New Mexico.’⁴

² Personal communication with Rep. J. Paul Taylor at his home (29 October 2020). The taped interview will be archived at the Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University (Las Cruces). Taylor celebrated his 101st birthday 24 August 2021.

³ Kilcrease, Della. “Blacks in Las Cruces – Sentiments of Black History Preserved,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, front page *Sun Life*, 23 February 1986.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

Discrimination Against Black Teachers

When the junior and senior high schools were desegregated, those Black teachers without tenure were dismissed. One Black teacher with tenure who had been in the system since 1943 was also dismissed. This teacher contested the decision of the administration, and in 1954 her case was still pending in the State Supreme Court. The superintendent had vouched for her at the hearings, stressing that she was morally fit, loyal to the administration, and capable of teaching subjects for which she had been trained at the high school level. She was the wife of a prominent minister and very active in civic affairs in Las Cruces. This teacher had indicated her willingness to accept another position in the school system if she did not have to sacrifice her tenure through doing so. She was offered a position in the cafeteria at approximately two-thirds of her former salary, provided she would resign and relinquish her seniority position on the teaching staff. This she refused to do.⁵

In a refrain that was clearly evident in several of the other study cities as well, the Black community members urged one another to proceed slowly, with patience and caution, during any efforts to affect change for the common good. Several informants confided in researchers Williams and Ryan that they felt that any resistance to desegregating the schools had “stemmed largely from the former superintendent” and that the school board and the community at large had few to no objections to integration. In pleading for patience, one influential African American put things this way: “Let the wood burn to coal, let the coal turn to charcoal, the charcoal cool to ash; then the groups in Las Cruces can get along together without stirring up trouble.”⁶

The “N” Word

The use of the “N” word in conversation and print was casual and commonplace throughout the 20th-century. An internet search using Newspaper Archives.com reveals some 2,181 usages of the word in print between 1 January 1899 and 31 December 1980 in the small digitized New Mexico newspapers collection alone. The word was used in conjunction with someone’s name, as the name of geographical or topographical features, to describe certain toys, in comic strips, in print fillers meant to be humorous, in articles reprinted from other States, in daily serials, and a myriad of other instances. Considering that many remember that hearing the word for the first time was often their first ugly brush with racism, it is difficult to understand the psychic toll its ubiquitous usage extracted. The following examples are included to provide a glimpse into the prevalence of the use of this particularly prejudicial word in print:

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

In the Spring of 1922, campus and city newspapers exhorted locals to come “ALL OUT FOR KOLLEGE KACTUS KARNIVAL (KKK) DAY!” while revealing that the Gamma Sigma Fraternity would be in charge of the “Drown the Nigger” concession stand.⁷ A newspaper article in 1939 warned those fishing in the Rio Grande river that currents and other hazards existed. “For those who ‘nigger fish’ from the bank,” warned the journalist, “and for those who fish the streams, other sources of danger present themselves.”⁸ Children playing were often heard to exclaim, the “... last one in is a nigger baby!”⁹ At the Doña Ana County Fair, attendees could “dance, throw confetti, buy peanuts and crackerjacks, stake your carnival dollar on the wheel, hit the nigger baby, and get a cigar.”¹⁰ Common sayings using the offensive word made it into print in order to make a particular point: “There is a big nigger in the taxation wood pile in Doña Ana county. It ought to be kicked over and the nigger run out.”¹¹ To a person, each interviewee involved in the current research reported how hurtful the term was to them personally. Often said in jest and without necessarily intending to harm or offend, the gradual dis-use of the vulgar term in print over time affirms its offensiveness.

Advertising

Classified advertisements routinely stipulated that job offers, housing, or items for sale were for “Anglos only.” Notices such as “Earn \$8 to \$12, four to six hours work, Anglos only” or “Housewives earn \$5 first two hours in own home – Anglos only” with Box numbers for respondents were routinely published through the 1950s.¹²

Anti-Discrimination Ordinance Defeated

In 1962, a measure forbidding discrimination in Las Cruces hotels, motels, restaurants and theaters was defeated in a 2-2 tie vote by the City Commission. Dissenting commissioners explained that there had not been “any discrimination problem in the past” and that passing the ordinance would only “stir up unnecessary trouble.”¹³

Criminal Justice Las Cruces

The tense interplay between politics, crime, and racism is encapsulated in one of New Mexico’s most infamous unresolved murders. Ovida “Cricket” Coogler disappeared after leaving the downtown Las Cruces café where she worked on 31 March 1949. Her battered and

⁷ “Concessions Lined up for Carnival,” *Rio Grande Republic*, 4 May 1922, p. 3.

⁸ “She Loved Him Charles M. Cree—” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 9 June 1939, p. 2.

⁹ Thomas, Alice. “Desk Gossip,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 5 June 1942, p. 2.

¹⁰ “County Fair is in Full Swing – Exhibits All in Place and Large Crowds Take in the Many Sights,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 23 September 1920, p. 1.

¹¹ “Editorials by Republican Readers,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 11 February 1913, p. 12.

¹² *Las Cruces Sun News*, 18 September 1950, p. 7.

¹³ “Anti-Discrimination Ordinance Defeated,” *Albuquerque Tribune*, 10 July 1962, p. 20.

decomposing body was found in a shallow grave more than two weeks later by some young rabbit hunters in the desert north of Las Cruces.

According to family members, she was very spirited, somewhat of a loner, generous, and a tomboy always up for adventure. She apparently had quite a few influential friends ranging from Doña Ana County Sheriff “Happy” Apodaca to some prominent members of the state Democratic Party. Some have suggested that the 19-year-old Coogler was a prostitute, but others dispute that characterization. Her rape and murder remain unsolved.

The story implicates not only state politics, but also the torture of a Black friend of Coogler’s named Wesley Byrd. Sheriff Apodaca was ultimately convicted for the trauma he inflicted while attempting to wring a false confession out of Byrd. Pittsburgh Steelers running back Jerry Nuzum, originally from Clovis, NM was later tried for Cricket’s murder. Amidst NMSU student protests that Nuzum was being railroaded, a judge threw the case out after four days, concluding there was insufficient evidence. In 2009, Las Cruces author Paula Moore published *Cricket in the Web*.

Eight years after her death, the Albuquerque branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) publicly opposed the reinstatement of former Doña Ana County Sheriff A. L. (Happy) Apodaca, despite a petition signed by Doña Ana County residents requesting Apodaca’s return to duty. He was removed as sheriff for malfeasance of office and served a year in prison for violation of the 14th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. The charge arose after Wesley Byrd related how he was tortured in order to falsely admit guilt in the murder. “The memory of his diabolical torture of a prisoner held in trust, to force a confession, is still fresh with us,” the NAACP resolution stated. “We do not feel that such a person should ever again be entrusted with law enforcement in our state.” Against their wishes, and after a Grand Jury convened in Silver City ended in a hung jury and a mistrial, Apodaca was reinstated with the State Police Department. He died of an apparent heart attack in 1981 at age 69. While friends and family maintained his innocence, others believe that at the very least he knew what happened to ‘Cricket’ the night she was killed, and that he was never properly punished for Byrd’s brutal treatment.¹⁴

Minstrel Shows

The *Rio Grande Republican* in 1909 reviewed the “Nigger Minstrel,” produced by boys with the Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA) as being “a howling success in nearly every respect.” Hadley Hall on the NMSU campus was filled with people from the College and nearby Mesilla Park. “The jokes were good, the music excellent, especially the Washington Pie quartet, and the

¹⁴ Available on-line at the lascrucesbulletin.com/stories/memories-of-murder-cricket-mystery-still-lives-3431; “NAACP Opposes Reinstatement of A. L. Apodaca,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 20 June 1957, p. 14; on-line obituary, “Happy” Apodaca.

stunts were above average.”¹⁵ The same newspaper, 14 years later, reviewed another blackface minstrel show by exclaiming:

Guy Machen was a perfect Sambo with his recitations, given in dialect with a piano accompaniment... [he] brought down the house. Guy was the blackest nigger Mesilla Park has ever seen.¹⁶

In addition to decades of regular appearances of the “Nigger Minstrel,” and the “Coonville Hoboes,” another blackface presentation called the “Hoodooos” was presented by the Senior Class of Las Cruces High School at the Armory on 28 April 1922. “What is the Hoodoo?” asked the journalist rhetorically, “Come and see for yourself. It has number without end of comical situations, even the nigger cook, Aunt Paradise, coming in for her share.”¹⁷

Campus Life and Racism at New Mexico State University Las Cruces

New Mexico was still a territory when Las Cruces College opened the doors of its two-room building in the fall of 1888. The organizers of Las Cruces College were led by Hiram Hadley, a respected educator from Indiana. The following year, the territorial legislature authorized the creation of an agricultural college and experiment station to serve as New Mexico’s land-grant college under the Morrill Act.

Named the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (N.M.A. & M.A.), this institution and Las Cruces College merged, opening its doors on 21 January 1890. The first semester hosted 35 students and six faculty members. By 1960, the name was changed by a state constitutional amendment to New Mexico State University (NMSU). Today, NMSU encompasses more than 900 acres and in the Fall of 2017 enrolled 24,580 students with a faculty-to-student ratio of about 1 to 16.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the New Mexico State University campus has a long history of discrimination against minorities in general and Blacks in particular. The Greek system routinely relied upon “non-Caucasian” clauses that disallowed people of color from joining fraternities and sororities. Hadley Hall routinely advertised their “Nigger Minstrels” as fundraisers. Robert Goddard -- who among other claims to fame ran the campus radio -- was an outspoken segregationist. The following brief newspaper selections over a period of some fifty years depict the daily prejudices that existed on campus.

At the same time, they show an appreciation for visiting African American artists and lecturers. The juxtaposition between the minstrel mockeries, the racist chants of the sports crowds, the

¹⁵ “Neighborhood News,” *Rio Grande Republican*, 23 April 1909, p. 6.

¹⁶ Source: “Mesilla Park and State College Notes,” *Rio Grande Farmer*, 24 May 1923, p. 3.

¹⁷ “Their Minstrel A Great Success – Saturday Night the ‘Coonville Hoboes’ Played at College, Saturday, at Las Cruces,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 23 April 1909, p. 1; “The Hoodoo,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 27 April 1922, p. 4.

reverance for star Black athletes, and the well-attended African American artistic endeavors illustrate the long-term tensions and struggles between raw racism and the opposite desire of many others for multi-ethnic appreciation and equality.

Student Newspapers

Since 1893, the student-run newspaper, *The Round-Up*, and its predecessor, the *New Mexico Collegian*, were billed as the “The Voice of the Student Body.” The paper is published weekly during the academic year.

The 1919 sophomore class, for their Spring performance selection, staged a short sketch called “The 13th Squad.” The squad was composed of “eight members of the class made up as negro recruits.” The entertainment was deemed “very comical throughout,” and reportedly “brought forth much applause.” The skit began with loud snoring, and “several pairs of No. 10s” sticking out of the end of a small pup tent. Reveille was blown and after much “bawling out” by the hard-boiled sergeant, “the ‘nigger’ rookies came piling out of the tent.” After a short drill, in which “every form of ignorance was displayed by the rookies,” the ‘innoculation’ of the crowd was accomplished by using a large injector in the form of an automobile grease gun.¹⁸

A performance earlier that same month featured an all-White cast. When the curtain arose for the second part of the program, the audience was treated to a “genuine surprise.” Seated on the stage “and looking like professionals in every way was a troupe of negro minstrels.” The costumes worn were a big hit: “From the old negro mammy to the little pickaninny,” wrote the reviewer, “every kind of minstrel character imaginable was represented.”¹⁹

It was surely no accident that the annual campus extravaganza’s acronym mirrored the vigilante terrorist group known as the “K. K. K.” although any explanation for the moniker is not known. The fourth annual “Kollege Kactus Karnival” of the New Mexico A. & M. was headlined on page one of the campus newspaper each year, with the 1923 rendition praised for being “filled with amusements of every kind and description,” and for providing a model for “future years.” A perennial favorite sponsored by the Gamma Sigma Fraternity called for all fun seekers to try the “African Dip,” a variation on the “N” word dunk previously described. Those who were fortunate enough to hit the target were rewarded by “seeing the negro performer take a forced plunge into the tank.”²⁰

¹⁸ “Sophs Entertain with 13th Squad – ‘Colored’ Squad, Under Command of Captain Provide Much Amusement, Bunch is [Duly] ‘Innoculated,’” *State College Round-Up*, 20 May 1919 p. 1.

¹⁹ “Commercial Number on Student Lyceum is Great Success – Minstrel Show Proves Big Hit with Student Body. Costumes Are of Latest “Creation.” Spanish Music Also Part of Program,” *State College, The Round-Up*, 6 May 1919.

²⁰ “Annual K. K. K. Day Great Success – Parade, Concessions, Pageant, Ball Game and Dance All Make Up Fourth Annual Kollege Kactus Karniva,” *NM A. & M. Round – Up*, 15 May 1923, p. 1.

The following reprint from a Lawrence, Kansas campus newspaper is representative of the steady barrage of derogatory and discriminatory *Round-Up* news blurbs and column fillers:

We note that as the result of a lecture at Purdue University, favoring racial equality with the negro, three negroes on the campus were invited to a fraternity dance. That might be the right thing to do at Purdue University, but we are rather proud of the fact that three negroes who came to this [Lawrence, Kansas] campus to enroll last fall stayed only five or six days.²¹

Although outright intimidation or removals did not necessarily take place on the New Mexico campus, incidents elsewhere were given ample newsprint in the student paper throughout the decades.

In 1937, *Round-Up* journalist Johnny Gaines recounted with dismay the treatment of a visiting Black football player:

Playing end for the Tempe [AZ] team last Wednesday was a negro. This negro happened to be an excellent athlete, and he played his position well. Slurring remarks, both from students and down-town supporters, too vile to print, could be heard all over the stands, and they were directed at this particular player.

The article concluded with, we “should remember that had it not been for two negro boys, the United States would not have fared nearly so well in the Olympics, which may be considered the *ultra-ultra* in sports circles.”²²

It was not uncommon for *Round-Up* readers to be buffeted by articles brushed with bigotry, situated alongside advertisements for upcoming events featuring world-renowned artists of color:

Carol Brice, contralto, will appear as the next guest artist for the Lyceum program series at New Mexico A&M... Edward Tatnell Canby, writing for the *Saturday Review*, said that she ‘may well be the greatest Negro voice.’

In 1944 she was the first of her race to win the coveted Naumberg Award, and has since appeared as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic Symphony, the Kansas City Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony and other great orchestras, as well as appearing on her own radio show on a major network.²³

²¹ “Exchanges,” Associated Press reprint, in *The Round-Up*, 1930, p. 4.

²² “Campus Commentary by Johnny Gaines,” NM State College *Round-Up*, 1 December 1937, p. 1.

²³ “Negro Contralto on Lyceum Program,” *The Round-Up*, 10 December 1947, p. 4.

Reviews of this and other performances indicate that these events were well-attended by diverse audiences.

Whereas some of the articles and inane column fillers often veered into prejudicial language, the editorials for the most part seemed empathetic toward unity and tolerance. “The colored people, the Jews, and the Japs” aren’t the only people who suffer from racial strife, wrote *The Round-Up* editor Ted Root in 1946. “Right here at home, on our A&M campus, race segregation is practiced and even encouraged” rued Root. “The Spanish-American people and the few colored students are the goats in our case.” Citing one particular instance of latent discrimination, the editor pointed out that the by-laws and constitutions of the fraternities no longer excluded Latinx and African Americans from membership, “but the members themselves do – by their foolish prejudices.” A good friend of the newspaper staff, a Hispano, was dating an Anglo classmate. Root wrote that when a “bid from a sorority was given her, it contained an ‘if clause -- which was, ‘if you stop going with the boy you are going with, then --’” The editor disclosed that she did not join the sorority.²⁴

In 1947, one of the *Round-Up* editors congratulated Alfredo Abrego of the Texas College of Mines for his “fine article on racial discrimination recently published in the Mines’ Prospector.” The article was occasioned by the fact that, according to the *Round-Up*, “the Tempe [AZ] team left their Negro ball-player home when they came to El Paso, ostensibly because such things (i.e., Negro participation with Whites in athletic events) just aren’t done in Texas.”²⁵

A few years earlier, at the height of World War II in 1943, a different *Round-Up* editor posed a lengthy and heartfelt rebuke to those who would discriminate on the basis of skin color:

We stood at the printing company window yesterday afternoon and watched a short parade, composing a band of Negro soldier-musicians, army trucks exhibiting huge spotlights, anti-aircraft can[n]on and carterpillar army tank. The band and the army equipment came from Fort Bliss.

And afterward – at about supper-time – we watched the Negro band members group in front of a café across the street. They stood there aimlessly talking for a few moments. They looked through the windows. They seemed to hesitate. Two of them went in and came out again. Then the group went quietly down the street.

It would be not only trite but beside the point to comment on the patriotism of people who cannot eat in the same room with Negro

²⁴ “Dynamite...?” State College *The Round Up*, 28 June 1946, p. 2.

²⁵ “Stray Splinters from the Editor’s Desk,” NMSU *Round-Up*, 12 November 1947.

soldiers who, like their own brothers, sweethearts and husbands, are wearing uniforms.

For it doesn't matter that these black men are serving their country just as white men are. Argument for tolerance on that ground would be argument for a resurgence of intolerance after the war, when Negroes are no longer "giving their lives." And there is nothing else to say that hasn't been said – and ignored—thousands of times.

It is unfair to deny a man a chance because he was born with a skin of a different color from yours... But many people – the upright and honorable – are often unfair.²⁶

Black students were asked to take on the role of diplomacy at the same time they faced daily discrimination themselves. New Mexico A&M graduate student William Marshall, for example, was invited to speak to a social psychology class to "give a new slant on the old question of prejudice." *The Round-Up* editor recounted that Marshall's presentation, "brought back to all of us the situation of racial prejudice as it exists everywhere, being rampant in our schools, businesses, fraternity life and in our churches."²⁷

Continued the author:

We, having been exposed to facts which should lead us to intelligent action, set the pattern for living in America whether we like it or not. You will find, in practically every case, that those who are most rabidly prejudiced are the ones possessed of the least knowledge.²⁸

In a moving testimony to the success of Marshall's presentation, the editor concluded by observing that, "if anyone went into the social psychology class with prejudice dormant in his breast, we are certain there could be none there now."²⁹

Clara Belle Williams was NMSU's first Black graduate in 1938. "Some faculty members didn't want to speak to negroes," Williams said during a telephone interview in 1978. Three teachers decided to teach the Black enrollees in their classrooms. "Our classes were on the third floor of the English building,"³⁰ she recalled. She was forced by at least one teacher, unwilling to accommodate her inside the classroom, to take notes from the hallway. With no hallway seating, she stood to take her notes. Upon her graduation, students boycotted the

²⁶ "Editorial – We Need Tolerance," *State College New Mexico Round-Up*, 22 October 1943, p. 2.

²⁷ "Stray Splinters from the Editor's Desk," *The Round-Up*, 19 January 1949, p. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ "First Black Graduate Tells Story," *Round-Up* (February 1978), p. 1.

commencement ceremony.³¹ “They didn’t want to have a commencement because some of the students didn’t want to walk with a negro,” Williams recalled. “There were only 13 of us anyway, and they just passed our diplomas through the window.”³² Recollecting the discrimination, Williams said, “I didn’t pay them any attention, I just studied and got good grades.”³³ Sixty-seven years after her graduation, the English building was renamed Clara Belle Williams Hall in her honor.

She returned to teaching after earning her degree at age 52. Williams worked with J. Paul Taylor – who was employed by the University in the registrar’s office after returning from WWII military service – to find housing for African American students, who were not allowed to stay in the campus dorms.

Taylor remembers that he reached out to Williams by telephone, admitting,

Mrs. Williams, I’m embarrassed, really, to talk with you about this, but we have Negroes who have enrolled and they have no place to stay. They should be enrolled in school, in college, and I’m sure they’ll do well if they have a place that’s friendly to them. I have to find a place for them, because they can’t stay in the dormitories.

“Now, Paul,” responded Clara Williams, “don’t you worry about me... let’s just be frank with one another.” After assuring Taylor, that she would “find a place for these students,” she concluded their first of many conversations by saying, “Let’s get one thing straight. I’m not embarrassed about this. I know the situation at the University.”³⁴ Williams ensured that the African American students were accommodated in welcoming neighborhood residences. Although the restrictions regarding campus housing were eventually lifted, subtle discrimination continued to persist. Without going into detail regarding the incidents themselves, two students were found guilty of violating two campus policies, and were punished accordingly. Although one of the students declined to comment, Phillip Morgan told a *Las Cruces Sun News* reporter in 1970 that Las Cruces was nothing but “a *Jim Crow* town,” with a “*Jim Crow* college.”³⁵

Ku Klux Klan Attempts to Recruit NM Masons

³¹ “NMSU Renames Building to Honor First Black Graduate,” *Santa Fe New Mexican* (14 February 2005), p. 2.

³² “First Black Graduate Tells Story,” *Round-Up* (February 1978), p. 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Personal communication with Rep. J. Paul Taylor at his home (29 October 2020). The taped interview will be archived at the Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University (Las Cruces).

³⁵ “After Suspension, Phillip Morgan Pins ‘Jim Crow’ Label on University, City” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 14 December 1970, p. 1. Emphasis added.

Although the full influence of the Ku Klux Klan within New Mexico remains to be fully understood, there is evidence that the KKK attempted to recruit Masons into their organization. The following excerpts were taken from a two-page letter from New Mexico's Grand Master of Masons, Francis E. Lester of Mesilla Park, that was printed in a 1921 issue of the *Rio Grande Republican*.

Grand Master Francis Lester began by stating that "definite evidence has come to my notice of solicitation among Masons and officers of Masonic lodges in this grand jurisdiction for membership in the organization known as the Ku Klux Klan." He vowed that it was his duty to address and communicate the evidence to all Masons within his purview.

In no uncertain terms, Lester declared that the Ku Klux Klan's known practices are "contrary to the principles of Masonry and of good government." Master Lester reminded his fellow Masons that not a single one of the nation's democratic principles is more vital than "the maintenance of law and order through our legally constituted authorities." In a direct reference to unlawful vigilantism including lynchings, Lester wrote:

Our system of government is opposed to the administration of punishment in disguise, and to the theory and practice of secret punishment or any similar form of tyranny. It guarantees to every citizen charged with an offense a fair hearing before punishment can be inflicted.

Lester called out "masked violence, mob rule, the setting up of any secret self-governing authority of law, or the substitution of the reign of the tar bucket for the reign of the law of the land" as being "absolutely un-Masonic and un-American."

He declared that any "body of men, any sect, any clan or any organization that seeks to independently arrogate to itself the functions of government and the enforcement of the laws of our country is unpatriotic and directly opposed to those principles of Masonry that we teach and practice."

New Mexico's Masonic Grand Master observed that a free government "is no better and no worse than what we make it," and concluded by challenging his followers to "actively function for good government."³⁶

One month later, Grand Master Lester promised in print that the Ku Klux Klan would "never gain a foothold in this state." Without sharing any details, Lester declared that "their well-laid plans to establish stamping grounds in this part of the Southwest were squelched in the making," he said, and as a result "the organizers have disappeared from the scenes of their former activities." The *Rio Grande Republican* reported that "100 per cent of the subordinate lodges of the Masonic Order in this state ... upheld Mr. Lester in his denunciation of the Ku Klux

³⁶ "Masonic Grand Master Condemns K. K. K., F. E. Lester Points Out Fallacies of Klan Creed as Un-American," *Rio Grande Republican*, 20 October 1921, p. 1.

Klan.” According to the same article, Mr. Lester received letters from officials of Masonic lodges in practically every state in the Union, “commending him for his courage and forethought in issuing this timely warning.”³⁷

Some 20 years later, in 1948, it appears that the Klan had not entirely given up its recruiting efforts. In an announcement prominently positioned on the front page just below the headline, the *Las Cruces Sun News* proclaimed that the public was invited to a big ceremony of the Ku Klux Klan in Macon, Georgia. Citing leaflets announcing the ceremony, the short article stated that “the public is invited to attend and to find out for themselves exactly the ideals and principles for which the Klan stands.”³⁸

In Albuquerque, a 1949 showing of the film *Birth of a Nation* was protested because “it glorifies the Ku Klux Klan and hurts the Negro.”³⁹ The Rev. J. W. Ford, Black minister of the Methodist church, said picketing was ordered after the Chief Theatre rejected a request not to show the movie. A committee made up of University of New Mexico students and others formed to protest the showing.

Housing Contractors

Important facts come to light in unexpected ways. Systemic racism within the Las Cruces construction industry, for example, was confirmed during a funeral address on behalf of a local building contractor. Mr. C. B. Smith, an Hispano contractor in town, was honored during a funeral tribute for standing against racism. Sam Bone, NAACP State Director, stated that during the late 1950s, Smith was the first builder who would build “homes for Black families.”⁴⁰

Alliances and Organizations Las Cruces

Better Citizenship League of Colored People

A 13 September 1934 newspaper notice announced an organizational meeting to form the Better Citizenship League of Colored People of Doña Ana County, to be held that Sunday at the Baptist church on Hadley and St. Peter streets. “All colored people of Doña Ana County” were requested to attend.¹

³⁷ “K. K. K. Will Not Organize Here,” *Rio Grande Republican*, 10 November 1921, p. 1.

³⁸ “Public is Invited to Big Ceremony of Ku Klux Klan,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 10 December 1948, p. 1.

³⁹ “Showing of Film ‘Birth of Nation,’” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 6 July 1949, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Smith, Josephine. “Four Generations of Community Service: An Hispanic Family Named Smith.” *Doña Ana Historical Society*, Volume IV, Number 1 (January 1997), p. 63.

¹ “Negroes to Form League on Sunday,” *Las Cruces Daily News*, 13 September 1934, p. 21.

Peace Parade

“Twenty organizations,” including Legionnaires, the high school band and pep squad, “followed by junior high school girls, Loretto Academy girls, Holy Cross pupils, colored people, Scouts and Cubs, Legion members Legion Auxiliary members, and Catholic Daughters of America” formed the largest parade of to date through downtown Las Cruces. The Peace Parade also included “the Aggies band and pep club, ROTC members, enrollees with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp BR 39N and the NM State Guard.”²

Photograph: Woodmen of the World Children

Source: “Black and White Image of Elementary School Class. Students Dressed in Capes and Berets and Holding Instruments. School in Background. Bordered. Possibly Woodmen of the World Children’s Band,” Las Cruces Museum System Online Collections, Object ID 94.2.93 (c1940s).

Q. Was the Las Cruces chapter of the Woodmen of the World fraternal order discriminatory?

² “Can’t Guarantee Freedom, Peace Crowd is Told,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 11 November 1941, p. 1.

Scouting

In the early 1920s, in a proposition endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce, each of the Las Cruces churches was asked to form at least one troop of Boy Scouts, citing the good effects that the movement exerts in communities. A local newspaper reported that “districts having strong scout councils report far less trouble from juvenile vandalism and lawlessness.” Not only are “the boys of the town taught to respect property and authority,” continued the article, “but their energies are directed into wholesome, constructive channels and they have neither the time nor inclination to make mischief.”³ The involvement of all of the town’s churches implies that Scouting was at this time non-discriminatory.

Ministerial Alliance

According to researchers Williams and Ryan, one of the most active agencies in human relations in Las Cruces was the Ministerial Alliance “which makes a practice of including a Negro minister in its Good Friday and Easter services.” As of 1954, the United Council of Church Women was also bi-racial. They noted that a chapter of the NAACP with about seventy members had been conducting a membership drive “but had not been engaged in a particularly active program recently.”⁴

4-H Club

Apparently the 4-H Club was one of the few national organizations that welcomed minorities. In 1966, Ms. Paul Zickeroose, assisted by Ms. Ross Carroll provided leadership, and the club was sponsored by the First United Presbyterian Church. “The membership... is open to all races and creeds with ages ranging from 10 to 17 years.”⁵

NAACP

In 1957, the state NAACP called for penalties to be associated with violations regarding discrimination in public places. Las Cruces was selected to host the statewide NAACP convention the following year. In 1986, Las Cruces was one of 12 branches in the state, including Albuquerque, Northwest Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Farmington, Gallup, Clovis, Roswell, Hobbs, Carlsbad, Alamogordo and Lovington. There was also a college chapter at NMSU and youth chapters in Albuquerque and Las Cruces. Although the NAACP has been active in the

³ “Las Cruces Boys at Scout Camp – Troops A and B of Las Cruces and Mesilla Park Enjoy Outing at Dripping Springs,” *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 29 June 1922, p. 1.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁵ “Peace Corps Presented Sketch of Four-H Work,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 22 December 1966, p. 8.

state since 1914 (Albuquerque), it was not recognized as a formal organization until 1951. In 1986, the NAACP president Alfred J. Rucks said that he hoped one day there would be no need to have such an organization. "We are trying to put ourselves out of business," said Rucks. At that time, the NM NAACP concerned itself with national patterns regarding "economics, regression, and the downward trend of Black college graduation."⁶

Communism

Although additional research is warranted, there is evidence to suggest that members of the Communist Party tried to influence the Black community. Several references suggest that African Americans were being lured into the Communist Party, a charge their leaders denied. Whether this influence was real or fabricated, H. B. Wright felt compelled to reassure those who believed the rumor. In a Letter to the Editor written in 1950, he responded to a previous letter published in the newspaper:

Someone recited an experience in the movie theatre here in which someone made a remark about colored people. This remark (if it was actually made) would certainly tend to incite hard feelings among the colored people... The author had to put it in a column and scatter it far and wide where it would do maximum damage. The most reliable and solid leaders of the Colored people and their organizations have warned repeatedly that the communists were trying to incite them in every cunning way they could do so. This strategy is to make them believe that the white people are their enemy and the leaders of the colored people know this and are doing all they can to counteract it! The Colored people of this community have the good sense to know and recognize any attempt of the communists to influence others.

(Signed) H. B. Wright.⁷

Desegregation Las Cruces

The NAACP in 1954 circulated petitions in communities where no program of desegregation had been announced. Those cities were Roswell, Carlsbad, and Las Cruces.¹ Researchers Williams and Ryan provided the following summary of circumstances regarding the Las Cruces school system as they found it in 1954:

⁶ "NAACP Votes to Hold its 1958 State Convention in Las Cruces," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 15 October 1957, p. 7; Kilcrease, Della. "NAACP State Official Says Priority is Helping Masses of Black People," *Las Cruces Sun News*, front page *Sun Life*, 23 February 1986.

⁷ "Private Opinion – Letter to the Editor," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 8 March 1950, p. 4.

¹ A prepared statement by Hubert LaGrone, president of the state chapter of the NAACP, quoted in, "Clovis Making Sincere Effort, Negroes Believe," *Clovis News Journal*, 5 August 1954, p. 1.

In spite of the generally tolerant attitude of its citizens, the schools in Las Cruces remained segregated until the fall of 1953 when the junior and senior high schools were combined at the schools which were formerly for Whites. The first classes included about twenty-two Negro youth in these schools. The Negro elementary pupils remained at Washington School in a segregated situation even though the district included both Anglo- and Spanish-American families. Washington School was one of the least well-equipped schools in the system. The Las Cruces system was consolidated in the spring of 1954. The system then included eight elementary schools, one junior and one senior high school, with about 5,000 students.²

When the Black students went to the integrated high school for the first time, it was generally believed that the Black boys would have an easier time adjusting to the new situation than would the girls, "because they had participated in bi-racial sports meets in the past." One high school teacher, who admitted that "she had thought the Negroes would have a hard time," said that "everyone in the school administration was surprised at how well the Negro students fit in." The junior class elected a Black boy as president within a few weeks of the opening of school. It was the opinion of the school officials that the class had done this to make their classmates feel at home, for they had not known the student except as an athlete. He was also well liked by his classmates. Time and again, researchers Williams and Ryan were told by interviewees that "if the parents would just stay out of it, the students would get along very well together."³

² Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

Civil Rights NM/Las Cruces

'The Square Deal' in Politics

In 1922, Mr. A. R. Smith, editor and publisher of *The Phoenix Tribune* wrote the following letter to the editor of the *Southwest Review* regarding New Mexico's upcoming gubernatorial election:

Permit me to say a word about the candidate for Governor on the Republican ticket. Dr. Charles Lee Hill, who is the Republican nominee for Governor in your state, is to me well known. He came with his wife and two daughters to Albuquerque, from Wheeling, W. Va. in 1904. For several years I was employed in his home and I can truthfully say his home life was ideal. Dr. Hill is a man of even temper and wonderful executive ability. In business and professional life he made a wonderful success.

The colored people of New Mexico will do well to line up solidly and support Dr. C. L. Hill in the coming election. His attitude toward our people is friendly, and he believes in the doctrine of the Square Deal. As editor of the *Southwest Review*, Mr. Henry, you can render no better service to your constituency than to urge upon them the necessity of supporting a clean, big-hearted Christian man such as Dr. Charles Lee Hill, for Governor of New Mexico. Thanking you for the privilege of bringing this matter to your attention, and with assurances of high esteem, I am, Cordially and sincerely yours."¹

The post–World War I depression made 1922 a bad year for Republicans, whose president occupied the White House. Hill lost to Democrat James Hinkle.

Racial tensions, never extreme, did occasionally bubble to the surface well into the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1967, a group of interested and concerned members of the Black community led by two ministers rejected circulating rumors of an impending local riot or some other type of disturbance to protest perceived inequalities. Rev. B. J. Choice and Rev. C. S. Star of the Second Baptist Church, and Rev. C. S. Starks of Phillips Chapel Methodist accordingly sent the following letter to Mayor T. J. Graham:

We have taken note in the last few days of rising tensions in our community. The news media have reported that rioting and disorder is planned in this community impliedly by Negroes. In the interest of

¹ "What an Editor Thinks of Republican Candidate for Governor," *Rio Grande Republican* 26 October 1922, p. 4.

maintaining order and good relations with all people in the City, we, Reverend Choice and Reverend Starks, and a group of interested and concerned Negro members of this community, wish to state to you and to the people of Las Cruces: that we have no knowledge of, or any intentions of starting a riot or any kind of disturbance in this community. We are aware of our problems. We need more job opportunities for our young people. We deplore the distrust and suspicion which has been brought upon us by these rumors. We request that you do everything within your power to dispel these rumors. We wish to commend you for the fine work which you have been doing to make this a great community.²

Commenting on the letter, Mayor Graham said, "I feel these people are sincere and honest in what they say. I have anticipated no trouble from our local citizens and I appreciate their attitude and this letter. All of this has been based on rumors and I am sure our people our not going to listen to anybody else coming in here to create trouble."³

Biographies Las Cruces

Biographies

Among others, research is currently underway for the following individuals: Albert N. Johnson (New Mexico's first Black mayor), the Boyer family, Cedric and Merdest Billingsley Bradford (store owners/activists), Clara Belle Drisdale Williams (NMSU's first Black graduate), Francis E. Lester, Grover Pettes family, James Williams (Tuskagee Airman), Jean Baptist Calutier (Mesilla church bell ringer), Leona Ford Washington, Thelma Joyce White, Richardson family, and Drusilla Elizabeth Tandy Nixon.

Tuskagee Airmen

"The idea of an entirely African American squadron in the Army Air Corps seemed far-fetched at a time when there were only a handful of black pilots in the entire country. However, Tuskegee Institute had operated a federally-funded training program for black pilots since 1939, so when just such a squadron was authorized by the War Department it was based there. Lieutenant Colonel Noel F. Parrish, the unit's third white commander, was directly responsible for ensuring the Tuskegee Airmen's many successes."

Source: "Freedom Just Around the Corner: Black America from Civil War to Civil Rights," in *Smithsonian*, available on-line at postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/freedom-just-around-the-corner.

² "Negroes Dispel Disturbance Rumors Here," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 3 August 1967, pp. 1-2.

³ Ibid.

“In celebration of the life and legacy of New Mexico’s own Tuskegee Airmen, James Flowers (Las Cruces), Dr. James Williams (Las Cruces), and John Allen (Rio Rancho) and the host of other Tuskegee Airmen who overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of World War II, paving the way for full integration of the U.S. military, the Office of African American Affairs, renowned artist Ben Hazard, Mayor Richard Berry and many contributors (listed below) joined together to erect a monument at the New Mexico Veteran’s Memorial in Albuquerque, NM. The monument is a lasting symbol and reminder of the sacrifices the airmen made, placing their lives on the line, for their country. Supporters of the monument are listed below.”

Source: “Freedom Just Around the Corner: Black America from Civil War to Civil Rights,” in *Smithsonian*, available on-line at postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/freedom-just-around-the-corner.

Grover Pettes

“An indigenous New Mexican born in NM in 1925. His father homesteaded 640 acres near Las Cruces, NM. On that land they developed three wells and started the Mesa Development Center, a private independent water company that serviced 300 customers.” (daughter Marilyn Hill).

Oral Histories

Clarence Fielder, Mabel Blackmon, Stella Ramzy Gipson.

Living Histories

NAACP Chapter President Bobbie Green, Delano Eugene Lewis, Rep. J. Paul Taylor.

SELECTED IMAGES LAS CRUCES, NM



Figure 151. Street scene Borderland Garage

African American man leaning on storefront wall, Borderland Garage, circa 1915

Source: Collection of the City of Las Cruces Museum System

Identifier: 81.1.38



**Another
Glorious
Fourth
!!!**

CELEBRATE AND LET THE CHILDREN CELEBRATE IN A WAY BEFITTING THE DAY

Complete assortment of Fireworks, Crackers, Candles, Sparklers, Nigger Chasers, Snakes-in-the-Grass, Colored Fire, Punk, Rockets, Bombs, Etc. Etc. Stock up this week.

***Our Soda Fountain Will Be Open
All Day on the Fourth***

A COOL PLACE--DELICIOUS DRINKS--PERFECT SERVICE

We serve the celebrated

Velvet Ice Cream

Order a brick for your 4th of July dinner

Las Cruces Drug Co.



Figure 152. Las Cruces Drug Co. advertisement, Fourth of July 1923

“Another Glorious Fourth !!!

... Complete assortment of Fireworks, Crackers, Candles, Sparklers, Nigger Chasers...”

Source: Advertisement. *Rio Grande Farmer*, 28 June 1923, p. 9.

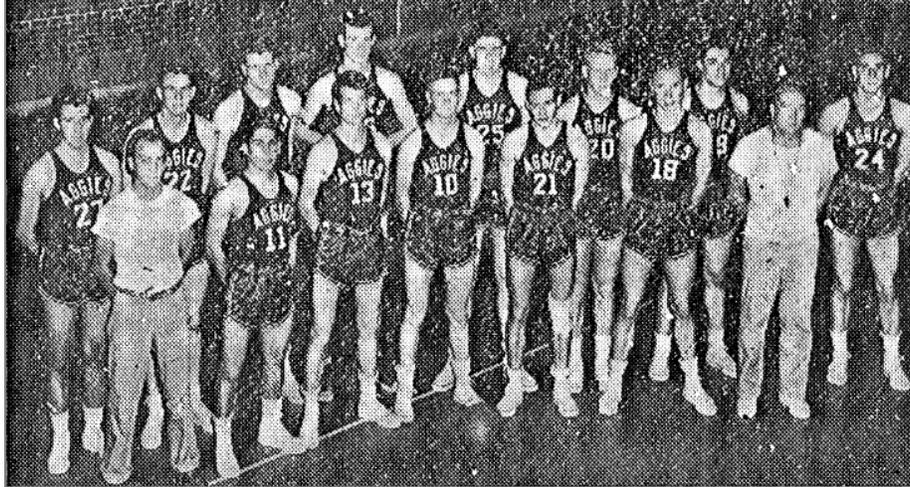


Figure 153. NMSU 1949-50 basketball squad

New Mexico Aggie 1949-50 Basketball Squad

Back row, l. to r. – Toribio Apodaca, guard; Bob Porter, forward; Roland Thomas, center; Allyn Donnelly, center; Bill Dunn, center; Charley Clement forward; Mike Svilar, center; Dick Apodaca, guard. Front row, l. to r. – Robert Digneo, manager; Raymond (Junior Apodaca), guard; Gene Wilder, forward; Jimmy Blevens, forward; Jimmy Crouch, guard; Vince Budenholzer, forward; George McCarty, coach. Source: *The Round-Up*, 8 February 1950, p. 6.

Just below the photo of the all-White 1949-50 New Mexico State College basketball squad, was a short piece advertising the world-renowned all-Black Harlem Globetrotters. Sponsored by the Lions Club of Las Cruces, “the Harlem Globetrotters, a clever Negro basketball team, will appear at Williams gym in a game with the Philadelphia Hebrews.”



Figure 154. Globetrotters 1950

Source: “Globetrotters to Play Philly Hebrews Here,” *The Round-Up*, 8 February 1950, p. 6. Photo source: On-line e-bay.com.



Figure 155. "Chow" New Mexico Nat'l Guard at Columbus

African American man serving/collecting food for New Mexico National Guard - 1916

Source: Collection of the City of Las Cruces Museum System

Identifier: 1.1.76

HISTORICAL PANELS ON THE HISTORY OF THE...
presence in cities and
communities through-
out the state.

1942 Graduating Class,
Booker T. Washington High
School From Las Cruces
exhibit, photo courtesy
Juanita Blackmon
Alexander



Figure 156. Graduating class, Booker T. Washington High School, Las Cruces (1942)

Source: Roswell Art Museum exhibit brochure.



Figure 157. Graduating seniors Phillips Chapel school

Graduating class segregated Phillips Chapel school (1950)

Source: Collection of the City of Las Cruces Museum System

Identifier: 2019.7.244.1

Lyceum Lilter



Figure 158. 'Negro' contralto, Lyceum musical program

“Carol Brice, well-known Negro contralto, will be the feature attraction on the next Lyceum musical program.”

Source: Photo caption, *The Round-Up*, 10 December 1947, p. 4.



Figure 159. Congregation Phillips Chapel

Congregation Phillips Chapel (1940)

Source: Collection of the City of Las Cruces Museum System

Identifier: 2019.7.244.2



Figure 160. Advertisement Mesilla Dam Amusement Park (1922)

“THE RIVER GETS THE N***** WHEN YOU HIT THE TRIGGER. Shooting Gallery – N*****-Baby Throwing”

Source: Advertisement. *Las Cruces Rio Grande Republican*, 29 June 1922, p. 4.

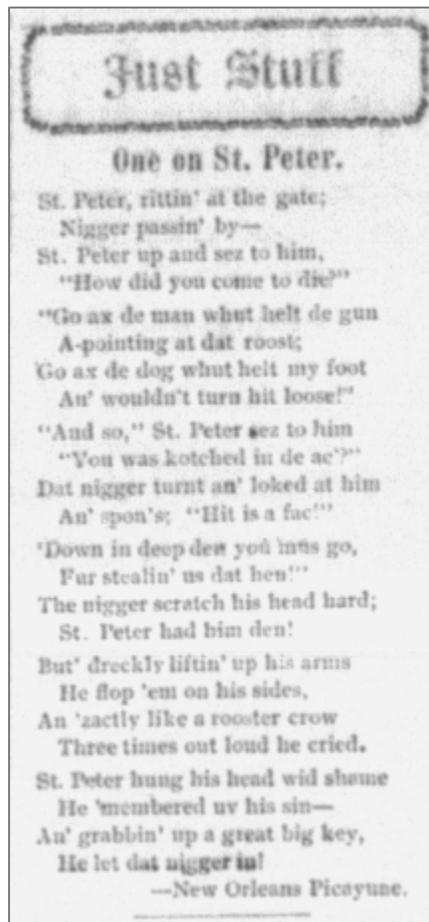


Figure 161. 'Just Stuff' newspaper column

"Just Stuff" regularly reprinted in the local newspaper.

Source: "St. Peter sittin' at the gate; N***** passin' by --," *Rio Grande Republic*, 20 April 1907, p. 2.

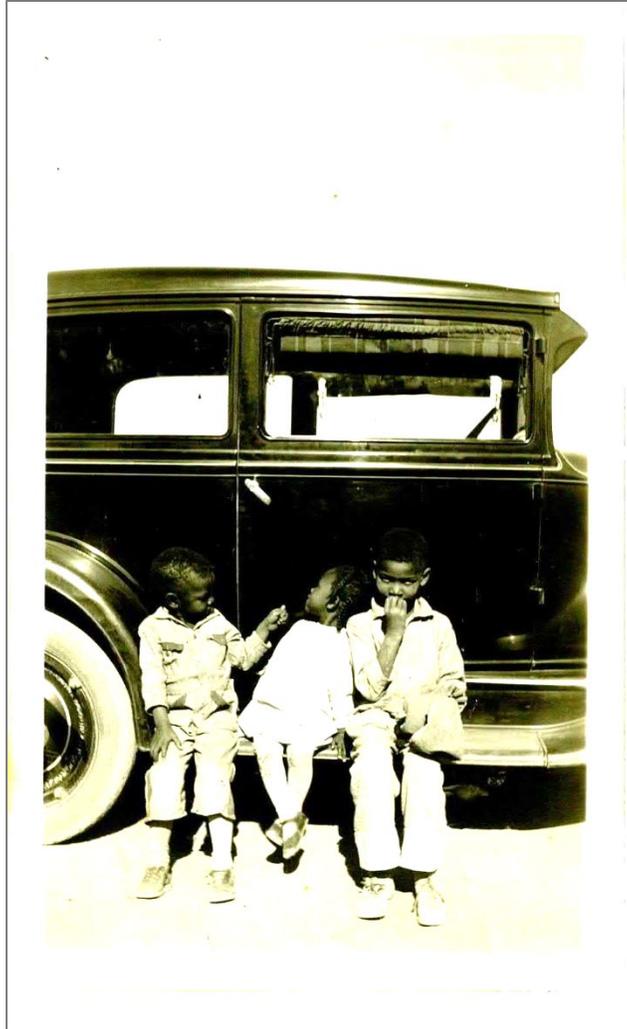


Figure 162. Clarence Fielder

Clarence Fielder, brother, and sister (1930s)

Source: Collection of the City of Las Cruces Museum System

Identifier: 2019.7.244.3



Phillips Chapel C.M.E. Sunday School Class, 1930. From Las Cruces exhibit, photo courtesy Mary Bishop

Figure 163. Phillips Chapel C. M. E. Sunday School Class, 1930

Source: Roswell Art Museum Exhibit brochure



Figure 164. Switchboard operators

“Mountain States Tel and Tele Co. 1929 Las Cruces NM Old No. 9 Switchboard”

Source: Las Cruces Museum System On-line Digital Collection Object ID #X2002.8.4.
Available on-line at Argus.net.

Many professional and clerical positions, such as switchboard operators,
were not open to Las Cruces African Americans

NEW MEXICO COLLEGIAN.

VOL. V.

LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO, OCTOBER, 1897.

No. 5.

Sketches on a Mississippi Steamboat.



"HOG FOOT,"

The Ugliest Roust-about Aboard.

(FROM A SNAP-SHOT BY THE AUTHOR.)

NOTE.—The following is the first of a short series of sketches written during a recent trip on a Mississippi steamer from St. Louis to New Orleans, and is published at the request of the editor. The sketches were written during the trip and are therefore open to criticism for any crudeness of style, as well as for any of those misstatements which sometimes occur when recording first impressions.

F. E. LEVYER.

THE NEGRO ROUST-ABOUT.—No. 1.

SO one who finds enjoyment in the study of human nature, there can be no more interesting or picturesque feature of a trip in a Mississippi river steamer than the negro roust-about. In this interesting character, a traveller from our Northern states sees an entirely different type of negro to that seen in his own country, and in place of the polite and efficient waiter, porter, or barber one finds a type of negro that for ignorance and general depravity may well rank as among the lowest class of our citizens.

The number of roustabouts carried on a Mississippi steambot varies with the amount of work to be done. We had about sixty on board. Their work consists chiefly of loading, unloading, and moving the freight, and your first sight of them will probably be as they are loading freight at a landing. You will notice at once that they are strong men. They will

pick up a barrel of flour and go shuffling across the "stage" with greater ease than you would carry the empty barrel. Five or six of them will easily carry a box of bacon weighing over six hundred pounds, and you may often see a roustabout carrying, half on his shoulder and half on his head, a sack of corn weighing nearly two hundred pounds.

The manner in which the roustabouts are treated and continually driven by their mates will strike you at first as cruel and no doubt arouse your sympathies. The treatment they receive is little, if any, better than that accorded to the average dog. They feel the heavy blow of the mate's stick on the slightest pretext, and seem to be cursed almost on sight. The first night out I saw one of our mates knock one of the negroes sprawling on the deck, with his fist. I expected to see the negro get up and at once precipitate a fight, but he meekly took his punishment and went about his work all the quicker for it. So it was in many similar cases; beaten, cursed, cuffed, bull-dozed,—all seemed to be expected by these unlucky negroes and was usually taken without a word in reply.

The mates on a Mississippi steambot are stern men. They have to be. Their principal duty is to oversee the roustabouts. The first qualification for the position they occupy seems to be a perfect command of the strongest English; and the second, an ability to wield the stick they always carry with force and precision. Let an unlucky negro be seen loitering in his work and he is greeted with such an outburst of fiery language that one involuntarily turns to the speaker with a feeling half of surprise and half of respect for so complete and unique a vocabulary. Irony, abuse, ribaldry, coarse jests and fierce threatenings, all find free expression. And should the negro come within reach of the mate's stick, it is brought down on his back with such a resounding whack as to leave a good impression beneath it.

And yet those who would seem to be in a position to judge will tell you that this severe

Figure 165. Mississippi sketches in NMSU's Round-Up newspaper

The *New Mexico Collegian*, precursor to the State College *The Round-Up*, featured a series chronicling a Mississippi "Negro" "Roust-about." The series was meant to be humorous and sympathetic to the plight of the Southern Black, but succeeded instead in perpetuating demeaning stereotypes and bigotry.

Source: "Sketc[h]es on a Mississippi Steamboat -- 'Hog-Foot,' The Ugliest Roust-about Aboard," Vol. V No. 5, October 1897, p. 1



Figure 166. "World's Greatest Negro Choir"

Source: "World's Greatest Negro Choir!" *Las Cruces Sun News*, 7 August 1947, p. 4. Tickets on Sale at Las Cruces Drug Co., Walgreen Drug Agency, Valley Drug Company, Baker Drug Company, Model Cleaners, and Dunlap's White House.

Q. Perhaps these businesses were non-discriminatory?

7—HELP WANTED	
EARN \$8. TO \$12. FOUR TO SIX hours work Anglos only . Box 45 % Sun-News. 140-6c-145	
STENOGRAPHER CLERK wanted for permanent position in Las Cruces. Experience nec- essary. Starting salary \$225 month. Address written applica- tion to Box 49 % Sun-News, Las Cruces, New Mexico. 145-tfn	
10—HELP WANTED Female	
HOUSEWIVES EARN \$5 FIRST 2 hours in own home, Anglos only . Box 46 % Sun-News. 140-6c-145	
MAID FOR GENERAL HOUSE- work, 920 N. Alameda. 145-2c-146	

Figure 167. "Help wanted Anglos only"

Source: *Las Cruces Sun News*, 18 September 1950, p. 7.

42 Help Wanted Salesmen

WANTED—Salesman to sell and deliver drug sundries and school supplies to retail stores in Santa Fe area. Must own car or panel. Bond required. **Anglos only.** Apply in person Mr. Glenn Thomason, El Fidel Hotel, 1-6 p. m. Sunday. 17p18

Figure 168. Wanted "Anglos only"

Source: *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 18 January 1941, p. 9.

WANTED maid for family of two, no washing. Private bedroom and bath furnished. Excellent wages. 2-6089. 3803 Mesa Verde Drive.

WAITRESS wanted. \$60 month plus meals. Uniforms furnished and laundered. Apply in person. **Anglos only** need apply. Airport Restaurant.

EXPERIENCED ladies' ready-to-wear saleslady with lengthy experience in selling better grade ready-to-wear. Apply Markus Store. 308 West Central.

Figure 169. "Anglos only need apply"

Source: *Albuquerque Journal*, 24 September 1943, p. 16.

ROOM, private home. Near capital. 355-J,	15u14
ROOMS—Anglos only, 137 E. De Vargas. 532-J.	14u27
ROOM, 636 Cerrillos Road.	4p3
ROOM, private bath. 1 or 2 men. 916-J.	2u1
LARGE sunny south room. Kitchen privileges. Mrs. Riddle, 229 Pal- ace Ave.	19u1f

Figure 170. "Rooms -- Anglos only"

Source: Santa Fe New Mexican, 24 January 1941, p. 11.

**11 For Rent--Apartments
Houses Furnished**

NICE modern four room house.
Anglos only. Inquire 863 Agua
Fria. 8-13

SMALL furnished apartment to per-
manent tenants; adults only. No
sick. Phone 541. 8-12

THREE rooms, electric refrigeration,
gas heat, 720 Acequia Madre. Call
L. F. Sheldon. 8-94

SMALL 5-room house, furnished.
Permanent tenants. References
exchanged. 587-J. 8-12

Figure 171. "Houses Furnished -- Anglos only"

Source: *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 10 August 1937, p.7.

30 Unfurnished Apartments
RESPONSIBLE couple only. Lowlands,
close in. Garage available. Phone 4158
between 8-9 p. m. Friday.
THREE room apt. unfurnished, modern.
Has gas range only. No pets, children,
or drinking. **Anglos only.** 823 Forrester.

Figure 172. "Unfurnished apartments Anglos only"

Source: *Albuquerque Journal*, 5 March 1948, p. 18.

Girls (31) 21-25, free to travel California, Washington and return with lady manager. Nationally known company. Expenses advanced. Transportation furnished. Average earnings \$175 per month. For information see Mr. Pennington, Alindar Hotel, 2:00 to 5:00 Wednesday through Friday. Curiosity seekers need not apply. **Anglos only.**

Figure 173. "Girls free to travel... Anglos only"

Source: *Las Cruces Sun News*, 5 December 1946, p. 5.

EXPERIENCED waitress. Also woman to assist with cooking. Also dish washer. **Anglos only.** Brown's Cafe. 2709 North Fourth Street.

MAN who understands plumbing repairs and all around house maintenance. Steady job, modern living accommodations available. Albuquerque and Cerrillos Coal Co., Madrid, N. M.

READY-TO-WEAR saleswoman. We will consider only a woman with considerable retail experience in sportswear, moderate priced dresses or better ready-to-wear. Salary plus commission and generous discount. Apply Personnel office.

Figure 174. "Experienced waitress... Brown's Café... Anglos only"

Source: *Albuquerque Journal*, 27 August 1947, p. 8.

BOYS—VETS—18 TO 24

Single, free to travel Miami and re-
turn, permanent position, expense ac-
count, transportation furnished, high
earnings, assist manager, leave im-
mediately. See Mr. Reynolds, Cole Ho-
tel, 10 a.m. to 12 a.m., 4 p.m. to 7
p.m. daily. No phone calls. **Anglos
only.**

**WE NEED BOYS FOR
PAPER ROUTES**

Figure 175. "Boys for paper routes... Anglos only"

Source: *Albuquerque Journal*, 14 December 1960, p. 33.

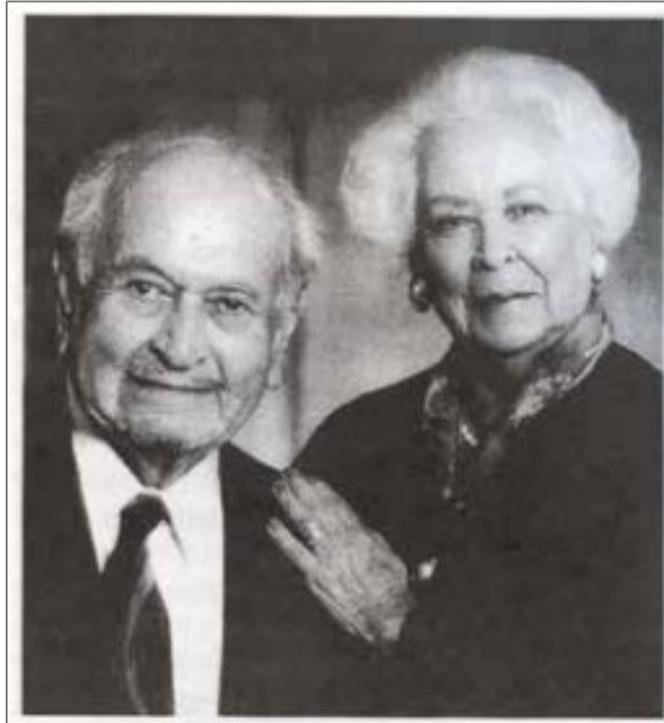


Figure 176. Josephine and C. B. Smith

Josephine and C. B. Smith, photographed on the occasion of their 60th wedding anniversary celebration, 8 October 1995. Sam Bone, State NAACP Director paid tribute to Smith for being the first contractor willing to build homes for Black families in the late 1950s.

Source: Smith, Josephine. "Four Generations of Community Service: An Hispanic Family Named Smith." *Doña Ana Historical Society*, Volume IV, Number 1 (January 1997), p. 63.

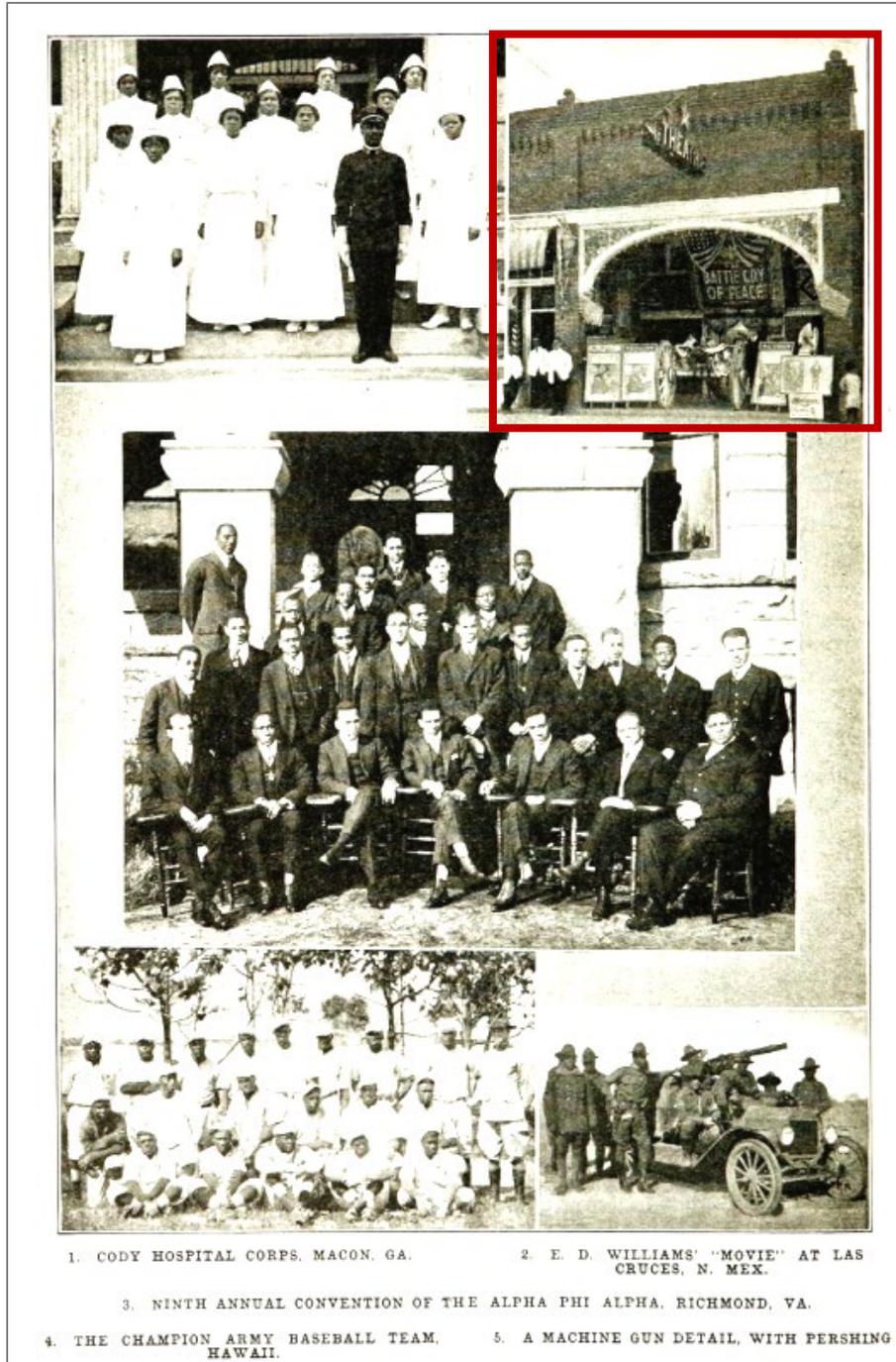


Figure 177. Random happenings featured in *The Crisis* magazine

(Upper right) "E. D. Williams' 'Movie' at Las Cruces, N. Mex."

Scenes highlighting the range of African American pursuits published in a national magazine.

Source: *The Crisis* magazine, Volume 13 Number 5 (March 1917), p. 232.

Venerated Places Black Communities Las Cruces

NAME	TYPE	LOCATION
Midway Dance Hall	Social center	Chamberino, NM
Apodaca Park	Juneteenth celebration site	Verify location
Latter Rain Harvest Fellowship	Church	401 N Main
Mt. Carmel Baptist Church	Church	955 S. Walnut Street
New Life Missionary Baptist	Church	6399 Payan Road
Phillips Chapel CME	Church	638 N. Tornillo
Seventh-Day Adventist	Church	1351 N. Tornillo
Greater St. John God in Christ	Church	1615 North Mesquite Street
Bethel Second Baptist	Church	405 East Hadley Street
The Armory	Social center	Verify location
Church of Christ	Church	1520 N. Mesquite St.
Historic Mesquite District	Black neighborhood	Boundaries to be provided
Mrs. R. Bennett House	Green Book safe haven	521 N. Church St.
Pullman Café	Employed Black residents?	Verify location
Clara Belle Drisdale Williams	Residence NMSU first grad	Verify location
Albert Johnson	Residence first Black mayor	Verify location
U-Tote-Em Grocery Store	Owned by activists Billingleys	Verify location
Valley Welding Service	Bill Anthony, sole blacksmith	Hadley St. and Church St.
Homesteads	Multiple Black Las Cruces	East of Las Cruces North I-70

Table 7. Venerated Places Black Communities Las Cruces

LAS CRUCES

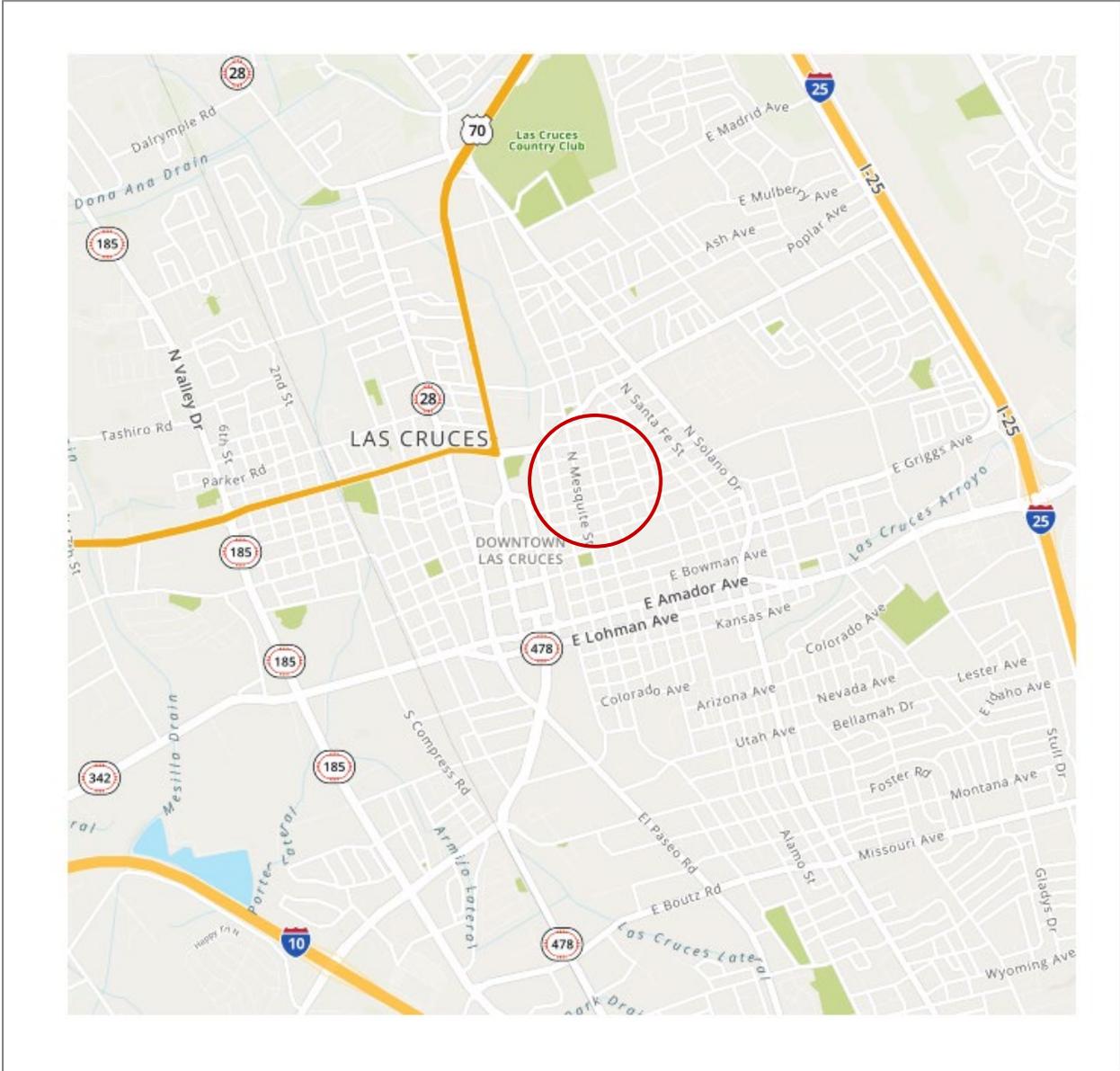


Figure 178. Map showing the location of the historically Black neighborhood in Las Cruces

Suggestions for Additional Research Las Cruces

How did the federal Homestead Act affect early African American settlement patterns in Las Cruces and elsewhere?

Who is buried at the Community Cemetery for African Americans, established during the 1940s?

What was the full impact of the 'Urban Renewal' effort that demolished half of the downtown Mesquite neighborhood during the 1960s?

Which pre-World War II businesses were Black-owned? Hired Blacks? Were discriminatory?

Did African Americans feel welcome at the Mesilla Dam Amusement Park?

Were Boy and Girl Scout troops in Las Cruces segregated?

What more is known about the "Midway" dances in nearby Chamberino?

What is the history of the "Associated Colored Churches"?

Were African Americans involved in the planning or by participating in the Las Cruces Centennial celebrated in 1949?

What was the reaction within the Black community to the daily newspaper serials set in the Deep South?

Were local Black residents involved in any way with the local CCC Camp G-178?

With the local German and Italian POW camps?

Are there any connections between the National Register sites and the Black experience? The WPA buildings?

How do historians and cultural anthropologists explain the popularity of minstrel and blackface shows with White audiences, and what was the reaction within the Black community?

It is known that the Ku Klux Klan attempted to recruit local Masons. Was there a local relationship between the two organizations?

What is the history of the "Better Citizenship League of Colored People of Doña Ana County"?

What relationships, if any, existed between the Communist Party and the local Black community in the decades before federal civil rights legislation was passed?

Which groups and individuals are credited with leading the local civil rights movement?

What more is known about C. B. Smith, the first contractor willing to build for Black families during the 1950s?

ROSWELL



Figure 179. Map of New Mexico highlighting the city of Roswell

ROSWELL

The City of Roswell is located along the western edge of the Llano Estacado at the fork of the Pecos and Hondo Rivers. Situated at an elevation of 3,649 feet, the landscape varies from flat to rolling hills, with the lowland stretching westward in gradual slopes to the Sacramento, Sierra Blanca and Capitan Mountains. Situated in the middle of a fertile irrigated plain, it capitalizes on its farms, ranching, a growing tourist industry, and the presence of the New Mexico Military Institute (NMMI). Between 1943 and 1967, the Roswell Air Airfield (later Walker Air Force Base) provided an important economic and cultural boon to the town.

Although the Spanish explorers Antonio de Espejo (1582) and Gaspar Castaño de Sosa (1590) traversed the Pecos Valley, very little history of the area was recorded until about 1866. That is when the first permanent residents, Hispanic farmers and sheep ranchers, began settling in what is now known as the “Chihuahuita” section of Roswell. The confluence of the Río Hondo and the Pecos rivers made an excellent resting and watering spot for cattlemen and their herds. Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving blazed the Goodnight-Loving Trail in 1866, and other Anglos from Texas soon followed. John Chisum settled in Roswell to become the “Cattle King of the Pecos.”¹

Roswell was established around 1870 when professional gambler Van C. Smith enlarged Patterson’s original trading post into a saloon/restaurant/casino/hotel and built a store nearby (now Fourth and Main Streets) to cater to the needs of drovers on the Goodnight-Loving Trail. In the spring of 1872, Smith began calling his place “Roswell” after his father. The Roswell Post Office opened in Smith’s store on 20 August 1873 and he became the first postmaster.² Named after New Mexico’s delegate to Congress, Jose Francisco Chaves, Chaves County was created in 1889. The town of Roswell was chosen as the County seat in 1890 with a population of 343. Roswell became an incorporated town the following year.³

Main Street was maintained as a wide thoroughfare, in order to steer large cattle herds through the middle of town. Ranchers, including John Chisum and Joseph Lea, established vast cattle ranches nearby. By 1902, sheep were also being raised in the vicinity. Cattle and sheep ranching dominated southeastern New Mexico until two significant events occurred in the 1890s. The first was the 1891 discovery of artesian water near Roswell. The second was the arrival of the Pecos Valley and Northeastern Railroad (later bought by the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe) in 1894.⁴

¹ Consensus Planning, Inc. and Souder Miller and Associates, *City of Roswell Comprehensive Master Plan* (2015).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. Note: “Artesian” denotes the presence of a well bored perpendicularly into water-bearing strata lying at an angle, so that natural pressure produces a constant supply of water with little or no pumping.

Roswell's climate brought the U. S. Army to the community in the 1940s to establish the Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF). After World War II, the RAAF became home to the world's only atomic warfare unit, the 509th Bomb Wing and the "Enola Gay" B-29 bomber. In January 1948, the RAAF became Walker Air Force Base, an important link in the Strategic Air Command (SAC). Roswell thrived while Walker Air Force Base was in operation. The population almost doubled between 1940 and 1950. By 1960, Roswell's population climbed to 39,593. Walker Air Force Base closed in 1967, which precipitated a sharp decrease in the City's population to 33,908 by 1970.⁵

Roswell has been actively promoting itself since at least 1903, when the Chamber of Commerce released a promotional brochure touting the city as "the Pearl of the Pecos." The Chamber of Commerce assured would-be settlers that there were no "savagely Indians" near Roswell, and also assuaged those potential residents leery of the desert by informing them that "early settlers planted trees *as all white men do in a new country*, and those trees are today the wonder of the whole arid Southwest."⁶ Although long-gone now, three hundred thousand apple trees were planted in 1896 alone.

In 1901, Roswell apples won the gold medal at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.⁷ Apple production peaked about the time of World War I, witnessed a marked decline ten years later, and was a thing of the past by 1935.⁸ Popular cowboy humorist Will Rogers famously proclaimed that Roswell was "the prettiest little town in the west."⁹ The valley had once indeed been a beautiful oasis with its thousands of apple and cottonwood trees. On 8 February 1933, the temperature fell to 24 degrees below zero. Thousands of cottonwoods split open, and bled to death when the sap began rising. In a matter of about seven years the once-beautiful upper Pecos Valley took on a less picturesque appearance as orchards and cottonwood groves yielded to cotton and other row crops.¹⁰

⁵ Consensus Planning, Inc. and Souder Miller and Associates, *City of Roswell Comprehensive Master Plan* (2015).

⁶ Roswell Chamber of Commerce, "The Pearl of the Pecos," (Roswell: Record Publishing Co., 1903), pp. 4 and 29. Emphasis added.

⁷ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. "The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History. The University of Mississippi," Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI) p. 99.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁹ Ricketts, Jeremy R. "Land of (Re) Enchantment: Tourism and Sacred Space at Roswell and Chimayo, New Mexico," *Journal of the Southwest*, Vol. 53. No. 2 (Summer 2011), pp. 239-261); Roswell Chamber of Commerce, "The Pearl of the Pecos," (Roswell: Record Publishing Co., 1903), pp. 4 and 29. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. "The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History. The University of Mississippi," Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI) p. 172.

Roswell hosted a Sunday School as early as 1886. The first churches were organized in the early 1890s. The First Christian Church was organized in the spring of 1892. The First Baptist Church was founded two years later. In 1899 the village received its first telephone, and it acquired a pumping engine to fight fires. The Roswell Woman's Club was established in 1895. Two years later, an attempt to start a circulating rental library failed. By 1900 some city residents enjoyed electric lighting. This was the same year that saw the first labor union, and the arrival of the Ringling Brothers Circus. The turn of the century also brought the first public high school.¹¹ In late 1880 a teacher was hired by private subscription, and a school was built three miles east of Main Street.¹²

According to Eugene Jackman's dissertation on the New Mexico Military Institute, the first physician reached Roswell in 1882. The first minister arrived a few years later. The first law office opened its door in 1882. A drug store was in operation by 1888, and that same year musically-minded citizens organized a band.¹³ The construction of the railroad at Carlsbad, some seventy-five miles to the south, the presence of the telegraph system, a newspaper, banks, a variety of businesses, and regular mail service inspired other early settlers to call Roswell home.¹⁴

The availability of reliable water and rail transport launched agriculture as a viable industry, and created a population explosion. Between 1890 and 1900 Roswell's population grew by 600%.¹⁵ In addition to the aforementioned apple orchards and cotton, vast fields of alfalfa, corn, and grain were also harvested. The New Mexico Military Institute was built in 1891. The agriculture- and commerce-based economy continued to grow until 1941. Most of the buildings in Roswell's Downtown Historic District were built during the 1885-1935 era. A May 1908 newspaper article noted that a "new negro Baptist church building on Kansas avenue" would receive its roof in just a few days.¹⁶ The railroad also made it possible for tuberculosis sufferers to reach New Mexico. The trickle of invalids that had started in the 1830s and 1840s became a flood after the railroad arrived. One Roswell physician remarked in 1910, that were it not for its reputation as a haven for lung patients, Roswell would have remained "only a cow-camp."¹⁷

The city rested much of its early reputation on its military base. In 1967 the air base closed, and a major oil company moved away. "Fifteen thousand people left town, taking one-half of

¹¹ Ibid., p. 99.

¹² Ibid., p. 30.

¹³ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. "The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History. The University of Mississippi," Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI) p. 22.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁵ Condie, Carol J. *Cultural Resources Investigations, East Second Street Project, Main Street to 1519 East Second Street, East of Atkinson Avenue, Roswell, Chaves County, New Mexico*. (Albuquerque: Quivira Research Center Publications 391, November 1999) p. 6.

¹⁶ "Classified Ads," *Roswell Daily Record*, 11 May 1908, p. 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Roswell's financial capital with them.”¹⁸ Innovative solutions to this jolt were found almost immediately and “Roswell recovered so rapidly that it was named an All-American City in 1979.”¹⁹

Today, the City of Roswell is the largest city in southeastern New Mexico, the fifth largest city in the state, and it continues to serve as the county seat for Chaves County. Home to nearly 50,000 people and located at the crossroads of U. S. Routes 70, 285, and 380, the City is a major hub of economic activity, growth, and tourism for the region.²⁰ It hosts a variety of diverse and distinguished institutions such as the New Mexico Military Institute, Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell, the International Law Enforcement Academy, Roswell International Air Center, Roswell UFO Museum, Roswell Artist-in-Residence Program, Roswell Museum and Art Center, Robert H. Goddard Planetarium, and the Anderson Museum of Contemporary Art.²¹ In July 1947, Lieutenant Walter Haut of the RAAF told the *Roswell Daily Record* that the Army had captured a UFO that had crashed on a ranch near Corona, 75 miles northwest of Roswell. Witnesses that saw the wreckage said that the strange debris was not of this world and claimed to see some little gray bodies. General Roger Ramey insisted that it was only a weather balloon. The federal government was not forthcoming about what later became known as the “Roswell Incident” offering explanations that did not satisfy UFO researchers. The International UFO Museum and Research Center opened in 1992 with a mission to learn the truth about the Roswell Incident. The UFO Museum has since become Roswell’s most popular tourist attraction.²²

Researchers Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan based the following demographic information upon their fieldwork conducted and published in 1954:

Between 1940 and 1950 the population increased 90 per cent, and it is now estimated at approximately 30,500, of whom over three-fourths are Anglo-American, only about 3,500 are Spanish-American, and less than 1,000 are Negro. The Negro population tends to be relatively stable, having increased less, proportionately, than the other two groups. Some of the increase in Negro population can be attributed to air force personnel living off the base.²³

¹⁸ Condie, Carol J. *Cultural Resources Investigations, East Second Street Project, Main Street to 1519 East Second Street, East of Atkinson Avenue, Roswell, Chaves County, New Mexico*. (Albuquerque: Quivira Research Center Publications 391, November 1999) p. 6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Consensus Planning, Inc. and Souder Miller and Associates, *City of Roswell Comprehensive Master Plan* (2015).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*,

Culturally, Roswell remains “an extension of Texas and Oklahoma.”²⁴ Its architecture shows only slight traces of Spanish influences. “The Negro element has always been small and its voice negligible in community affairs.”²⁵ The African American population was often overlooked. In 1907 a journalist observed that Roswell's population was “ninety-five per cent American, four per cent Mexican, and one per cent ‘knockers.’”²⁶ The word ‘knockers’ in this sense most likely refers to the presence of itinerant workers looking for work as they passed through town.

Black Employment Opportunities

Additional research is warranted to determine which businesses catered to Whites only, which businesses were Black-owned or primarily serviced the Black neighborhoods, and which employed African Americans:

Motor Coach Industries, Purdy's, Merritt's, Hinkel's, Markus Shoes, Woodridge's, The Vogue, Elizabeth's, Woolridge's, Hand Laundry, Dabbs Furniture Company, Kessel's Inc., W.W. Merritt Independent, F.W. Woolworth Company, Sears, Roebuck, and Company, Mode O'Day, Kessel's Department Store, Everybody's Cash Store, The Bray Moore Shop, Ball and Ray, Edington's Fabric Shop, Hunter and Son, A.C. Massey, The Popular Dry Goods, Jackson Food Stores, Home Food Storage #1, Building and Construction Materials, Arnold Transfer Company, Wilmot Hardware Company, White's Mattress Factory, Valley Refining Company, Del Rio Hotel, Green Haven Courts, Spring River Tourist Camp, Allen W. Hinkle Dry Goods Company, Makia's Dry Goods Store, L.C. Knadle -- The Vogue, Roswell Laundry and Dry Cleaning, W.E. Whitmore, Berkey Bowling Alleys, F.M. Reeves and Son -- Concrete Tile, Cotton Seed Hauling -- A.C. Willis, Mrs. G.P. Carraway -- Central Grill.¹

Writing in 1954, researchers Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan deciphered the different ways in which Latinx and Black populations were treated in terms of their access to the workforce:

At times there have been Spanish-Americans in elected or appointed positions in the city and county government, but there never have been any Negroes in such positions. There

University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

²⁴ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. “The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History.” The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI) p. 21.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. “The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History.” The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI) p. 173.

¹ U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Identifier: 77845973, Record Group 188: Records of the Office of Price Administration, 1940 – 1949.

seems to be very little discrimination against Spanish-Americans in the matter of private employment. This is not true for the Negroes *who are concentrated in the unskilled jobs, with the exception of a few Negro teachers and the Negro ministers.*²

Discrimination, Prejudice, and Persecution

The following “Letter to the Public” written by the proprietor of the Bank Saloon appears to encapsulate the prevailing notions regarding Roswell’s Black residents in 1903, just as Roswell was gaining traction as a successful community with many early amenities. The letter describes the perceived differences between the “good old fashioned negroes,” and the “worthless blacks” purportedly “run out” from the Texas Panhandle and Oklahoma. W. R. Cummins praises those Blacks who ‘know their place,’ and villifies those Black newcomers who insist on equal access to stores and schools:

This is a white man’s government, and ever since Roswell has been on the map the white people have paid the taxes and managed the town. It is true that during the past many years there has been one or two good old fashioned negroes here, and they have had the respect and confidence of all the people. But now Roswell is threatened with an overflow of worthless negroes run out of the Panhandle of Texas and Oklahoma, and the people have been wondering what to do to protect our families and homes from the encroachments of these worthless blacks. Today they are threatening to invade our public schools, they are saucy and impudent on the streets and in the stores... No wonder the negroes are demanding to be put in the public schools to associate with the white children... Respectfully Yours, W. R. Cummins (Better known as ‘Red Hoss’ proprietor of the Bank Saloon.)¹

Former Roswell resident Charles Maxwell remembers the racial injustices he encountered as a young person. Eventually, their father moved the family to Santa Fe to escape the harsh attitudes of Whites toward non-Whites there:

My father was a sharecropper in Roswell. When I was 14, the boss man made us give up our house on the land to a White

² Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13). Emphasis added.

¹ “To the Public,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 19 September 1903, p. 3.

family. My dad got tired of being a sharecropper... We were so glad when dad decided to leave Roswell. It was so prejudiced down there. The Black kids played with the Black kids, and Whites with Whites. The teachers were favored toward the White kids more than the Black and Hispanic kids. They used to put all the kids to work on the farms in Roswell. But in Santa Fe my dad made sure my brothers and sisters got a good education.²

Charles Maxwell estimates that 80 percent of Santa Fe's Black residents are in mixed marriages. In Roswell, he remembers, "Blacks only went out with Blacks." He prefers to shake off incidents of prejudice — customers who too hastily accused him of wrongdoing, or the not-uncommon occurrence of patrons using the n-word. Ironically, though, Maxwell notes that in 2009, as he helped local Girl Scouts with door-to-door cookie sales, he was accosted by two police officers after a resident complained that "a strange black man" wandered the streets. "'I've had a wonderful experience here... in Santa Fe,' says Maxwell, 'but that hurt me more than anything else in all my time here.'"³

Researchers Williams and Ryan in 1954 recorded the repeated use of the phrase, "Now, I don't feel about the darkies like some other people here do, but ___."⁴ They noted that influential Anglos participating in the study attributed racial tensions to "the presence of Negroes from New York or California or at the Air Force base," although not a single interviewee "could recall any specific incident which might have led to overt trouble." It was the opinion of the Anglo-American informants that the local 'Negro' population "knew its place" and was satisfied with it. "Negroes, on the other hand, said that they had been working steadily but not hastily to better the position of the group in the community and that it was not from the outside that the movement gained its support or strength."⁵

In addition to daily social indignities and color-based obstacles, Latinx and African American citizens faced discriminatory lending practices. Loan applications for homes or farmland were denied or disappeared without a trace. Although anecdotal evidence exists, additional research is required to determine how widespread discriminatory lending practices were in New Mexico. The following information pertains largely to Hispano farmers, however, their experiences paralleled the Black experience.

² Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. "Black in Santa Fe," *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfireporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13.

⁵ Ibid.

During the 20th century, minority farmers and ranchers were routinely denied the credit they needed to maintain their livelihoods. Discriminatory lending in the Southwest set in motion a devastating cycle of displacement and destruction.⁶

When the U. S. emerged from the Great Depression, the federal government took a more active role in agricultural production by subsidizing the cost of equipment, and providing landowners with large operating loans. The extension of farm credit allowed farmers and ranchers to invest in their crops and herds early in the year without having to proffer the cash on their own.⁷ For White rural Americans, these low-interest loans encouraged unprecedented growth and expansion. But for minorities, the denial of subsidized loans often pushed them out of farming and ranching altogether.⁸

The following incident was all too typical:

His application was denied. And as he turned to leave the office that day, the loan officer told him something he never forgot. 'Men like you weren't meant to own land,' the agent said, 'You were meant to work it.'⁹

Because of a history of bias lending, underserved communities including African Americans were less likely to inherit land and equipment, leaving them with less collateral to expand their farms and ranches. For minorities, the denial of subsidized loans often pushed them out of farming and ranching altogether.¹⁰

Similar to 'redlining' in urban areas, unequal access to credit in rural America baited minority farmers and ranchers into inescapable financial traps. First, unscrupulous loan officers would deny minorities low-interest government loans. Then, they would refer them to private lenders who offered higher rates -- and worked with appraisers to undervalue their land and assets. "This left many non-Anglo borrowers eligible for less credit... In time, they would fail or simply leave."¹¹ There continues to be precious little evidence to work with, because often the White loan officers denied minority borrowers without fully processing their loans. "It was as though the loan process never happened."¹²

In 1999, African Americans and Native Americans brought two separate class action lawsuits against the USDA. Both cases were successful in establishing a pattern of discriminatory lending. "As a result, Congress appropriated \$2 billion to African American plaintiffs, and in

⁶ Waddell, Benjamin, "Men Like You Weren't Meant to Own Land...," *Social Justice* journal, 11 March 2020. Online at: hcn.org/articles/south-social-justice-men-like-you-werent-meant-to-own-land.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Keepseagle v. Vilsack, the government created a settlement fund of \$680 million.”¹³ *Pigford v. Glickman* (1999) was a class action lawsuit against the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), alleging racial discrimination against African-American farmers in its allocation of farm loans and assistance between 1981 and 1996. The lawsuit was settled on 14 April 1999, “as what is reportedly the largest civil rights settlement to date.”¹⁴

The lawsuit was filed by Timothy Pigford, who was joined by 400 additional African-American farmer plaintiffs. Dan Glickman, the Secretary of Agriculture, was the nominal defendant. The allegations were that the USDA treated Black farmers unfairly when deciding to allocate price support loans, disaster payments, farm ownership loans, and operating loans; and that the USDA had failed to process prior complaints regarding racial discrimination.¹⁵

As we shall see, multiple circumstances in addition to discriminatory lending practices have conspired to create extreme wealth disparities between America’s various ethnic groups. In 2016, according to the Institute for Policy Studies, the median wealth for Whites was \$146,984, compared to \$6,591 for Latinx citizens, and \$3,557 for Black families.¹⁶ Much additional research is needed to determine how Black New Mexicans in particular have fared.

Racial Disparities and Politics

In October 1957, Robert C. D. Tieuel Jr., of Hobbs, sent a letter about the “Negro’s’ place” in New Mexico public affairs. He conveyed that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other groups were contemplating entering a candidate for one of Lea county’s three seats in the house, while asking: “Don’t you really think that the time has come for our people to be represented in this august body, seeing that other groups are well represented?”¹⁷

The following verbatim exchange ensued between Mr. Tieuel and the editors of the *Roswell Daily Record*:

A. – They will be here when the Negroes and their friends can elect such representation, it is pretty much a matter of numbers. The Indians, a much larger racial group, haven’t crashed the legislature.

¹³ Waddell, Benjamin, “Men Like You Weren’t Meant to Own Land...,” *Social Justice* journal, 11 March 2020. Online at: hcn.org/articles/south-social-justice-men-like-you-werent-meant-to-own-land.

¹⁴ Timothy Pigford, et al., v. Dan Glickman, Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture, US District Court for the District of Columbia, Civil Action No. 97-1978 (PLF). Paul L. Friedman, U.S. District Judge.

¹⁵ Tadlock Cowan and Jody Feder, “The Pigford Cases: USDA Settlement of a Discrimination Suit by Black Farmers,” Congressional Research Service (29 May 2013). Available on-line at nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/crs/RS20430.pdf.

¹⁶ Waddell, Benjamin, “Men Like You Weren’t Meant to Own Land...,” *Social Justice* journal, 11 March 2020. Online at: hcn.org/articles/south-social-justice-men-like-you-werent-meant-to-own-land.

¹⁷ “Negroes in State Seek Recognition,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 29 October 1957, p. 4.

Q. – If we got a really qualified man do you think we could get fair-minded and liberal Anglo and Spanish support?

A. – Sure, but election would be difficult.

Q. – Would not the election of a well-qualified Negro to the legislature be a shining example of our democracy in the nation and the world?

A. – Nope. Negroes have been elected to many state legislatures without anybody getting excited about it.

Q. – What is the highest elective or appointive office ever held by a Negro in New Mexico, county or state?

A. – No Negro has ever been elected to state office and probably never a county office. I know of no appointive office of any consequence ever held by a Negro in this state. Several Negroes have worked in clerical jobs at the statehouse.¹⁸

Tieuel responded to the editors this way:

As you may know, Lea county contains perhaps the greatest Negro population (and for sure the biggest voting group in the state). And yet it is in Lea county and *southern New Mexico where the bulk of our population lives that we experience more discrimination and caste humiliation owing to color than anywhere else in the state.*¹⁹

The editors countered that “Negroes or any other group are not likely to win political recognition out of the liberality or fairmindedness of bigger groups.”²⁰ They continued by stating that, “It may be some time before there is Negro representation in the New Mexico legislature” because the legislatures of 1951 and 1953 “were dead set against creating legislative districts in the counties that might favor Negroes” or others “living in certain areas.”²¹ The editors were correct in their assessment. It took 108 years from the establishment of New Mexico as a state in 1912, for the first Black State senator, Harold Pope, Jr. to be elected to the legislature on 3 November 2020.

NAACP Conference Attendees Denied Accommodations

In 1954, an official with the NAACP accused the city of Roswell of “*wholesale racial discrimination*” during the association’s statewide convention there. Mrs. Cora Cooper, convention program director, charged in an open letter that delegates were told prior to the convention that “they were not welcome, and that during the convention housing and food accommodations were consistently refused.”²² An emergency meeting of Roswell businessmen

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ “Negroes in State Seek Recognition,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 29 October 1957, p. 4. Emphasis added.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “Roswell Charged with ‘Wholesale’ Discrimination – NAACP Official Says Hotels, Cafes Closed to Delegates,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 13 November 1954, p. 1. Emphasis added. Please note: A search of

was held a few days before the convention, she claimed, and as a result, many establishments were closed during the two-and-a-half day meeting. Approximately 60 out-of-town delegates attended the session. Claude Simpson, manager of the Roswell Chamber of Commerce, denied the delegates were told they were unwelcome, but added later that he didn't know who had "invited them in the first place."²³

Mrs. Cooper charged that:

1. Many Roswell restaurants were locked up during the convention, and all hotels and motels were suddenly 'Full – No Vacancy.'
2. Accommodations were refused one speaker, a white woman, when it was learned she was there to address the convention. It was learned later, she said, the place was not filled up. Another national speaker was also refused a room.
3. The City refused to accept or honor requests for reservations telegraphed in advance from Albuquerque.
4. One restaurant owner, after much pleading by convention officials, agreed to serve breakfast, but on the agreed morning, his place was closed.
5. Delegates were kept under police surveillance.
6. One Roswell White citizen was warned not to house Negroes in his home.
7. After having been promised use of a hall, it was later denied to the group. Only after lengthy discussion, she claimed, did authorities compromise to partial use.²⁴

"It is difficult to believe," Mrs. Cooper said, "that a whole city, individually and collectively, could or would contrive to work such un-American, undemocratic humiliations and harassment upon their fellow citizens in the State of New Mexico."²⁵ Chamber manager Simpson, in denying Mrs. Cooper's charges, responded that motels and hotels were filled to capacity the weekend of the NAACP convention because of the opening of the deer season. "We're always full up that weekend," he said, "and there's usually a big stayover."²⁶ He said he wired the association concerning the lack of accommodations after Hobart LaGrone, state president of the NAACP wrote him approximately six weeks ahead of time. "I simply suggested they look into further arrangements,"²⁷ Simpson said. However, LaGrone, contacted by reporters in Albuquerque, said

digitized newspapers during this time period revealed that this incident was not reported in the local Roswell newspapers.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Simpson's telegram proposed that "we go elsewhere" with the convention.²⁸ Concerning Cooper's claims, Simpson dismissed the charges by saying, "I think this is all her imagination."²⁹

Cooper conveyed that Roswell's mayor, Bert Ballard, had been "very cordial" in addressing the convention. She added that additional leaders, church groups, and interested citizens were invited to meet with the delegates to share discussions regarding "our mutual problems in the field of human relations," but none made an appearance. "There were exactly three individual Roswell citizens who willingly gave us assistance when our need was great," she said. "I shall not name them, but am sure they sleep peacefully."³⁰

Segregation and Sports

Racial discrimination was in no way confined to the political realm. "Sad to say, many towns in New Mexico were guilty of mistreating minority ball players in the professional and amateur ranks."³¹ The West Texas-New Mexico Minor League, for example, had a rule that no more than four "Negro" players could play on each team. "Latino players from Central America and the Caribbean were counted as Negroes."³² Future Hall of Fame baseball outfielder Wilver "Willie" Stargell played his first professional season for the Roswell Pirates, one of eight teams in the West Texas-New Mexico League. Raised in northern California, Stargell had never experienced deep-seated racial discrimination until that 1959 season.³³ Largely treated as equals on the field, 19-year-old Stargell and his fellow Black and Latino players excelled in games, but faced segregation in every part of their lives off the field. In his words, "racism was with us every minute of the day."³⁴

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Melzer, Richard. "Many Fought for Their Dreams," *First Person*. Available on-line at [news-bulletin.com/opinion/columns/many-fought-for-their-dreams/article_0e641f28-19c4-11e9-8023-a3958c0e7f1c](https://www.bulletin.com/opinion/columns/many-fought-for-their-dreams/article_0e641f28-19c4-11e9-8023-a3958c0e7f1c) (17 January 2019).

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Alliances and Associations

'Colored' Elks

The Roswell Lodge was organized 27 July 1905, and chartered the following year, with a membership of 700 by 1955. The first meeting was held in the Gallier Building at the northwest corner of First and Main.¹ Denied admittance to the Whites-only fraternal gatherings, Blacks formed their own Lodge. The newspapers were peppered with references to Roswell's "colored Elks" who frequented Yellow Pine Lodge No. 846:

The Roswell colored Elks will dance for sweet charity tomorrow night... in the municipal dance hall over the Joyce-Pruit Company. A cordial invitation is extended to all colored people of the Pecos valley. This is the first time that Yellow Pine Lodge No. 846, I. B. P. O. E. of W., has given an entertainment of this kind for charity only. John Marthe's Cotton Pickers will furnish the music.²

While the courtesy was not reciprocated, White residents were always invited to events hosted by Roswell's Black Elks:

The colored Elks of Roswell are giving an open-air dance at the Page Park tonight and again there Wednesday night. Music will be furnished by a seven-piece orchestra, the white citizens are invited... the local Elks are on a drive to raise funds to erect a rest and lodge hall and will kindly appreciate the aid of the community.³

Period obituaries provide a fascinating glimpse into the variety of Black organizations available to interested patrons. One Roswellian, for example, belonged to the following religious, civic, and social clubs: Grand Coulee Dam Chapter 237 of the Order of the Eastern Star, the Acorn Masonic Lodge, Delta Upsilon Fraternity, White Shrine of Jerusalem, Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship of Roswell, and the Full Gospel Church and Minister's International. Willie Mack, 45, resident of Roswell for 14 years, was also a porter at the New Mexico Transportation Co., and was a member of the Masons, Masonic Prince Hall Pecos Valley 7 and the Mount Gilead Baptist Church.⁴

¹ Emerson Brownie, "Here is Story of 16 Elks Lodges in New Mexico: Lordsburg Lodge is First with Full Information," *Roswell Daily Record*, 12 May 1955, p. 2.

² "Colored Elks Will Dance For Charity Here," *Roswell Daily Record*, 13 May 1930, p. 5.

³ "Colored Elks Dance" *Roswell Daily Record*, 17 June 1929, p. 8.

⁴ "Willie Mack Local Resident Dies at Hospital," *Roswell Daily Record*, 20 August 1956, p. 14.

Researchers Williams and Ryan reported that in 1954 there was a branch of the NAACP that was recently formed but not quite yet active. According to their informants, the NAACP “was not considered by the Negroes to furnish the leadership in the community”⁵ at that time. Much work remains to be accomplished documenting the breadth, depth, and influence of these and other alliances and associations on the Black Roswellian experience.

Buildings, Structures, and Landscapes

Originally, houses in the Roswell area were made of sun-dried mud *adobe* bricks, local rock, or *terrones* (sun-dried sod). Until settlers began planting trees in the vicinity, log cabins or frame structures were rare. The arrival of the railroad in 1894 brought brick, glass, and lumber to the area. Roswell settlers began building with these new materials, “in the familiar styles of their hometowns farther east: Georgian, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, California Mission, Hipped Box, Mediterranean, Prairie, and Greek Revival among others.”¹

Churches

It is well known that Black churches provide for the spiritual, emotional, and educational care of their congregations. What is less well-documented is how self-sufficient these churches were, and to what extent they made up for municipal shortcomings (fueled by inattention or outright discrimination). Church fundraisers, for example, raised money for everything from building supplies, to scholarships -- to sidewalks and street lighting -- that should have in all fairness been provided by the city.

The Second Baptist Church of the City of Roswell published the following articles of incorporation on 23 June 1908:

Know All Men By These Present – That We, Crutcher Eubank, John T. Boyer and Jessie W. Patterson, who have hereto subscribed our names, each a citizen of the United States and a resident of the City of Roswell in the County of Chavez, Territory of New Mexico, do hereby declare and publish our purpose to incorporate ourselves as a religious association and

⁵ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

¹ Michelsohn, Lynn. *Roswell, Your Travel Guide to the UFO Capital of the World!* Cleanan Press, 2008. Available on-line books.google.com/books/about/Roswell_Your_Travel_Guide_to_the_UFO_Cap.

to become a body corporate for religious and educational purposes... for the benefit and education of colored people as may seem wise and prudent...²

Newspapers dutifully covered the celebratory events and the fundraising amounts: “The colored people gave an entertainment at the home of Mrs. Jane Allen last night, for the benefit of the church,” wrote one observer, “and raised \$14 clear of expenses.”³

Rev. J. B. Bell, a missionary for New Mexico and Arizona, conducted successful revivals “among the colored people” at the Second Baptist church. In 1910, he and his congregants raised money to pay for “seats, lights, and new side walks.” Serving as spiritual leader and building contractor, the *Roswell Daily Record* applauded the fact that he met with “success in both lines of his work.”⁴

Negro Motorist Green Book Safe Havens

First published in 1936, the *Green Book* was created by a Harlem-based postal carrier named Victor Hugo Green. Like most African Americans in the mid-20th century, Green had grown weary of the discrimination Blacks faced whenever they ventured outside their neighborhoods. Car ownership had exploded in the years before and after World War II, but the lure of the interstate was also fraught with risk for minorities. “Whites Only” policies meant that Black travelers often couldn’t find safe places to eat and sleep, and so-called “Sundown Towns”—municipalities that banned Black visitors after dark—were scattered across the country. As the foreword of the 1956 edition of the *Green Book* noted, “the White traveler has had no difficulty in getting accommodations, but with the Negro it has been different.”⁵

Inspired by earlier books published for Jewish audiences, Green developed a guide to help Black Americans indulge in travel without fear. The first edition of his *Green Book* only covered hotels and restaurants in the New York area, but he soon expanded its scope by gathering field reports from fellow postal carriers and offering cash payments to readers who sent in useful information.⁶ By the early 1940s, the *Green Book* listed thousands of establishments including hotels, guest houses, service stations, drug stores, taverns, barber shops, and restaurants from across the country, all of them either Black-owned or verified to be non-discriminatory. A similar publication called *Travelguide* was marketed with the tagline, “Vacation and Recreation

² “Local news,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 23 June 1908, p. 4.

³ “Local News,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 10 March 1906, p. 4.

⁴ “Successful Revival Among Colored Baptists,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 29 June 1910, p. 3.

⁵ Andrews, Evan. “The *Green Book*: The Black Traveler’s Guide to Jim Crow America,” (Updated 13 March 2019). Available on-line at history.com/news/the-green-book-the-black-travelers-guide-to-jim-crow-america.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Without Humiliation.”⁷ Thanks to a sponsorship deal with Standard Oil, the *Green Book* was available for purchase at Esso gas stations across the country.

In his memoir, *A Colored Man’s Journey Through 20th Century Segregated America*, Earl Hutchinson Sr. described purchasing a copy in preparation for a road trip he and his wife took from Chicago to California. “The ‘*Green Book*’ was the bible of every Negro highway traveler in the 1950s and early 1960s,” he wrote. “You literally didn’t dare leave home without it.”⁸ Even in cities with no Black-friendly hotels, the book often listed the addresses of home owners who were willing to rent rooms. In 1954, it suggested that visitors to Roswell, New Mexico should stay at the home of a Mrs. Mary Collins.⁹ The Sunset Café was another popular *Green Book* recommendation.

“There will be a day sometime in the near future,” wrote Victor Green in the Introduction to his 1948 edition, “when this guide will not have to be published”:

That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States. It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication for then we can go wherever we please, and without embarrassment.¹⁰

Just as Green had hoped, the march of progress eventually helped his guidebook achieve obsolescence. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act finally banned racial segregation in restaurants, theaters, hotels, parks and other public places. Two years later, the *Green Book* quietly ceased publication after nearly 30 years in print.¹¹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Green, Victor H. *Negro Motorist Green Book* (1948 edition), Introduction. Available on-line at Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. “The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1948” [The New York Public Library Digital Collections](https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/70651400-893f-0132-f4b5-58d385a7bbd0). 1948. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/70651400-893f-0132-f4b5-58d385a7bbd0>.

¹¹ Andrews, Evan. “The *Green Book*: The Black Traveler’s Guide to Jim Crow America,” (Updated 13 March 2019). Available on-line at [history.com/news/the-green-book-the-black-travelers-guide-to-jim-crow-america](https://www.history.com/news/the-green-book-the-black-travelers-guide-to-jim-crow-america).

National Register Sites Roswell

The following buildings and structures are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Each should be researched to fully understand any connections with Black history:

Chaves County Courthouse
Diamond A Ranch
Downtown Roswell Historic District
Flying H Ranch
James Phelps White House
Louise Massey House
Millhiser-Baker Farm
Milne-Bush Ranch
New Mexico Military Institute
Patrick Floyd Garrett Ranch
Robert H. Goddard House
Roswell Artist-in-Residence Compound
Saunders-Crosby House
Slaughter-Hill Ranch
South Spring Ranch
Urton Orchards

Works Projects Administration (WPA) Sites

The following projects were federally funded during President Roosevelt's administration. Each will be researched to understand the connections between the properties and the Black community:

Bottomless Lakes State Park
Cahoon Park
City Hall
DeBremond Stadium
Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge
Historical Center for Southeast New Mexico
Sculpture and Bas Relief
(former) Municipal Airport
Roswell Museum and Art Center
New Mexico Military Institute (NMMI)

New Mexico Military Institute (NMMI)

While ranching and agricultural pursuits, health-seekers, tourists, and the presence of a nearby Air Force base sustained the locale for many decades, the *Roswell Daily Record* declared that without the establishment of the New Mexico Military Institute, “Roswell would be scarcely more than a way station on the Santa Fe railroad.”¹²

Writing sixty years after the event, Colonel Robert S. Goss’s wife credited Mrs. Lea with conceptualizing and initiating the school. The Goss Military Institute opened on 3 September 1891 to thirty-eight students of both sexes. Claimed Mrs. Goss:

the colonel relented at Mrs. Lea's insistence and admitted girls, bringing Miss A. E. Hassen in as the matron... Girls were day students and not subject to the same military discipline as boys.¹³

At the time, the entire southeastern portion of the New Mexico Territory was home to just 7,081 inhabitants.¹⁴ Despite its remote location and sparse population, the newly-established institute strove to “give a good collegiate education, with a knowledge of military science and art, and training in military modes of thought and action, habits, and manners.”¹⁵ In the second year of its existence the Goss Military Institute became the New Mexico Military Institute.¹⁶ Women were disallowed not long afterward. A newspaper article relayed that “girls were too much for Wilson, a military man, to tolerate,” and that “his arguments were successful in getting the regents to eliminate entirely the girls’ department.”¹⁷ With or without the presence of women, the male cadets found no shortage of mischief to embroil themselves in. An old “Delinquency Book,” preserved from 1905, lists as some of the infractions the following:

missing church, reading unauthorized material during study hall, in town without permit, smoking, cooking in room, kicking another cadet in ranks, throwing at instructor’s door, sleeping during study hours, dice in possession, bringing mice into room, deserting post, dirty khakis, combing hair at dinner, [and] urinating from window.¹⁸

¹² Jackman, Eugene Taylor. “The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History.” The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI), p. 183.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 35 and 39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

In the fall of 1928 cadets published the first edition of the *Pup Tent*, a fortnightly newspaper. The *Bronco* boasted that NMMI was the only military school with an enrollment of under six hundred in the United States that had three publications edited and managed by the students: the *Bronco*, the *Maverick*, and the *Pup Tent*.¹⁹ Each encapsulates the campus news and social atmosphere, including the ethnic tensions and racial degradations of the day.

Jason James was a singular personality who graced the pages of the campus newspapers for a variety of mostly unsavory reasons. He had fought in the Civil War with Colonel J. C. Lea, following him to Roswell in 1892. He admitted to:

ambushing, killing, wounding, and taking Negroes prisoners after the war when he joined the Ku Klux Klan and organized the 'Bulldozers' to prevent the election of Republicans in the election of 1876. Fearing this was not enough, he broke into the registrar's office ... stole registration blanks [and] exchanged false ones with Negroes for the real ones.²⁰

James was active in the 'Second Klan,' delivering speeches in Roswell at both Klan and Masonic gatherings. NMMI historian Dillon said that James "seemed to think that the aims of the two organizations were practically identical."²¹ He was refused his request to host Klan meetings in the Lodge Hall.

Despite Roswell's reputation as a largely peaceful village during the 1920s, James imagined conspiracies everywhere, especially from the fairly large Roman Catholic element. Only slightly less evil in his mind was prohibition and universal suffrage. He believed that the 'Negro' was "better off in slavery," and foresaw national ruin through "racial pollution of the Nordic stock."²²

At every opportunity Jason W. James preached militarism to the corps, and he made available funds to perpetuate the James marksmanship medals after his death. He apparently impressed the cadets, who dedicated the 1918 *Bronco* to him because of his "true American spirit." Ten years later the *Bronco* called the James medals the most prized of all, predicting with certainty that he would "always be remembered among our dearest friends."²³

The campus was rife with other nefarious and colorful characters, including sons of famous national figures. Cadet B. H. Cobb, the son of acclaimed baseballer Tyrus "Ty" Raymond Cobb,

¹⁹ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. "The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History." The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI), p. 193. These newspapers will provide a wealth of information regarding race relations once the archives re-open and the issues are made available to researchers.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

was credited for saving a drowning student visiting the Institute pool.²⁴ The son of Will Rogers also attended NMMI.²⁵ Often brimming with controversy, the campus atmosphere seemed to drift into ultra-conservatism. Just after WWII in 1946, Superintendent D. C. Pearson spoke to the cadets of a “confused and uncertain future” in a nation where “organized minority groups claimed rights that seriously interfered with the rights of the great majority.”²⁶

As a noteworthy aside, Superintendent D. C. Pearson’s grandson was murdered in 1965. Although the circumstances surrounding his death remain murky, Norman Lincoln Rockwell -- head of the American Nazi party at the time -- claimed that young Pearson and four other cadets had requested to join the party in 1963. “He also claimed there was still a large group of cadets at NMMI who were members of the Nazi Party.”²⁷

A liberal-minded cadre of cadets was not allowed to host Jesse Owens, the Black track star who humiliated the Nazi chief during the 1936 Olympics, or Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the President of the United States during World War II. No reason for the denials were given.²⁸ Decades later, Vice President Richard Nixon, Barry Goldwater, and J. Edgar Hoover were invited to speak on campus, although each was unwilling or unable to accept.²⁹

Although a few local Black residents were allowed to work on campus in service capacities, none were admitted into the school until the late 1960s. James Love was a longtime campus and Scout Camp cook who kept “the space just below the belt buckle filled”³⁰ for countless cadets and Scouts over the decades. Gus Lee served as his predecessor, and Lee’s wife Mattie was employed as domestic help.³¹

When the Institute opened its doors to some 950 cadets in the fall of 1965, the school was one year shy of its seventy-fifth anniversary. The students came from forty-three states and seventeen foreign countries. Fewer than half of them came from New Mexico. “At least one of every nine cadets, was the son or grandson of an alumnus.”³² The following year, in 1966,

²⁴ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. “The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History.” The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI), p. 219.

²⁵ “Will Rogers Son Coming to Institute,” *Alamogordo News*, 9 May 1929, p. 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

²⁷ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. “The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History.” The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI), p. 384.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 347, p. 354, and pp. 359-360.

³⁰ “Boy Scout Activities,” *Alamogordo News*, 9 May 1929, p. 1.

³¹ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. “The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History.” The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI), p. 73.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 387.

Edward W. Colbert Jr., of Colorado Springs, became the very first Black cadet to be accepted into and to matriculate from NMMI.³³ A brief look backward reveals that prior to 1954, little to no consideration was given to African American applicants. Former school officials declared that enrollment was either already at capacity, or that the Black applicants “had not been serious in their intent.”³⁴

Austin T. Cushman graduated from the high school division of NMMI in 1921. He was named chairman of the Sears Roebuck and Company, approximately three decades after he went to work for the company in 1931 as an extra salesman. He referred to Sears as the “greatest organization ever founded since the Christian Church,” vowing to pay particular attention to four areas of sound business, including, “men, merchandise, methods, and money.”³⁵

NMMI Graduate A. T. Cushman and the Sears and Roebuck Company

It is worth noting that the Sears and Roebuck Company radically changed the purchasing power of the disadvantaged during the era of Jim Crow. By allowing African Americans to avoid price-gouging and condescending treatment at their local stores, Cornell University historian Louis Hyman writes that the catalogue “undermined White supremacy in the rural South.”³⁶ As Jim Crow-era researchers have documented, purchasing everyday household goods was often an exercise in humiliation for African Americans, particularly those living in the South. Before the advent of the mail-order catalog, rural Black southerners typically only had the option of shopping at White-owned general stores - often run by the owner of the same farm where they worked as sharecroppers. Those store owners frequently determined what African Americans could buy by limiting how much credit they would extend.³⁷

For many years, Sears and Roebuck adhered to Jim Crow customs, hiring Blacks for marginally skilled tasks including warehouse stocking, janitorial services, and kitchen duties only. In 1894, however, the company reached out to minority communities in an unprecedented manner. Sears and Roebuck began mailing 322-page, illustrated product catalogs to rural addresses. The catalog format allowed for anonymity, ensuring that all customers would be treated the same way.³⁸

³³ Ibid., p. 411.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 412.

³⁵ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. “The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History.” The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI), p. 519.

³⁶ Farzan, Antonia Noori. *Washington Post*. “How Sears Mail-order Catalogs Undermined Jim Crow Racism,” 16 October 2018. Available on-line at chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-sears-history-racism-jim-crow-20181016-story.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Sears and Roebuck and Julius Rosenwald

Julius Rosenwald, who had become a part owner of the Sears Company after Alvah Roebuck sold his share of the business in 1895, became a well-known philanthropist on behalf of the Black community. He donated \$4.3 million -- the equivalent of more than \$75 million today -- to open nearly 5,000 'Rosenwald schools' in the rural South between 1912 and 1932, the year he died.³⁹

Rosenwald, the son of Jewish immigrants from Germany, became a friend of Booker T. Washington and served on the board of the Tuskegee Institute. He also helped fund Black YMCAs and YWCAs. And he provided financial support to Black artists and writers, including opera singer Marian Anderson, poet Langston Hughes, photographer Gordon Parks, and writer James Baldwin.⁴⁰

Although no known Rosenwald schools existed in New Mexico, additional research will disclose whether or not Black New Mexicans attended the schools elsewhere. It also remains to be seen whether or not any of New Mexico's mixed-race YMCA and YWCA programs benefitted from Rosenwald's largesse.

Famed NMMI graduate Paul Horgan, award-winning author of several books, including Maurice Garland Fulton and Paul Horgan, eds., *New Mexico's Own Chronicle, Three Races in the Writings of Four Hundred Years* (Dallas: Banks Upshaw and Company, 1937). Horgan's *magnum opus*, *Great River: the Rio Grande in North American History* is a two-volume work of approximately forty-three thousand words. The volumes embrace four civilizations: aboriginal Indian, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo-American. These seemingly comprehensive overviews of the region's history exclude Black and Asian histories almost completely.⁴¹

Neighborhoods Roswell

After the establishment of Fort Stanton in 1855, several small Hispanic communities appeared, among them the *barrio* of Chihuahueta on the Rio Hondo. Now surrounded by the city of Roswell, the small Spanish-speaking village was first noted by the U. S. Surveyor General in 1867. Its residents had come from northern New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico.¹

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. "The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History." The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI).

¹ Condie, Carol J. *Cultural Resources Investigations, East Second Street Project, Main Street to 1519 East Second Street, East of Atkinson Avenue, Roswell, Chaves County, New Mexico*. (Albuquerque: Quivira Research Center Publications 391, November 1999), p. 5.

In a pattern typical of Southwest border locales, an Anglo community developed side-by-side with the existing Latinx/Chihuahuita community during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The multi-cultural populations interacted economically, but were spatially and socially segregated. Latinx families generally lived south of the Hondo River on the east side of Roswell. The small number of *African-Americans tended to cluster along the Hondo River east of Main Street*,² while some Black families lived interspersed in mainly Latinx or Anglo areas.

Working-class Anglos lived close to the business district, while wealthy Anglo merchants, bankers, and cattlemen built their larger, more expensive homes along wide avenues farther west. As the business district expanded in the second half of the twentieth-century, homes in some of these residential areas, such as the 300 and 400 blocks of North Pennsylvania and North Kentucky Avenues, were replaced by businesses. Most of the downtown area remains residential.³

Chihuahuita means ‘little Chihuahua,’ and is named after the Mexican state just south of the New Mexico border, and its capital city, that was the birthplace of many of its original citizens. The oldest part of Roswell (originally called Rio Hondo) Chihuahuita hugs the south bank of the Hondo River on slightly higher ground than the rest of downtown Roswell, which protected it from the flooding that was once so common. Immigrants from Chihuahua, MX and Hispanos from Northern New Mexico and Texas settled here before Anglo Roswell existed. Little is known of Chihuahuita’s early history. In 1867 it appeared on a U. S. survey as Rio Hondo, featuring several adobe buildings. The Latinx settlements of La Plaza de Missouri 15 miles to the west and El Berrendo, a few miles to the north, were also recorded in the same survey.

After the Civil War, a wave of Anglo cattlemen flooded the region. Next, Anglo farmers taking advantage of the Homestead Act, and later, the discovery of artesian water and the arrival of the railroad, minoritized the early Hispano inhabitants. Some Latinx settlements withered away, but Chihuahuita persisted. Two separate societies, one Anglo and one Hispanic, developed in Roswell—and to some extent remain today. Chihuahuita had its own markets, laundries, barber shops, bars and restaurants, *curanderas* (healers), builders, churches, and schools. In the early 1900s the Chihuahuita area was platted as the ‘Acequia Subdivision’ of Roswell, and its street names were anglicized. Even so, Chihuahuita remains the traditional heart of Latinx Roswell.⁴

Generations have rebuilt, repaired, and added on to the original adobe structures, usually without keeping any records. It is difficult to know just how old some of these houses are, but the oldest are probably at 105, 106, 107, 114, and 115 South Mulberry Avenue (originally called Calle Alamosa); 708, 712, 718, and 901 East Walnut Street; and 715, 717, 719, 721, 725, 729, and 733 East Alameda Street (originally called Calle Camino Real). These houses are all built in

² Michelsohn, Lynn. *Roswell, Your Travel Guide to the UFO Capital of the World!* Cleanan Press, 2008. Available on-line books.google.com/books/about/Roswell_Your_Travel_Guide_to_the_UFO_Cap. Emphasis added.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

the New Mexico Vernacular Style: Adobe walls but pitched roofs, often covered with tin, rather than the flat-roofed Pueblo Revival style adobe houses usually associated with New Mexico. Houses in Chihuahuita are generally small. Yards are often filled with ornaments and decorations—including a space ship at the corner of Alameda and Elm Streets.⁵

A NAACP-sponsored study of New Mexico's segregated schools noted in 1949 that the "Negro population of Roswell is located partially in the neighborhood of the [Carver] school, and partly in the North Hill district which is considerably removed."⁶ Researchers Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan observed in 1954 that:

Spanish-Americans live in the southeastern quadrant of the city, but their neighborhoods also house some Negroes and Anglo-Americans. Most Negroes live south of the main east-west street, but there are no solidly Negro settlements. Their homes are found also north of this thoroughfare in predominantly Anglo-American neighborhoods. There are upper middle-class neighborhoods which have restrictive covenants although one informant said that it would be possible for some Negroes to purchase homes in certain of these areas.⁷

The researchers acknowledged that restrictive covenants in predominantly Anglo neighborhoods discriminated against people of color. The fact that these covenants could be ignored for "some Negroes" suggests that Anglos reserved an unspoken (and illegal) right to impose restrictions based upon certain individuals and not others. The authors attributed the gradual changes in the patterns of community discrimination to an influx of visitors from all over the United States which created an "increasingly cosmopolitan" composition.⁸

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "New Mexico's Segregated Schools," sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949).

⁷ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁸ Ibid.

Segregated Public and Private Spaces

Theatres

Theater enthusiast Gene Triplett remembers the heyday of movie venues with nostalgia:

There was a by-gone time of cartoons, kiddie shows and double features, when uniformed ushers roamed the aisles with flashlights, fragrant hot popcorn was a dime, and the manager had your parents' phone number if you hurt yourself running in the dark.¹

Everyone knew that the neighborhood movie theater served as a trusted baby-sitter, especially on Saturday afternoons. Robert Patrick was a ticket-taker, usher, and self-described "popcorn boy" at four of Roswell's five Main Street movie theatres between 1954 and 1955. Because the Yucca, the Plains, the Pecos, and the Chief were under one management, ushers were shifted from one to the other as needed. He remembers that the Pecos was largely considered to be "for Mexicans," who were not made to feel very welcome in the other theatres:

'This meant that we ushers weren't expected to keep it very clean,' explains Patrick, continuing, 'I don't think Blacks were allowed in the movie theatres at all, but I may be wrong. They may have just been made to feel so unwelcome on Main Street that they just didn't come. I know that we had no orders to turn them away.'²

Patrick remembers that when the Black-cast *Carmen Jones* showed at the Plains, "a special two-or-three row section was roped off at the very rear of the auditorium to allow Blacks to see it."³ Three Griffith Brothers – Louis Clyde, Henry Jefferson and Rupert Earl – bought their first theater in San Marcos, TX. By 1936, they owned interests in 125 theaters located in 58 communities with 80 partners, through Griffith Amusement Co. and Griffith Consolidated Theaters, including theaters all over Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico. In 1949, eight employees, led by company attorney Henry S. Griffing, bought the Griffith stock and formed

¹ Triplett, Gene. "Cinema Paradiso Photos Recall Heyday of Griffith-Video Theater Chain" (12 September 199) available on-line at oklahoman.com/article/2667268/cinema-paradiso-photos-recall-heyday-of-griffith-video-theater-chain.

² Patrick, Robert. "New Mexico Movie Houses of my Youth," available on-line at robertpatrickpersonal.wordpress.com/2012/08/13/new-mexico-movie-houses-of-my-youth.

³ Ibid.

Video Independent Theatres. By 1951, Video ran 157 screens in 48 towns, including 42 drive-in theaters.⁴

R. E. Griffith Theatres, Inc. apparently with its own rules for segregating crowds depending upon the locale, operated one or more theatres in Alamogordo, Carlsbad, Clovis, Deming, Eunice, Gallup, Hobbs, Jal and Roswell.⁵ The Pecos Theatre at 305 N. Main Street opened as the Princess Theatre on 28 July 1913. It was later renamed the Liberty Theatre. By 1941 it had been renamed the Pecos. It was closed in the summer of 1956.⁶ The Plains Theatre was designed by Jack Corgan in 1946 for Theatre Enterprises. It was built of reinforced concrete. The Plains seated approximately 1000 on its main floor. Another movie-goer, Will Dunklin remembers the Plains this way: "At one side of the projection booth was the cry [infant care] room and on the other – due to the regrettable segregation laws of the time – were 30 seats for 'colored' patrons."⁷

Drive-in Movie Theatres

On 6 June 1933, Richard Hollingshead opened the first theater for automobile enthusiasts in Camden, NJ. People paid 25 cents per car as well as per person to see the British comedy, *Wives Beware* outside under the stars. A few others followed, but the concept really gained traction with the advent of in-car speakers during the early 1940s. Drive-ins took off during the 1950s because they offered more flexibility than sit-in theatres, muses Jim Kopp of the United Drive-In Theatre Owners Association: "They offered family entertainment. People could sit in their cars, they could bring their babies, they could smoke."⁸ By 1958, the number of drive-ins nationwide peaked at 4,063.⁹

In an entry dated 21 August 1948, *Boxoffice* magazine reported that construction work was underway on the "new \$125,000 Valley Drive-In, being erected near the Roswell city limits by Theatre Enterprises, Inc."¹⁰ Considering that the segregated Plains Theater was owned by the same company, one wonders if segregation extended to automobile attendees as well as the in-house movie patrons. The Starlite-Drive-In was opened prior to 1955 when it was operated by

⁴ Triplett, Gene. "Cinema Paradiso Photos Recall Heyday of Griffith-Video Theater Chain" (12 September 199) available on-line at oklahoman.com/article/2667268/cinema-paradiso-photos-recall-heyday-of-griffith-video-theater-chain.

⁵ *United States v. Griffith Amusement Co.*, 94 F. Supp. 747 (W. D. Okla. 1950). Available on-line at law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/94/747/1880118.

⁶ Available on-line at cinematreasures.org/theatres/17380.

⁷ Dunklin, Will. Available on-line at cinematreasures.org/theaters/6592/comments.

⁸ Reid, Robin T. "The History of the Drive-In Movie Theater: The Continued Attraction of Viewing Movies Under the Stars," *Smithsonian Magazine* (27 May 2008). Available on-line at smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-history-of-the-drive-in-movie-theater-51331221.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Kilgore, Michael. "Starlite Drive-In: 1901 SE Main Street, Roswell." Available on-line at cinematreasures.org/theaters/39790.

R. I. Payne, Frontier Theatres Inc. of Dallas, TX. It had a capacity for 500 cars. Later, a second screen was added and the car capacity was increased to 1,088.¹¹

Library

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, few American towns had the luxury of a building solely dedicated for use as a library. More often than not, libraries were privately owned, and zealously guarded. Public book holdings were tucked into a corner of City Hall, or inside the back room of a store, perhaps utilized as part of a physician's waiting room, or squirreled away in a shop or church cellar.¹²

Andrew Carnegie, often referred to as the 'Patron Saint of Libraries,' donated more than \$40,000,000 over his lifetime for the erection of 1,679 public library buildings in 1,412 communities in the United States.¹³ His library philanthropy was only a small part of the Carnegie benefactions. More than \$333,000,000 (ninety per cent of his fortune) was spent by the Steel King for what he called "the improvement of mankind."¹⁴

Many towns fortunate enough to have public libraries reserved them for White patrons only. Alongside transit systems and schools, "many public libraries remained segregated deep into the 1960s. Ironically, even Andrew Carnegie's contributions to public life actually perpetuated these discriminatory policies. "Instead of pushing for integration, some Carnegie libraries were opened specifically for Black communities, thus solidifying the 'separate but equal' creed."¹⁵

Roswell's public library at 123 W. Third St. near the intersection of North Richardson Avenue was built in 1906 by the Roswell Women's Club after the receipt of a grant from the Carnegie Foundation.¹⁶ It remains to be verified whether or not all patrons were welcomed.

Walker Air Force Base

Initially known as Roswell Army Airfield, the property upon which the base was developed was acquired from rancher David Chesser in 1941. Owing to its excellent weather, the purpose of

¹¹ Roe, Ken. "Starlite Drive-In: 1901 SE Main Street, Roswell." Available on-line at cinematreasures.org/theaters/39790.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bobinski, George S. "Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development," *American Library Association Bulletin*, December 1968, Vol. 62, No. 11 (December 1968), pp. 1361-1367. Available on-line at jstor.com/stable/25698025.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Summers, Megan. "Bodies of Knowledge – The Dark History of Segregated Libraries," available on-line at <https://www.theculturecrush.com/feature/bodies-of-knowledge>.

¹⁶ "Carnegie Library Soon to be Reincarnated; Local Realtor and Architect Announce Ambitious Plans to Restore Decaying Historic Building," *Vistas* (1 April 2018). Available on-line at rdnews.com/2018/04/01/carnegie-library-soon-to-be-reincarnated-local-realtor-and-architect-announce-ambitious-plans-to-restore-decaying-historic-building.

the facility was to provide military flight training and also to serve as a bombardier school. The facility had approximately 4,600 acres including seven concrete runways. Roswell Army Airfield was complemented by than nine auxiliary landing fields. The airbase was assigned to the United States Army Air Corps Training Command on 20 September 1941. By January 1945, the airfield was home to the 3030th Army Air Force Base Unit, which specialized in training B-29 Superfortress bomber crews.¹⁷

Upon graduation from high school, Eugene Sherman Prince enlisted in the Armed Forces, which at that time, consisted of “a segregated military, and a combined Army/Air Force unit.”¹⁸ He was assigned to Walker Air Force Base in 1947. In Roswell, he was assigned to a bomber base and fighter base squadron, and also trained as a construction welder and expert repair technician. This expertise led to his work on building underground missiles for nuclear warfare. While stationed in Roswell, he met his future wife Jeanetta Woodard, who worked on the base servicing B-29 bombers and trainer planes.¹⁹

Restaurants

The Roswell Downtown Lions Club sponsored the annual appearance of the “great barnstorming basketbatters”²⁰ known as the Harlem Globetrotters. Proceeds from the event bolstered the annual Christmas toy project, allowing the Lions to distribute toys to more than 2,000 needy children in the Roswell area.

In November 1957, the Harlem Globetrotters played before a capacity crowd at the Roswell High School gym, and were then denied service in a local restaurant. “The waitress gave us a menu and told us we would have to go outside,” said Winfield Welch, the Globetrotter’s manager. The dining room of the Chinese Chew Den restaurant had been reserved by the Roswell Lions Club, sponsors of the basketball game, for the team. The manager and announcer, arriving early and unaware of the previous arrangement, took seats in an unreserved section.

Welch and the two men left the café when the waitress told them they must leave. Globetrotter Coach Bob Milton said he and the team decided not to eat in the restaurant after their teammates had been refused service. “The place’s action was kinda out of date now,” Coach Milton said. “But it still hurts as much as ever.”²¹ Buddy Adams, a Roswell Lion Club

¹⁷ Armstrong, Alan. “The Legacy of Walker Air Force Base,” *Aviation Museum News* (31 December 2013). Available on-line at warbirdsnews.com/aviation-museum-news/legacy-walker-air-force-base.

¹⁸ “Obituary for Mr. Eugene Sherman Prince,” available on-line at northwestfuneralchapel.com/obituaries/Eugene-Prince/#!/Obituary.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ “Globetrotters Coming to Roswell Again This Year,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 17 November 1957, p. 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*

member, said the team encountered similar difficulties “every time they come” to Roswell.²² Adams said he was able to find only one motel that would even talk to them about putting the team up for the night. Although the team had a motel reservation at a Roswell motel, they drove to Clovis instead. Jack Chew, owner of the Chew Den, said his establishment did not practice a blanket policy for denial of service to “Negroes.” He said the incident was an “unfortunate misunderstanding.”²³

A search of February 1962 newspapers reveals that this story was also reported in the *Alamogordo Daily News*, “Cage Pros Are Denied Service,” 9 February 1962, p. 2, and the *Albuquerque Journal*, “Globetrotters Denied Service in Roswell Café,” 10 February 1962, p. 15. The incident appears to have not been reported in the Roswell newspapers.

Segregationist policies affected all sports to one degree or another. Historian Richard Melzer declares that Black and Latino players were not allowed to eat in White restaurants in Roswell or elsewhere in the league. Famed major baseball player Willie Stargell:

either ate in the segregated restaurants’ kitchens or on the bus if White players took him leftovers from their meals. Stargell eventually brought his own food, although items such as canned Spam did not make for the healthiest diet for young athletes on long bus trips. By the end of the season, Stargell had lost 20 pounds and not even his mother could recognize him when he returned home.²⁴

A confrontation took place in Plainview, TX (one hour east of Clovis, NM) that Stargell would remember for the rest of his life. A White man accosted him on his way to the stadium, pressed a gun to his temple, and threatened to kill him if he played that night:

Stargell recognized this incident as the defining moment of his life. He could let this racist tormentor keep him from playing ball and reaching his goal of reaching the big leagues. Or he could defy this bully and refuse to allow hate and prejudice stand in his way. Stargell chose to play that night and on every other night his name appeared on his manager’s lineup card.²⁵

²² “Globetrotters Draw Capacity Crowd But Can’t Eat in Roswell Café,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 9 February 1962, p. 1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Melzer, Richard. “Many Fought for Their Dreams,” *First Person*. Available on-line at news-bulletin.com/opinion/columns/many-fought-for-their-dreams/article_0e641f28-19c4-11e9-8023-a3958c0e7f1c (17 January 2019).

²⁵ Melzer, Richard. “Many Fought for Their Dreams,” *First Person*. Available on-line at news-bulletin.com/opinion/columns/many-fought-for-their-dreams/article_0e641f28-19c4-11e9-8023-a3958c0e7f1c (17 January 2019).

By 1962, he had made it to the Pittsburgh Pirates' major league lineup, where he played for the next 21 years, hitting 475 home runs, and becoming one of the most-liked and admired players in the game.

Schools

A Jewish congregation of about twenty members was organized in 1903, the same year that the Salvation Army arrived. Also in 1903, there was an attempt to establish a school for Roswell's twenty or more Black residents of school age. The following year the Salvation Army ran one for Spanish-American children, compelling them to speak English. In 1907 a Franciscan priest started the first parochial school, St. Peter's, the same year in which "a Negro teacher began a school for his race in the African Methodist Episcopal Church."²⁶

According to several sources, the first public school for Roswell's Black students was opened in 1904 with one teacher. Until 1926 it was housed in rented quarters. About that same time, a two-room structure was built, and a second teacher was employed. By 1953, it functioned with seven teachers in five rooms and included the first six years of schooling. Each room housed more than one class, and several grades attended only half-day sessions because of inadequate space.

Researchers Williams and Ryan observed in 1954 that any improvements to the Carver School were "as a direct result of interest the Negro students displayed in having a better school." As an illustration, Williams and Ryan reported that around 1946:

[T]he Negro students told the principal that they were going on strike for better facilities. They remained out of school one day, parading with their banners through the business district and around all the White schools. Some public interest was aroused by this demonstration, but it was several years before any improvements were made. Then Negro leaders urged their people to vote for a school bond issue, on the grounds that without it nothing could be done to any school. The issue passed, and the newspapers at that time stated that 60 per cent of the 211 votes cast were by Negroes. Shortly thereafter, Carver was enlarged.²⁷

Subsequently, the school administration also discussed the problems inherent in having a single teacher for all subjects in the Black junior and high schools. Graduates were forced at their own

²⁶ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. "The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History." The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI) p. 174.

²⁷ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. "Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico." *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13.

time and expense to take up subjects such as language or additional science courses prior to being considered for college.²⁸

A blatantly racist local newspaper editor, referring to Black children as ‘pickaninnies,’ and using the impersonal pronoun ‘it’ as early as 1910 assessed the educational situation this way:

Roswell and Carlsbad settled this question for themselves years ago. Each maintains a school for negroes, that in Roswell being under the direction of one of the best negro teachers finished in the state of Texas, so that if there should be one of the pickaninnies who cares for anything more than to be able to read and write it can go as high as it wants to.²⁹

He continued his inflammatory opinion piece by declaring that educating Black students was a “joke,” concluding that it was not “negro nature” to strive for higher education, because it was “hard work.”³⁰ This same editor praised a Black teacher as being on “par with the best White teachers,” and expressed his belief that the “negroes are perfectly satisfied, and there is no race problem in the Roswell schools.” Similar emotional tirades in print were not uncommon.

Untruths and incendiary remarks aside, the first public ‘Colored School’ in Roswell opened in Smith Chapel on South Michigan Avenue in 1907, then moved across the street to the ‘Colored Masonic Hall’ where students attended classes for the next 23 years. The Roswell School Board let a contract to build a school for African-American students on this site in July 1930. The two-room building was completed shortly after the school year began and the students moved into their new George Washington Carver School for grades 1 through 12. Roswell’s African-American students attended school here until the fall of 1952 when the junior and senior high schools were integrated. Elementary students continued to attend Carver School until it closed in 1955.³¹

Social scientists Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan catalogued the following observations regarding inter-racial relations as they found them in 1954:

Public facilities were open to Spanish-Americans, limited only by their ability to pay for the services or their interest in using them. For the Negro community the pattern, which had been completely segregated until World War II, was slowly changing. Some hotels, motels, and restaurants would serve athletic teams with bi-racial personnel, if prior arrangements were

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “The Magnificent Prize Was Won by Progress Editor – The Tenderfoot Breaks into a Funny Strain...The Convention and Negro Schools,” *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 5 November 1910, p. 2.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Michelsohn, Lynn. *Roswell, Your Travel Guide to the UFO Capital of the World!* Cleanan Press, 2008. Available on-line books.google.com/books/about/Roswell_Your_Travel_Guide_to_the_UFO_Cap.

made. The hospital was open to all individuals on a non-segregated basis, and most doctors would take Negro patients.

However, some remnants of segregation remained in the city-sponsored recreation programs. There were three recreation centers, one for each group, located in the area of highest concentration of each. The swimming pool was limited to Anglo-Americans and Spanish-Americans, and plans were being discussed for the building of a pool in the area near the elementary school for Negroes.

Until a few years ago, there was one movie house which did not discriminate against Negroes, but as the result of one unpleasant incident, this theater refused further Negro patronage. Another movie reserved a section of the balcony for Negroes.³²

Not surprisingly, the segregation issue affected the school systems in the local vicinity as well. Ella Boyer and her sister Willie Francis Keyes of nearby Blackdom, NM were both educators who taught their children school lessons at home. The Black parents of Blackdom stated that “they did not want a White teacher beating on their children.” The White parents in the Roswell area did not want Black children seated side-by-side with their children. Rather than integrate Roswell’s school or build a separate school for Black children, the Greenfield school board brought building materials, and the Black men constructed a wood-frame school at Blackdom” for their children.³³

In 1949, Carver School’s enrollment totaled 110 students, with an average daily attendance of 90. Four teachers taught grades one through 12 in five classrooms. A statewide survey noted that the school was overcrowded and understaffed, with severe lab equipment shortages, dilapidated furniture, poorly-maintained restroom facilities, and numerous personal safety hazards.³⁴

Water for the chemistry lab was brought inside a window using a garden hose. Fifteen home economic students shared one stove and one sewing machine. Necessary school supplies were scarce or missing altogether. Library books were described as being “very, very old,” in poor

³² Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

³³ Baton, Maisha. “New Mexico’s Black Women – Establishing Perspectives,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), p. 162.

³⁴ “New Mexico’s Segregated Schools,” sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albuquerque Branch and the Albuquerque Civil Rights Committee. Presented by Frances Ann Salisbury, F. Prentice Hapgood, and (Chairman) F. Madison Strait (February 1949).

condition, and of limited subject matter. There were no current periodical subscriptions. The playground consisted of a single swing set in need of repair. The locale was described as heavily trafficked, with inadequate safety signage. The nearby High school gym was made available for use once a week. "Considerable hardship" was placed upon the Black families living in the North Hill district, because bus transportation was not provided for these students.³⁵

The authors of the study presented the following conclusions:

The children of Roswell who attend the Carver School in our opinion are not receiving an adequate education, or an instruction that is offered in other Roswell schools. An inadequate physical plant, a gross disregard for safety measures, and extreme friction between the School Board and the Parent Teachers Association is crippling the educational process, and it is imperative that these conditions be given statewide attention and consideration.³⁶

An alarming outcome of the sub-standard status of the segregated school system was the failure of the 'Negro' high school to achieve statewide accreditation:

Accreditation again has been denied the Roswell high school for Negro students, R. P. Sweeney, state director of secondary education, reports. Facilities there are inadequate and sub-standard, he advised the State Department of Education. The National Association for Advancement of Colored People announced after a recent meeting that it was considering a suit to demand equal facilities in segregated schools, as required by law.³⁷

It is not known how the denial of accreditation adversely affected Roswell's Black high school graduates as they sought to achieve higher learning at vocational institutes, community colleges, and four-year institutions.

Desegregation finally occurred when the Carver elementary school closed in 1954. The 13 pupils who were to attend the "all-Negro" school were instead allowed to enroll at schools in districts near their homes. The principal of Carver, Wendall Sweatt, was subsequently hired as a counselor for Black students at the junior and senior high schools, and for African American pupils scattered throughout the other public elementary schools.³⁸ Enrollment was now based upon the school's proximity to their own neighborhoods, rather than predicated upon ethnicity.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ "Accreditation Again Denied to Roswell School for Negroes," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 18 November 1951, p. 3.

³⁸ "Carver School Closes at Roswell," *Albuquerque Journal*, 20 September 1954, p. 16.

Entertainment

Although perhaps not as well covered by some of the region's other newspapers, the Roswell daily papers did pay some attention to the comings and goings of Black social life, including those forms of entertainment that mocked or belittled Black residents. In an age, for example, "when a Negro minstrel show could be performed and enjoyed by the cadets,"¹ the community staged a benefit minstrel show on behalf of the new school just before it opened its doors for business.

House Parties

Early announcements revealed the nature of the entertainment, and often identified the attendees. Similar tidbits commonly graced the society pages:

[T]he colored people of Roswell last night gave a birthday party to Mrs. Queen Murrell, the guests being the following persons: Rev. A. Walker, presiding elder of the El Paso District of the M. E. church, colored; Rev. J. R. Rector and wife of the Roswell church, Rev. Z. Z. Johnson and wife, Charley Lancaster and wife, Will Johnson and Essex Boyer, A. Hubbard and family and Harry Jones. The latter entertained with music on the phonograph.²

Another "grand ball for the colored people of the Pecos valley" was advertised as being hosted at the Battery "A" Armory. The article indicated that the balcony was reserved for white spectators where a charge of 25 cents³ was levied.

Perhaps mundane, these and other small insights into the residents' social activities – particularly those that included both Whites and Blacks -- must have occasionally brought separate neighborhoods together in some subtle and meaningful way over the years. At the same time, as the following example illustrates, much of the seemingly benign social news coverage could also be construed as demeaning or condescending:

Last night over two hundred white people attended a singing of Spiritual Songs by the church choir of the Negro Baptist Church

¹ Jackman, Eugene Taylor. "The New Mexico Military Institute 1891 – 1966: A Critical History." The University of Mississippi, Ph. D. dissertation, January 1967. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, MI), pp. 42, 49.

² "From Roswell, N. M.," *Roswell Daily Record*, 7 June 1907, p. 1.

³ "Colored Elks Ball," *Roswell Daily Record*, 17 April 1930, p. 9.

at 108 South Kansas. Several readings were given, depicting the Negro dialect... All of Roswell would enjoy this kind of entertainment and all Southerners would be reminded of the times they have attended these negro singings back home... These colored people know how to sing.⁴

Another useful glimpse into period race relations will be to look into the larger citywide and statewide celebrations. For Roswell's Centennial celebration, for example, it is not known whether African Americans were involved in the planning process. Was the Black experience commemorated or omitted from the events? Were Black residents involved as participants or attendees?

Juneteenth Celebrations

Of all of the predominantly Black social occasions reported in the local newspapers, the Juneteenth celebrations were followed most closely in the popular press, particularly during the opening decades of the 20th-century. "Big plans are being made here for the celebration of Emancipation Day by the colored folks of Roswell," trumpeted a typical broadcast:

On 19 June at the Haynes Park the colored people of Roswell will fittingly celebrate the day, which will be culminated with a free barbecue at noon. The barbecue is being supported by the business men of Roswell. A dance at the Armory at night, sponsored by the Colored Elk's Lodge, will end the day's celebraton.⁵

The following recap was also typical, including details that may or may not have been included in a story summarizing an event attended by White participants:

The celebration of Emancipation Day by the negroes of Roswell was considered a great success by all who took part in the festivities of the day... The ball game between the colored nine and the Mexican team from Chihuahua was the feature of the day and blacks won from the browns by a score of 11 to 5... The only disturbance of the day was at the dance at night when one negro struck another on the head for paying too much attention to the former's wife. The day was a pleasant one for all the colored people and they feel happy over its success.⁶

⁴ "Large Crowd Attend Singing of Spiritual Songs," *Roswell Daily Record*, 10 July 1931, p. 8.

⁵ "Day Freedom be Celebrated City Roswell," *Roswell Daily Record*, 29 May 1930, p. 10.

⁶ "Negroes Had a Big Time: Their Celebration of Emancipation Day was a Great Success from the Standpoint of Fun," *Roswell Daily Record*, 20 June 1905, p. 1.

In 1930, a salute was fired at sunrise on Emancipation Day, and the “Roswell colored folks started the celebration of their 65th year of freedom.”⁷ A large crowd gathered at Page Park for a barbecue and other events. Two years later, the two-day celebration was again hosted at Page Park, with the Elks Yellow Pine Lodge providing the picnic. A Grand Emancipation Ball featured “Blake and his Broadway buddies.”⁸ All White residents were invited to be spectators.

Five years earlier, in 1927, hardships caused by severe flood conditions prompted the cancellation of the Juneteenth celebration. Writing an open letter to the local newspaper, Waymon Gray offered the following explanation:

So many inquiries have been made in regard to the usual celebration of the 19th of June by the colored people of Roswell and the Pecos Valley, that on behalf of my race I wish to say that the omission of the celebration this year is not because we are any less patriotic or appreciative, but because of the fact that we do not feel that with thousands of our race homeless and hungry under the flood conditions, it would be right for us to spend a cent in jollifying but that every penny we can spare should be sent to the relief committees and our own people in the stricken areas. To this end, it is recommended that all colored people give to the extent of their power for this splendid relief work. We also wish to say that the celebration at Blackdom, of which we have only kind words, is in no sense an observance of Emancipation Day, but a worthy affair arranged by Prof. Waggoner for the advancement of his school work. The colored people of Roswell and the Pecos valley are not celebrating Emancipation Day this year, for the reasons stated.

Respectfully submitted, Wayman Gray.⁹

Approximately 900 Black Roswell residents celebrated the sixty-seventh anniversary of Emancipation Day at a large barbecue and patriotic program at Page Park. Rev. W. A. Johnson, pastor of the Second Baptist Church, “reviewed the achievements of the negro since emancipation, cited his loyalty to the United States government and allegiance in time of war... and discussed the contributions made by negroes to art, science, literature, and invention.”¹⁰ Page Park was apparently previously known as the “old Slaughter grove Moonlight Pavilion, much enlarged [and], remodeled.”¹¹ Fred Parnell, a former New Mexico Military Institute cadet, served as Page Park’s proprietor and manager.¹²

⁷ “Local Negroes Celebrate Day Freedom Here,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 19 June 1930, p. 12.

⁸ “Emancipation Day Page Park, June 19-20,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 10 June 1932, p. 2.

⁹ “Why Roswell Colored Not Celebrating Emancipation,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 10 June 1927, p. 9.

¹⁰ “Negroes Celebrate Emancipation Day,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 20 June 1932, p. 5.

¹¹ “May Day Opening Page Park,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 28 April 1926, p. 4.

¹² *Ibid.*

The following 1937 Juneteenth remembrance is presented verbatim. The original typed manuscript is archived in Santa Fe:

Negro Emancipation Day Barbecue Roswell, New Mexico¹

Emancipation Day, the 19th of June is celebrated each year, by the negroes of Roswell with a grand barbecue, and "collation" (delicacies brought by each housewife in a basket).

The day is begun by gay greetings, such as was heard by the writer on one occasion:

"How is you feelin' Sister Woodrel? I hopes your appetite is spacious fo' de tables sho' gwine groan wid good things this 'mancipation.'" There is calling back and forth to each other – planning ways of going to the barbecue by neighbors in the different negro residence districts in Roswell, particularly the southwestern portion of the City where the greater number of the two hundred and sixty negro population live, and only a few have automobiles or ways of carrying the huge baskets packed with good things for the feast.

Cahoon Park (which has replaced Hayne's Dream, their place of gathering in past years) was the scene of this year's colorful celebration – 1937.

Modern automobiles (driven by the most prosperous of the days revelers) and "Tin-Lizzies" and horse drawn vehicles, at an early hour deposit the gay revelers on the picnic grounds, where they immediately wend their way to the place of most attraction – the barbecue pits – three to five feet deep – where great fires or beds of coals have been kept red-hot throughout the night in order to roast the whole baby beeves, sheep, and lambs stretched on iron rods, or sometimes iron wheels laid across the tops of the pits. The carcasses are frequently turned by two men and basted with rich drippings and seasonings, by the patient capable barbecue cooks. This barbecue cooking has become an art learned by them through many years' service for both white and colored celebrations.

At noon the feast is served at tables made of long planks laid on "saw horses" on which great bowls of salads, pickles, pies, cakes, and breads have been placed. The barbecue is passed to each person then large dishpans (from which one can help themselves at frequent intervals) are heaped and placed every three or four feet down the length of the table. Gallons of fine coffee is served from buckets into bright tin cups. The later paper plates have taken the place of heavy crockery ones used in former years.

A chosen few white people are the honored guests at these barbecue celebrations. They are served apart and in all courtesy and deference by their colored friends.

The clothes worn on this occasion are multi-colored and of various styles and texture. Some wear silks and satins while others wear simple sport clothes, as the white people do, and

¹ Fray Angelico Chavez History Library/AC 228, WPA New Mexico Collection, Identifier: 5-5-50 (#33), "Negro Emancipation Day Barbeque – Roswell, NM," collected by Georgia B. Redfield, 1936-1940.

still others are dressed in extremes of different styles and fashions of the west, and of the Indian and the Mexican people.

A base ball game, dancing, and various athletic contests, are features of the afternoon and evening entertainment. There is always singing and music by the colored string orchestra which is very fine.

Source of Information:

John Woodrel (Colored) Roswell, New Mexico – J. P. White Bldg.

Collected by: Georgia B. Redfield

Desegregation

Roswell, unlike some of the other cities in the southeastern region of New Mexico, chose not to take a proactive stance in the months leading up to the Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation. The superintendent of schools, J. D. Shinkle, responded to the decision by saying he had “no definite announcement yet.”² He also declined to comment as to whether or not the matter would be discussed in the near future at school board meetings.

In the months preceding the Supreme Court decision to end school segregation, the *Roswell Record* publicly cautioned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). They asked that the NAACP not pressure certain school districts into complying with desegregation, should it come to pass. The editors asked the association to consider that it “takes time, money and a lot of planning to provide additional school facilities.” Acknowledging that the subject was “a touchy one,” they urged the NAACP leadership to be patient and tolerant.³

Researchers Williams and Ryan credited the willingness of a majority of Roswell residents to comply with school desegregation efforts to “recent immigrants” representing “all regions of the United States.” They attributed the “increasingly cosmopolitan composition” with contributing to a “gradual change in patterns of discrimination within the community.”⁴ Two years before the Supreme Court decision to end school segregation nationwide, Roswell had already mainstreamed their Black junior and senior high school students, principally as a cost-savings measure:

² “Negro Parents in Carlsbad to File Petition: To Seek ‘Full De-Segregation’ in School System,” *Roswell Daily Record*, 9 July 1954, p. 1.

³ “The Cracker Barrel: The State Press... Must Be Tolerant,” *Clovis News Journal*, 11 August 1954, p. 6.

⁴ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

Because of the small number of students involved, and the prohibitive cost of furnishing them equal but separate instruction, they were moved into the other junior and senior high schools in the fall of 1952. This initial group comprised about thirty students from the seventh through the twelfth grades.⁵

One school administrator interviewed in 1952, said that there was “no protest from Anglo-American parents, because the number was so small that it made no visible difference in the composition of the school.”⁶

Informed persons within the Black community felt that those students who entered the high school had an easier time adjusting than did those who went to the junior high school. This belief was based upon the policy of the high school administration of assigning Black students “only to those classes conducted by teachers known to be unprejudiced and helpful in the adjustments facing the Negro students.”⁷

Apparently, this judicious selection of teachers was not taken at the junior high school level, because “some of the Negro youth felt that they were resented in the school.”⁸ Several Black students in the high school purportedly confided to their principal at Carver that, “We’d like it better if the White kids wouldn’t over-do it being nice to us, then we could all be natural.”⁹ After some initial skirmishes with the administrative personnel at the White school, the Carver youths were eventually allowed to practice in the high school gym, where they made the acquaintance of some of the Anglo players. The Little League baseball teams, which were already integrated, also helped foster friendly intergroup relations.¹⁰

Once integrated, the proportion of Black students to others at the elementary schools was calculated to be about one in fifty. These numbers alone seemed to allay some fears of potential difficulties within some community ranks.¹¹ The problem, instead, according to school officials, was “what to do with the Negro teachers who had tenure.”¹² Of the seven African

⁵ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Williams, Robin M., and Margaret W. Ryan, editors. “Patterns of Adjustment: Carlsbad, Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Roswell, New Mexico.” *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation*, University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 173-197. JSTOR digital library, [jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807879757_williams.13).

¹² Ibid.

American teachers, including the teaching principal, four had tenure, and all had been employed with the Roswell system from between six and thirteen years.¹³ Additional research will be required to understand how each of these teachers was ultimately treated after student segregation was terminated.

Although there are hurtful memories to the contrary, most observers at the time agreed that school desegregation occurred with minimal hardships and disruptions. Interviewed soon afterward in 1954, some Black participants shared that they felt that the “atmosphere of Roswell was becoming less discriminatory as the ‘old timers’ retired, and their positions of community leadership were assumed by a younger and more varied group.”¹⁴ As is so often the case, the younger generation succeeded in inching the preceding generations forward along the long arc of progress including racial equality.

Biographies Roswell IN PROGRESS

Blackdom – Postmaster Bettie Malone

[postal cash book] “I’m Lynn Heidelbaugh, a curator with the National Postal Museum. The date on this book cover that you can see is April 1, 1913. That’s when the money order service was first offered at the post office in Blackdom, New Mexico. Blackdom was a still new town then, and its first settlers had started to arrive around 1908. The community was planned by and for African American homesteaders. They had left the south in hopes of gaining land ownership and other rights that were being denied under Jim Crow laws. Blackdom’s growing population called for an official post office, and their petition was approved in 1912. A post office could be a source of civic pride because it conveyed an extra sense of legitimacy to have this federal agency established in a community. Of course, having a local post office was also convenient. It meant that you could communicate to relatives back home and you could get businesses up and running. The history of the Blackdom post office mirrored the fortunes of the town. All three of the town’s postmasters used this account book. It was important to the postmasters because the number of money orders issued factored into their commissions and salaries. Postmaster Bessie Malone kept the ledger until the post office closed in 1919. The residents had begun to abandon the town. Water resources were limited, and the main cash crop suffered from prolonged droughts and pest problems. Blackdom had become a ghost town by the late 1920s.”

Source: “Freedom Just Around the Corner: Black America from Civil War to Civil Rights,” in *Smithsonian*, available on-line at postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/freedom-just-around-the-corner.

Biographies

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

James Lewis, John Chisum and Stagecoach Sally, Blackdom residents including the Wagoner Family, Black cowboy Addison Jones; Eugene Sherman, Tuskegee airman, Abraham Lincoln Brigade volunteer, Willie Stargell of the Pittsburgh Pirates, several jazz musicians including Preston Love, and others.

James B. Lewis Papers, 1975-1994 (MSS 619 BC)

NM African American leader, was NM State Treasurer, UNM graduate, his career, political and public government work, NAACP, etc.

George Hardy, Tuskegee Airman

“World War II enlistee George Hardy, a native of Philadelphia, PA, had just turned 18 when he was called to active duty in July 1943. That September, he was assigned to the 320th College Training Detachment at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and later transferred to the historic Tuskegee Army Air Field for aviation cadet training with Class 44-H.” After serving with distinction in Germany and Guam, Hardy was assigned to the maintenance squadron in Roswell, NM two years after the armed forces were integrated in 1948. Hardy served in the Korean and Vietnam wars and retired as a lieutenant colonel in 1971. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. “Twice,” recalled Hardy, “I worked for someone who didn’t think the services should have been integrated. I had a commander who wouldn’t talk to me unless I was in the line of duty. I’d see him in a club and he’d just ignore me and walk away... My squadron commander really didn’t want me in his outfit. They hadn’t seen many colored officers, and my wife was brown-skinned, and some people just didn’t like that.”

Source: Hardy, George and Abby Weingarten, “Tuskegee Airman Advanced in Ranks,” *Herald-Tribune*, 19 October 2012. Available on-line at heraldtribune.com/news/20121019/tuskegee-airman-advanced-in-ranks/1.

James Lewis

Born in Roswell, Lewis first went to a segregated school. "As a kid I didn't quite understand why you couldn't go certain places," Lewis said. "Kids now take a lot of things for granted ... I think we've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go." In 1982, Lewis ran for Bernalillo County treasurer despite hearing that there was no way a Black candidate could win. "Most of the people that I had talked to thought I was insane, primarily it was pigmentation," Lewis said. Years later, his résumé is full of accomplishments and firsts. He was former Gov. Bruce King's chief of staff and was the first black to win statewide office when he was elected state treasurer from 1985 to 1990. He also ran for Congress in 1990 but lost in the Democratic primary to then-Secretary of State Rebecca Vigil-Giron by a 243-vote margin. Lewis now is the city administrator for Rio Rancho and recently was nominated for a federal post by Energy Secretary Bill Richardson.”

Source: Smallwood, Scott. "Blacks Don't Let Small Numbers Hold Them Back," *Albuquerque Journal*, 19 September 1999. Available on-line at abqjournal.com/2000/nm/who/34who09-19-99.

Joseph Vogel, Abraham Lincoln Brigade

"Vogel, Joseph born 22 April 1911 in Turka, Poland; Polish; Jewish; Attended the National Academy of Design; Single; WPA Art Project NYC; Received Passport #31592 on 19 June 1936, which listed his address as 34 Horatio Street, NYC; CP 1932; Served with the >>>>>>>>> illegible >>>> for Liberty; Medical for Returned to the U. S. on 8 September 1937 aboard the *Paris*; WW II U. S. Army, combat cameraman and artist in both ETO and PTO; d. 19 December 1995, Roswell, New Mexico, buried South Park Cemetery, Roswell, Chaves County, New Mexico." The Abraham Lincoln Brigade was the country's first integrated military unit.

Sources: Scope of Soviet Activity; RGASPI Fond 545, Opis 6, Delo 849, ll 28, List of American Comrades that have been Repatriated as per 15 October 1937; Opis 6, Delo 1007, ll. 2, ver arc gen americ Joseph Vogel to Adolph Ross, August 8, 1984; (obituary) *The Volunteer*, Volume 19, No. 2, Summer 1997, p. 7; L-W Tree Ancestry; Find-a-Grave# 132807770. Cited in: The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives. Available on-line at alba-valb.org/volunteers/joseph-vogel.

Nate Byrd

"Funeral services for Nate Byrd will be held Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock from the Colored Seventh Day Adventist Church, 106 South Michigan... Nate Byrd was born in Roswell 19 June 1919 and attended the Carver school... He entered the Army 30 May 1945, and served with Company D, 56th Tank Battalion... Burial will be made in South Park Cemetery."

Source: "Nate Byrd Rites," *Roswell Daily Record*, 4 May 1953, p. 12.

Cowboy Addison Jones

"Addison Jones's birthplace is of uncertain origin, but he was likely born in Gonzales or Hays County, Texas. His cowboy skills led to his recognition in western Texas and eastern New Mexico as 'the most noted Negro cowboy that ever topped off a horse.' Addison, who was known as 'Nigger Add' or 'Old Add,' often was mentioned in memoirs and accounts of prominent cattlemen and cowboys who worked with him on the Littlefield Ranch. Addison's skills at roping and breaking horses made him notable among cowboys who usually led lives of anonymity... Stories abound of Addison roping a horse at full gallop and snatching it off its feet... Addison lived his remaining years in Roswell, New Mexico, where he died 24 March 1926 around the age of 81."

Source: Lee, Allen L. *Addison Jones (c1845 – 1926)*. Available on-line at blackpast.org/African-american-history/jones-addison-ca-1845-1926 (17 January 2007).

"Jones eventually became a range boss for a crew of African-American cowboys, working for George Littlefield. Littlefield established or purchased such outfits as the LIT Ranch in the Texas

Panhandle, the Bosque Grande in the Pecos River Valley and the Four Lakes on the Plains, both in New Mexico... At one time, his cattle, branded LFD, roamed over an area of eastern New Mexico the size of state of Rhode Island. Littlefield went on to acquire other properties and became a legendary cattleman, banker and philanthropist. Littlefield's fortune depended on having the best cattle and the best men to handle them, and Jones was at the top of this crew."

Source: Dunnahoo, Janice. "Historically Speaking – Famous Black Americans of the Old West," *Vistas* (25 February 2017). The *Roswell Daily Record* available on-line at rdrnews.com/archive/?p=157959.

Frank Chisum

"Born a slave, Frank Chisum was purchased for \$400 in 1860 by cattleman John Chisum, who set him free. He chose the name Frank Chisum for his close association with the cattleman for whom he worked as a cowhand, later as his bodyguard during the infamous Lincoln County War, and on the chuckwagon during cattle drives when John Chisum procured contracts to deliver beef to military outposts."

Source: Powers, Michele. "On View: Wild West Icon Frank Chisum," *Glaze* (22 February 2021). Available on-line at <https://www.cowboysindians.com/2021/02/masters-of-the-american-west>.

Matthew 'Bones' Hooks

"Matthew 'Bones' Hooks, a respected Negro citizen of Amarillo, who was known all over the Pecos country back in the days when 'Ad' Jones was a top hand with outfits of forty odd years ago, in the Roswell terrain. 'Bones' was a horse wrangler, and when it came to taming the wild bronks of those days, all of the cow persons had a wholesome respect for his skill. He was a great friend of "T" Ancor Gus Lee, and they worked together on many outfits. Gus as a cook and 'Bones' as a wrangler. These three are the only early day Negro cow workers. Several served as cooks, but only these three are remembered as being all-arounders with specialties... [Bones] has lived in Amarillo since 1901, [and] is the only Panhandle Negro ever to sit on a jury..."

Source: "About 'Bones' Hooks," *Alamogordo News*, 14 November 1940, p. 3.

Gus Lee

"Gus Lee, a well known negro boy, left Sunday morning for Tyler, TX where he will enter college for the winter."

Source: "Local News," *Roswell Daily Record*, 30 September 1907, p. 4.

"One of the old-time 'cow outfit' cooks of southeastern New Mexico and the man who kindled the first fire ever held at the New Mexico Military Institute will have charge of the barbecue here on 20 June when the colored population of Roswell celebrate the sixty-seventh anniversary of their emancipation. The celebration will be staged at Page Park... Everyone in Roswell knows

Gus Lee. Gus drifted down to the Pecos Valley Flats in 1886 from the Panhandle where he spent a number of years cooking for the T-Anchor Cattle Company. In the Panhandle he was known as "Y-Anchor Gus." He was born in Louisiana and at this time is 81 years of age. When Gus Lee came to Roswell he entered the company of the late Captain Joseph C. Lee, who at that time was head of the Lea Cattle Co. with cattle ranging over a wide area west of the Pecos. Gus later cooked for the I. F. D. Cattle Company and other of the 'outfits.' He kindled the first fire ever built at the New Mexico Military Institute when Colonel Goss opened what in later years has come to be the 'West Point of the West.' Gus worked for the Institute for many years as chief cook, being employed first by Colonel Goss, later by Colonel Meadows and still later by Colonel Wilson. Gus has forgotten more about barbecues than most folks know. He has directed more barbecues during the 46 years he has lived in Roswell and vicinity than any dozen men. Gus is getting along in years now and he is going to put his best into the coming event... 'It may be my last job of roasting meat over the open fire and I am going to make this the best meat ever barbecued in eastern New Mexico,' Gus Lee said this morning. 'I have cooked over the open fire all the way from the Canadian to the Rio Grande. I have cooked for the early day cattle barons of the southwest,' he said this morning. 'Captain Lea, he was sure a fine man, we all loved him and everybody who knew him respected him and admired him,' Gus said today in recalling some of his experiences before the drift fences came to eastern New Mexico."

Source: "Old Time Cow Outfit Cook to Plan Barbecue," *Roswell Daily Record*, 11 May 1932, p. 8.

Willie Stargell Major League Baseball

“His twenty seasons with the Pirates established him as one of the most powerful hitters in all of modern baseball, yet Stargell’s magnetic personality and his emphasis on teamwork and loyalty earned him as much respect as his spectacular playing.”

Source: Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), inside cover.

“Looking back over his rough years in the minor leagues, Stargell sees the many adversities he faced – from constant pain to the insults of racism and segregation – as essential to his development as a ballplayer and as a person.”

Source: Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), inside cover.

“I was raised in both a Negro and Seminole Indian environment.”

Source: Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), p. 1.

The San Angelo Sophomore League moved to Roswell. “Roswell prided itself on its high Caucasian population... We were segregated at all times from the white players, except when on the field. We were prohibited from living in the same section of Roswell or staying in the same motel as the white players... The Pirates arranged for me to board for \$20 a week with a black air force sergeant, who lived in Roswell.”

Source: Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), pp. 62-63.

“Though I was deeply bothered by the racism in the Sophomore League, I always hid the hurt inside and never allowed it to escape. Like the pin in my pelvis, it was a constant source of pain, but I never spoke to anyone about it.”

Source: Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), p. 64.

“The Sophomore League was a Class D league that ran from 1958-61. It had previously been known as the Southwestern League. The name change was part of a systemic change. The circuit went from being one with almost no ties to major league baseball and composed of minor league veterans to a league where every team was the farm club of a major league team and prospects of varying quality appeared.”

Source: *Baseball Reference* available on-line at baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Sophomore_League.

Albuquerque, NM Albuquerque Dukes 1960-1961, moved to Texas League 1962-1964
Alpine, TX Alpine Cowboys 1959-1961
Artesia, NM Artesia Giants 1958-1960; Artesia Dodgers 1961
Carlsbad, NM Carlsbad Potashers 1958-1961, moved from Southwestern League 1956-1957
and Longhorn League 1953-1955
El Paso, TX El Paso Sun Kings 1961, moved to Texas League 1962-1970
Hobbs, NM Hobbs Cardinals 1958-1959; Hobbs Pirates 1960-1961
Midland, TX Midland Braves 1958-1959
Odessa, TX Odessa Dodgers 1959-1960
Plainview, TX Plainview Athletics 1958-1959
Roswell, NM Roswell Pirates 1959
San Angelo, TX San Angelo Pirates 1958-1959

Source: *Baseball Reference* available on-line at baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Sophomore_League.

“The crossroads of my life appeared in a little town named Plainview, Texas. Plainview, located in the upper northwest corner of Texas between Lubbock and Amarillo, like all of the Sophomore League cities, specialized in boredom. For a Negro baseball player, social life was usually a good night’s sleep. There were no racial-free havens for us to frequent. Racism was with us every minute of the day... I decided to walk to the ballfield early. A white man, hiding around a corner, jumped into my path. He had a shotgun in his hand. The next thing I felt was the cold metal barrels of a gun pressed tightly against my temple. Though I began to shake like a leaf, the gun-bearing bigot never flinched... He stated his purpose up front ‘Nigger,’ he told me, ‘if you play in that game tonight, I’ll blow your brains out.’... I still feel the touch of the cold barrels today. It’s a feeling that has never left me.”

Source: Stargell, Willie and Tom Bird. *Willie Stargell: An Autobiography*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), p. 65.

Wagoner Family

“Rodney Bowe, Roswell NM descendant of Wagoner family, original homesteader of Blackdom, NM.” “Steve Wagoner – Resident of Roswell, NM and descendant of Wagoner homesteading family.” [Look up these names]

John and Frank Chisum

“A cattle baron who moved longhorn herds from Texas into New Mexico in the mid-1800s, John Chisum would work with Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving, found one of the largest cattle ranches in the American West, and became involved in New Mexico’s Lincoln County War.”

Source: Weiser, Kathy. “John Chisum – Cattle Baron on the Pecos,” (September 2017) available on-line at legendsofamerica.com/we-johnchisum.

Around 1854, “Chisum purchased a mulatto slave girl named Jensie from some emigrants bound for California. The girl was just 15 years old and beautiful and Chisum began a love affair with her. The couple had two daughters... At the outbreak of the Civil War, Chisum freed all his slaves, including Jensie. He would later provide Jensie and his daughters with a home in Bonham, TX as well as financial support for their needs.”

Source: Weiser, Kathy. “John Chisum – Cattle Baron on the Pecos,” (September 2017) available on-line at legendsofamerica.com/we-johnchisum.

In addition to other successful enterprises, in 1875 he purchased the 40-acre South Spring Ranch, three miles south of Roswell, NM and made it his headquarters of a cattle-ranching empire that extended for 150 miles of land along the Pecos River. “On 22 December 1884, he died of cancer... He left an estate worth \$500,000 to his brothers Pitzer and James.”

Source: Weiser, Kathy. “John Chisum – Cattle Baron on the Pecos,” (September 2017) available on-line at legendsofamerica.com/we-johnchisum.

Born a slave, Frank Chisum was purchased for \$400 in 1860 by cattleman John Chisum, who set him free. He chose the name Frank Chisum for his close association with the cattleman for whom he worked as a cowhand, later as his bodyguard during the infamous Lincoln County War, and on the chuckwagon during cattle drives when John Chisum procured contracts to deliver beef to military outposts.

Source: Glaze, Michele Powers. “Frank Chisum – Wild West Icon,” (22 February 2021). Available on-line at cowboysindians.com/2021/02/masters-of-the-american-west/.

“Roswell is perhaps most famous for its alleged intergalactic visitors that may or may not have crashed here via flying saucer in 1947. However, some very real famous people have traversed and lived in Roswell, including singer John Denver and actress Demi Moore. During the turbulent Wild West days, Roswell was the stomping grounds of cattle baron John Chisum, sheriff Pat Garrett, and even his arch-nemesis, Billy the Kid. Among others to call Roswell home were Robert H. Goddard, the father of modern rocketry; baseball player Joe Bauman, who hit 72 home runs in one season; pro-golfer Nancy Lopez; Western superstar Roy Rogers; rodeo champion Bob Crosby; and Dallas Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach. This book explores these celebrities and the many unsung local legends and heroes of Roswell through the vast photograph archives of the Historical Society for Southeast New Mexico, as well as private collections.”

“Discrimination is a disease.” –Roger Staubach, NMMI Graduate

“The transition from being an only child in Cincinnati to a cadet half a country away was culture shock. He never visited the school before enrolling, and his stay in Roswell came close to being extremely brief. ‘I was homesick like crazy for a while – I called home quite a bit,’ he said. ‘My dad was in bad shape (with diabetes) and I was worried about him. Plus, I had never left

Cincinnati, Ohio, before except to see relatives in Kentucky. 'But the Naval Academy had mentioned that if I could take a year off and go to Roswell (and maintain a B average) I could get in. They had sent a number of kids out there, and my mother said, 'Yeah, this might help you make up your mind.' Staubach feels the decision to attend NMMI turned out to be one of the best he ever made. 'The school was fantastic,' he said. 'We had great teachers who got me prepared to go to the Naval Academy.'"

Source: Christ, Bob. *Albuquerque Journal* Staff Writer, "NFL Hall of Famer Staubach Has Nothing but Praise for NMMI," 26 August 2016 available on-line at abqjournal.com/834404/staubach-has-nothing-but-praise-for-nmmi.

Oral Histories

Living Histories

SELECTED IMAGES ROSWELL, NM



Figure 180. Cowboys and ethnic diversity

No. 485 Cow Boys Ready for the Round Up

Born a slave, Frank Chisum was purchased for \$400 in 1860 by cattleman John Chisum, who set him free.

Source: Powers, Michele. "On View: Wild West Icon Frank Chisum," *Glaze* (22 February 2021). Available on-line at <https://www.cowboysindians.com/2021/02/masters-of-the-american-west>.

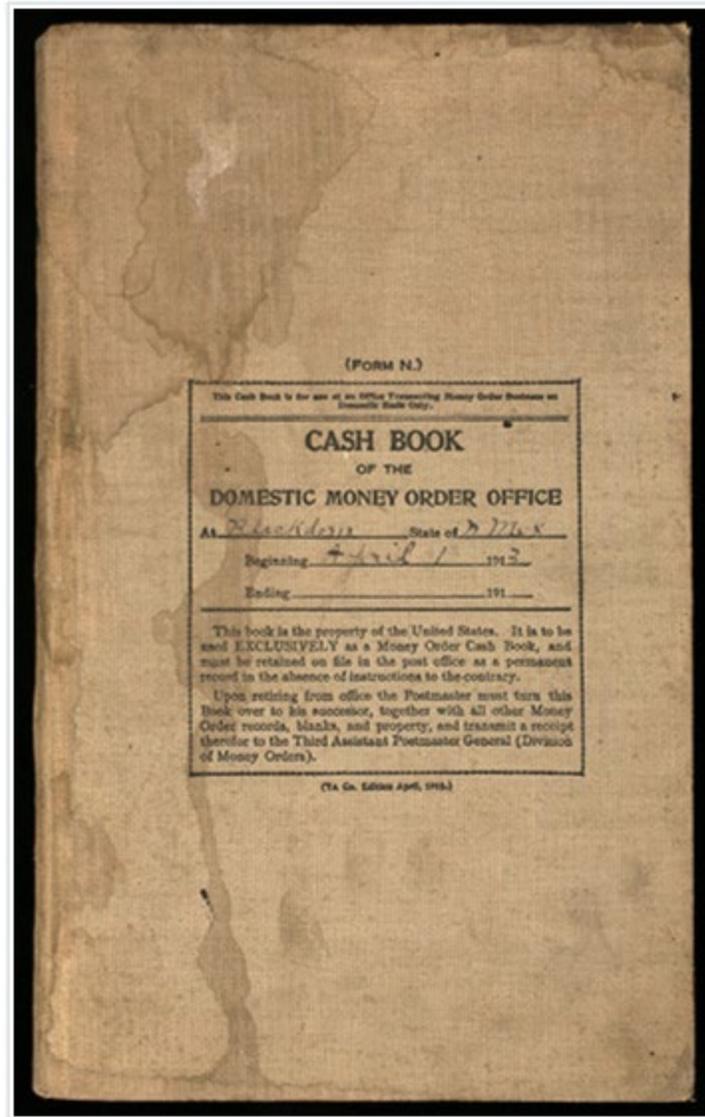


Figure 181. Blackdom post office cash book

Blackdom, NM supported more than one post office that offered money orders and postal savings accounts, functioning as *de facto* banks.

Source: "Freedom Just Around the Corner: Black America from Civil War to Civil Rights," in *Smithsonian*, available on-line at postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/freedom-just-around-the-corner.

Yellow Pine Lodge

No. 864 improved Benevolent and Protective order of—

ELKS

of the World, the Colored Elks of Roswell will give an Easter Charity-contribution Ball Friday night, March 29th, at the Armory; The colored people of all the neighboring towns will attend this ball and a merry dance will be the feature, and for the benefit of the white citizens a reserve place will be arranged for observation of the dancing program.

Music will be furnished by Lemp's Orchestra and the visiting Elks will be accorded with the privileges of which they are at their home towns, Amarillo, El Paso and Albuquerque.

Figure 182. 'Colored' Elks

Source: Advertisement. "Yellow Pine Lodge... The Colored Elks of Roswell," *Roswell Daily Record*, 29 March 1929, p. 10. Emphasis added.

DECLAMATION

Winner



Barbara J. Quarles

First place winner in the City of Roswell "I Speak For Democracy Contest" sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Barbara also won a controversial third place in the state-wide contest. Debate arising as to her not having won first place. 

BARBARA WE SALUTE YOU

Figure 183. "Declamation Winner"

Source: "Declamation Winner," *Carver High Yearbook* (1951)

GRAND
LABOR
DAY

BALL!

For the Colored People of Pecos Valley.
White people invited as spectators in reserved
balcony section

CARLSBAD, N. M.

AT THE ARMORY—GRAND MARCH 9 P. M.

Monday Sept. 3rd.

SIX BLACK DOTS
Premier music makers
will furnish music.

*Carnival Caps
Noise Makers
Refreshments*

Adm. 75c Balcony 50c

Wayman Gray, Mgr.

Figure 184. "For the colored people of the Pecos Valley"

"White people invited as spectators in reserved balcony seating."

Source: "Grand Labor Day Ball!" Advertisement. *Roswell Daily Record*, 31 August 1928, p. 13.



Figure 185. Frank Chisum and Chuck Wagon

Courtesy of John LeMay, Historical Society for Southeast New Mexico, Photo #855, n.d.



Figure 186. Oil painting Frank Chisum

Frank Chisum - Wild West Icon Oil Painting 60" x 20" (2020) by Kim Wiggins
(Roswell, NM)

Source: Available on-line cowboysindians.com/2021/02/masters-of-the-american-west



Figure 187. Frank Chisum

Courtesy of John LeMay, Historical Society for Southeast New Mexico, Photo #3872, n.d.



Figure 188. Washington Post cartoon.

Source: Published in the *Roswell Daily Record*, 19 November 1956, p. 4.

**JOIN THE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS
THE LARGEST NEGRO SECRET ORDER
IN AMERICA EXCLUSIVELY FOR MEN
400,000 MEMBERS IN AMERICA
3,000 IN OKLAHOMA**

**The Oklahoma Knights of Pythias now pay
\$500.00 Insurance on death, in addition to \$75.00
Burial.**

**Persons desiring to join can see Sir W. T.
Tucker, 313 East Second Street, Oklahoma City,
or Sir R. B. Williams, 2 South Peach, Oklahoma
City.**

FOR CLUBS AND NEW LODGES

**For special information write Dr. Charles B.
Wickham, Grand Chancellor.**

TULSA, OKLAHOMA.

Figure 189. Knights of Pythias

Source: "Join the Knights of Pythias the Largest Negro Secret Order," *The Black Dispatch*, (n.d.) p. 2.



Figure 190. "Okie Family Looking for Work Roswell"

Depression-era transplants brought their belongings, skills, aspirations, and often their racial prejudices with them to New Mexico

Source: Photographer Dorothea Lange, Farm Services Administration.

WAYNE ADAMS, **Candidate for State Representative**

Favors:

1. A long time Federal or Private loan system which would enable any farmer in Chaves County to construct tile or concrete ditches on their farms to save water.
2. More Farm-to-Market roads.
3. Lower State and Federal taxes.
4. More equitable adjustment of present income tax law to meet certain limitations which face farmers.
5. Repeal of pre-primary law.
6. Fair treatment for all groups regardless of color, race or creed.
7. More research to discover new farm crops and small industries for Chaves County.
8. A more equitable and workable Teacher Tenure Law.
9. Creation of an organization to study and improve the Housing situation of the colored people of Roswell.

Paid Political Advertisement

Figure 191. Paid political advertisement

Source: Paid political advertisement. "Fair treatment for all groups regardless of color, race, or creed" and "Creation of an organization to study and improve the Housing situation of the colored people of Roswell." *Roswell Daily Record*, 2 May 1954, p. 6.



Figure 192. Private jet owned by Elvis Presley

A private jet once owned by Elvis Presley sat on a Roswell, NM tarmac for 36 years before it was sold again at auction in 2018. Presley's provocative dancing and hit records turned him into one of the 20th century's most recognizable icons. Historians believe "his music also helped usher in the fall of racial segregation."

Source: Contreras, Russell. "Private Jet Once Owned by Elvis Presley For Sale – Again," *Entertainment* (18 June 2018). Available on-line at am920theanswer.com/news/entertainment/private-jet-once-owned-by-elvis-presley-for-sale-again.

Roswell Tent City and Sanatorium
(For the Treatment of Tuberculosis.)



(One of the Cottages.)

OPEN TO THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

Nice, clean, sanitary cottages.

The utmost diligence in maintaining a sanitary and healthful condition.

An experienced physician and trained nurses in attendance day and night.

The best the country affords to eat.

Terms and particulars on application to the Secretary,

DR. C. M. YATER,
119 W. 2nd St., Roswell, N. M.

Figure 193. Cottages for tuberculosis patients

Health-seekers and health service providers, from diverse ethnic backgrounds, made Roswell home.

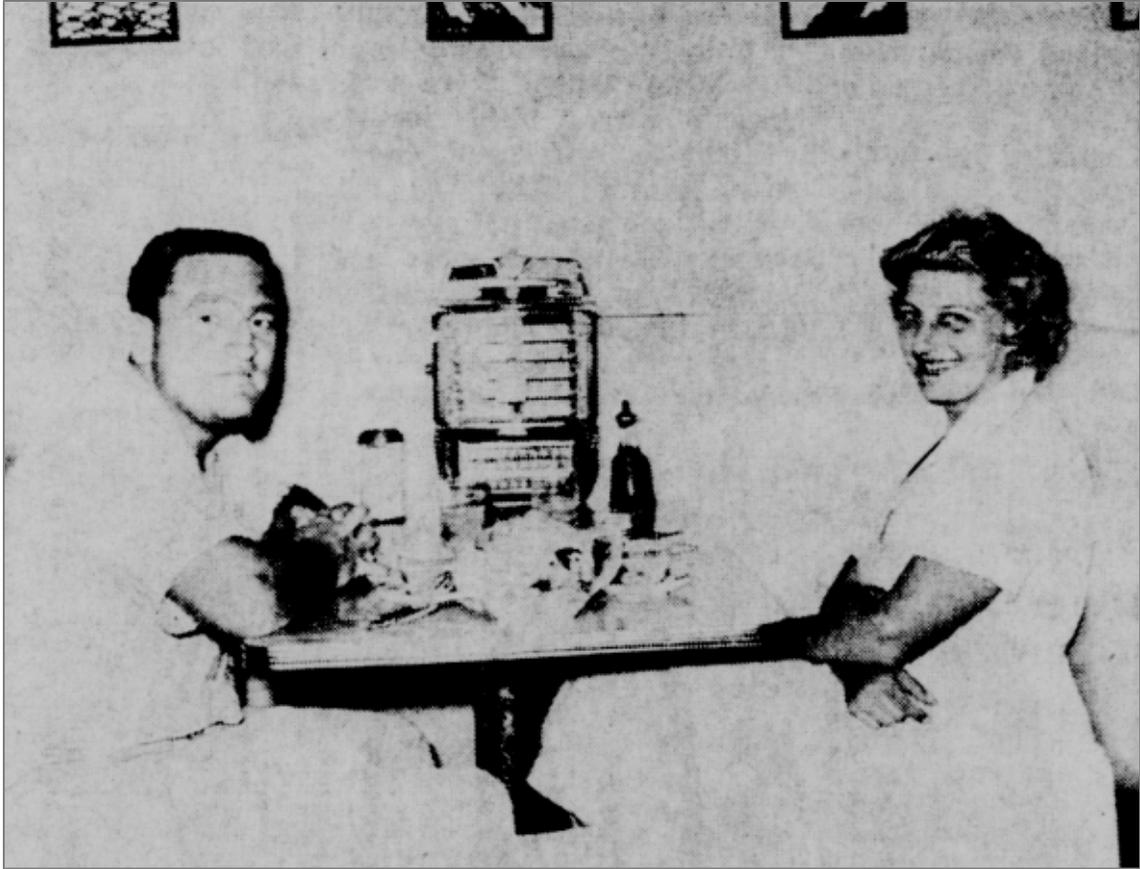


Figure 194. Harlem Globetrotters denied service

“Making a well-tanned and handsome couple, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Avdia, of 2808 Emerald Dr., have stopped in for a delightful meal at the CHEW DEN RESTAURANT. Like most of the people in Roswell, they know the selection of food is varied, the service prompt, and the end result is sure to be delicious. Plan this week to take the whole family out to dine at the CHEW DEN RESTAURANT, 1401 S. E. Main.”

In 1957, after playing to a packed crowd in town, the Harlem Globetrotters were denied service at the Chew Den Restaurant.

Source: “Globetrotters Draw Capacity Crowd But Can’t Eat in Roswell Café,” *Hobbs Daily News Sun*, 9 February 1962, p. 1.

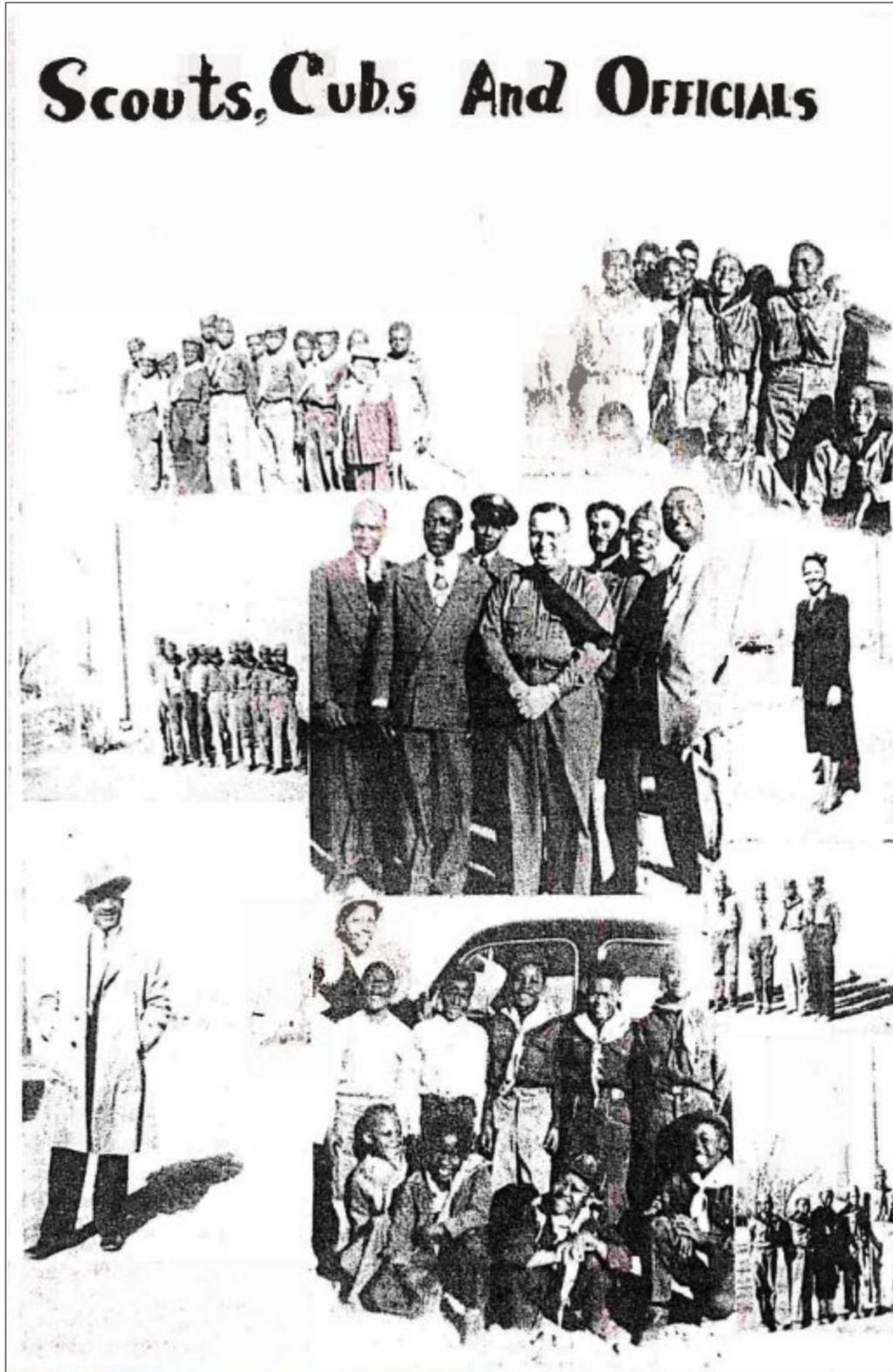


Figure 195. Carver High Yearbook (1951)

Source: "Scouts, Cubs and Officers," Carver High Yearbook (1951)



Figure 196. Roswell promotional brochure

Although there was a small African American population presence at the time, this promotional brochure published in 1906 omits the Black experience.

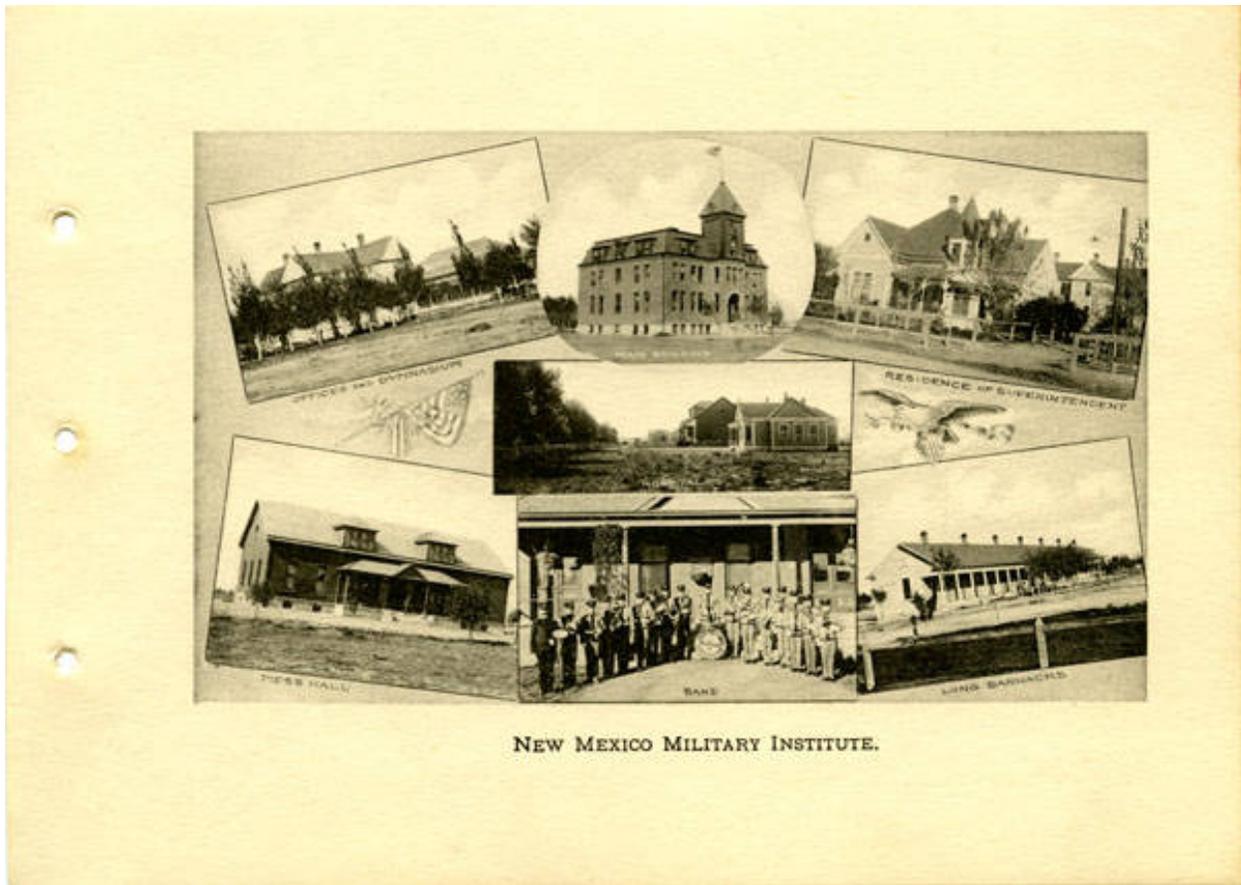


Figure 197. Promotional pamphlet. *The New Mexico Military Institute*

Black cadets were not admitted to the New Mexico Military Institute until the early 1970s.



BATTALION—NEW MEXICO MILITARY INSTITUTE.

Figure 198. Battalion -- New Mexico Military Institute

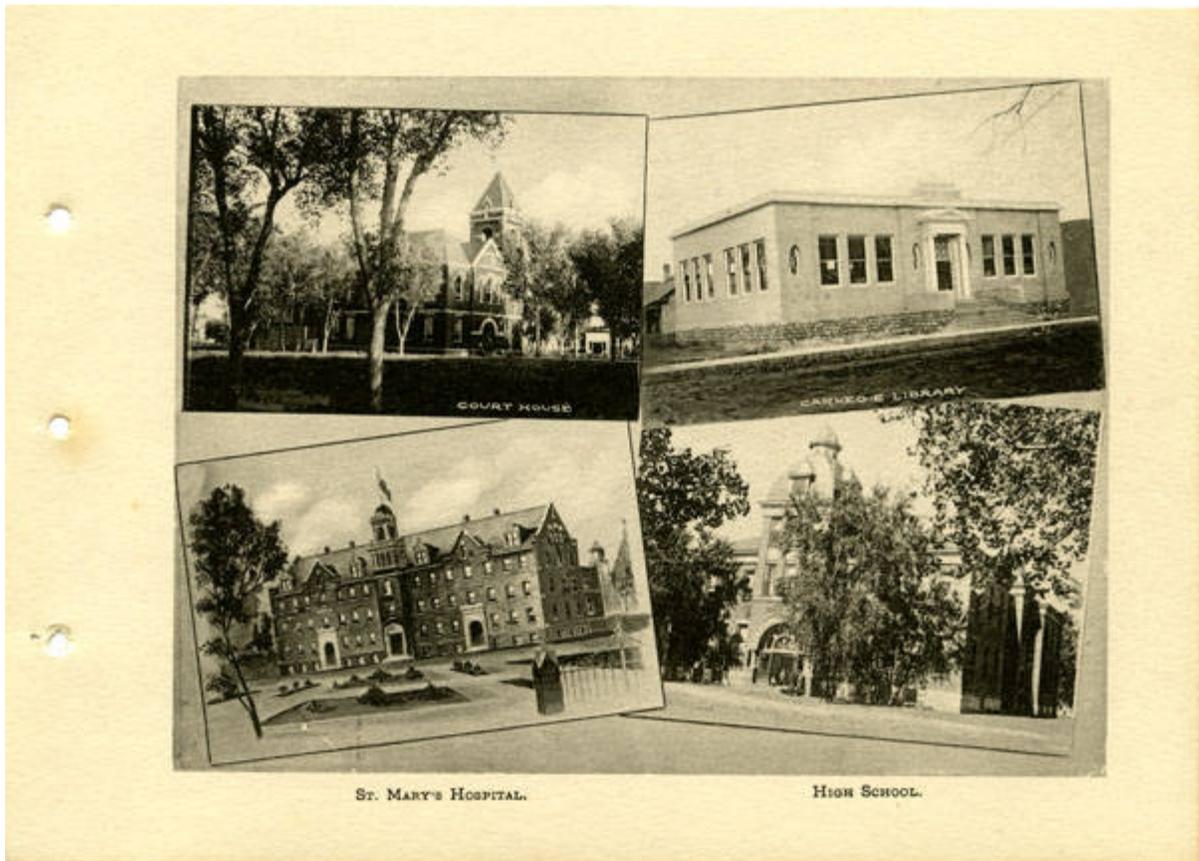


Figure 199. Prominent public buildings Roswell

It is not known, aside from the high school, which public buildings were segregated and which were not.

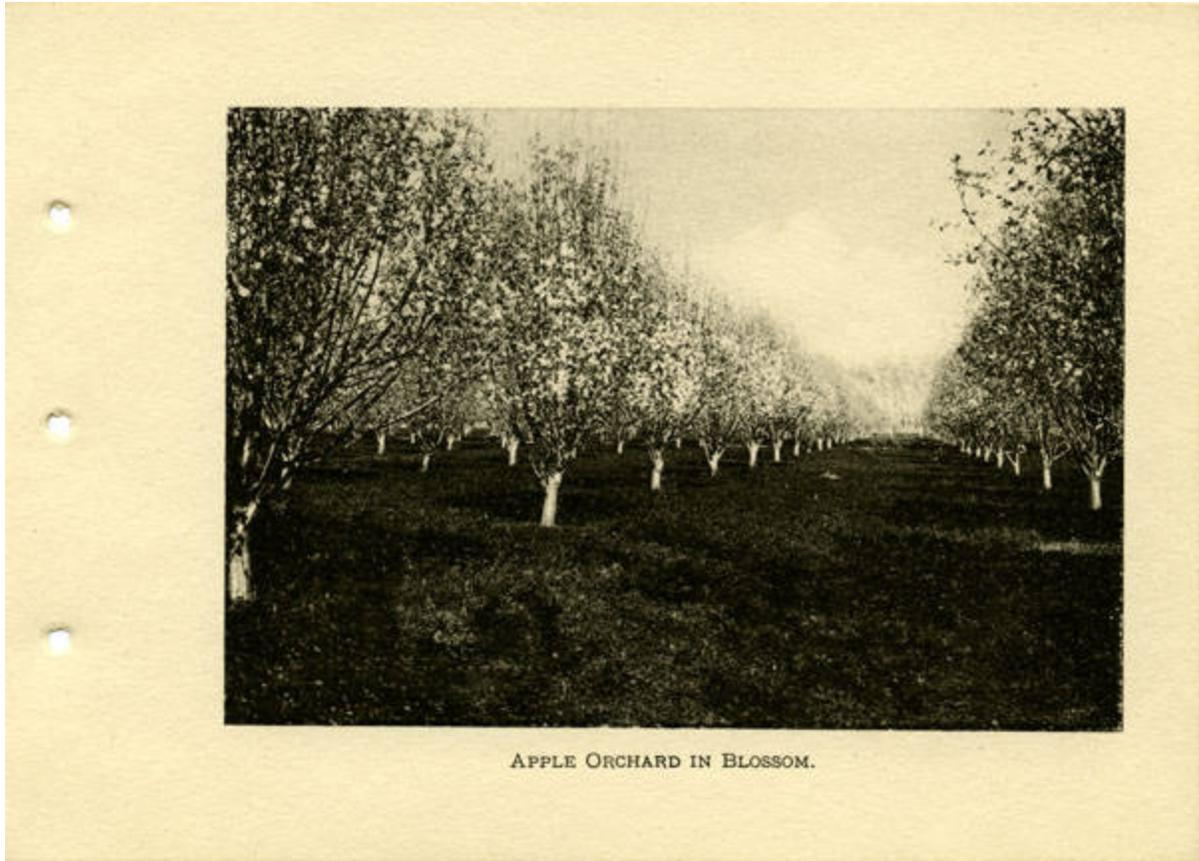


Figure 200. Promotional brochure. Apple orchards in blossom

African Americans may have worked in the apple packing plants before disease and drought ruined the apple industry.



Figure 201. Cotton Carnival parade

Roswell's Ku Klux Klan entry in the Cotton Carnival parade in 1926. Photo courtesy of the Historical Society for Southeast New Mexico

111c		11111
	Pioneer Klan No. 15	1000
zen.	Meets every Thursday night, 8:00	W
and	o'clock sharp. All members are req-	leaf
301f	ed to be present. Visiting K's are	inst
	welcome.	Kri
	By order E. C.	007
	—Adv.	

Figure 202. Pioneer Klan No. 15

The local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in Roswell was known as the Pioneer Klan No. 15.

Source: Advertisement. *Roswell Daily Record*, 1 June 1932, p. 8.



Figure 203. *The Black Dispatch* newspaper

Many Black residents in the larger cities and southeastern New Mexico subscribed to magazines, journals, and newspapers catering to the African American community.

Source: *The Black Dispatch* newspaper, 2 July 1920, p.1.

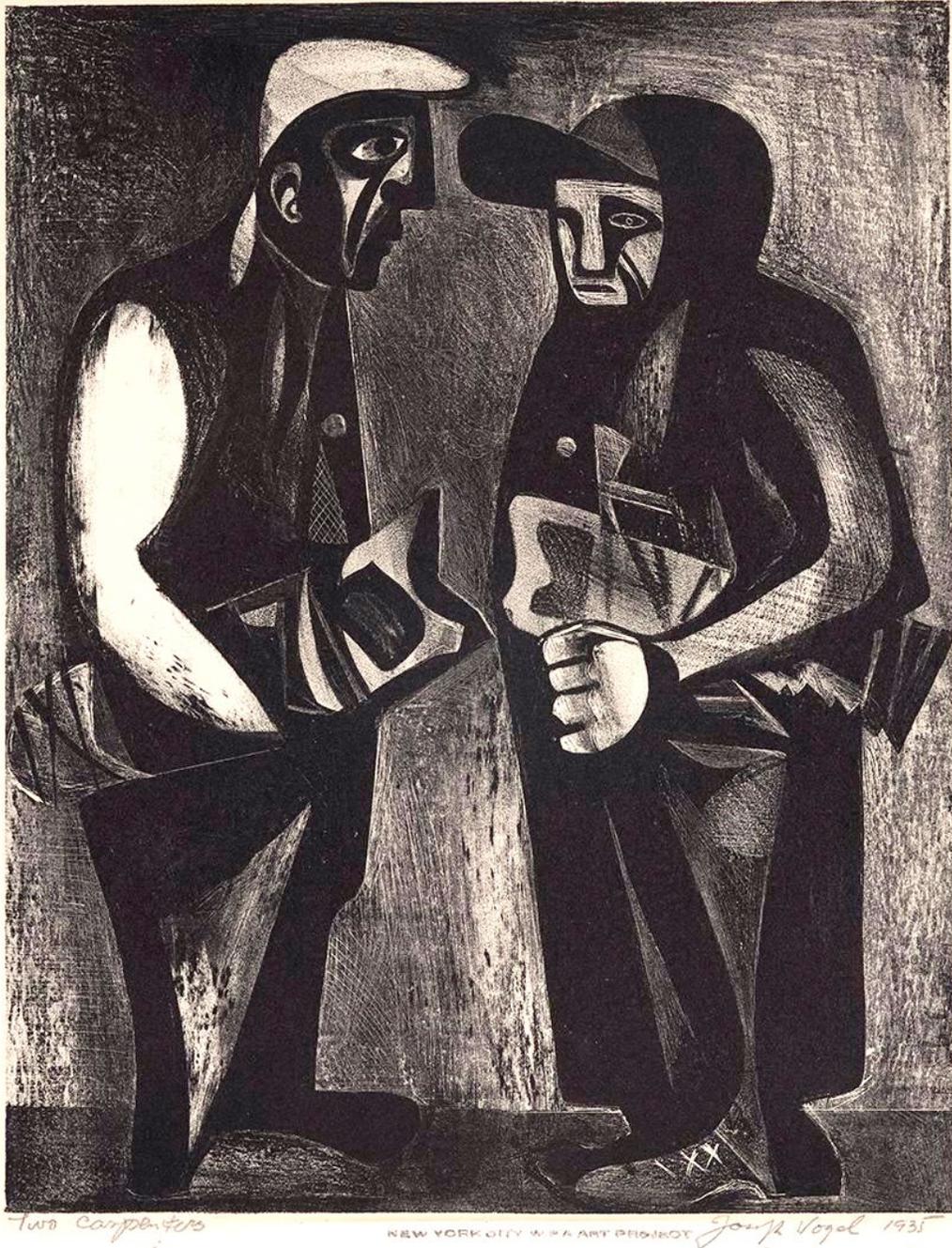


Figure 204. "Two Carpenters" by Joseph Vogel

"Two Carpenters" by Joseph Vogel (1935) New York City WPA Art Project

Joseph Vogel (born in Poland and buried in Roswell, NM) served in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, America's first racially-integrated military establishment.

Please Mention the "Green Book"

LONG ISLAND

AMITYVILLE

RESTAURANTS
Watervliet, 158 Dixon Ave.

ROAD HOUSES
Freddy's, Albany & Banbury Court

BARBER SHOPS
Jimmy's, Albany & Brewster

BEAUTY PARLORS
Boyd's, 21 Banbury Court

CORONA

TAVERNS
Big George, 106 Northern Blvd.
Prosperity, 32-19 102nd St.

NIGHT CLUBS
New Cameo, 108 Northern Blvd.

BEAUTY PARLORS
Myrt's, 105-09 Northern Blvd.

RESTAURANTS
Encore, 105-13 Northern Blvd.

FREEPORT

NIGHT CLUBS
Celebrity, 71 E. Sunrise H'way

HEMPSTEAD

TAVERNS
Modernistic, 96 So. Franklin St.

BARBER SHOPS
Sykes, 38 So. Franklin St.

BEAUTY PARLORS
Sykes, 38 So. Franklin St.

INWOOD

NIGHT CLUBS
Club Carib, 332 Bayview Ave.

JAMAICA

TAVERNS
Palm Gardens, 107-02 Merrick
Tolliver's, 112-27 New York Blvd.
Mandalay, 114-16 Merrick Rd.
Hank's, 108-04 New York Blvd.
Old Sweet, 158-11 South Rd.

TAILORS
Klug's, 107-21 171st St.

BEAUTY PARLORS
Roslyn, 106-53 New York Blvd.

LINDENHURST

NIGHT CLUBS
Club Ebony, Sunrise H'way 46th St.

SPRINGFIELD

BEAUTY PARLORS
Gorja, 126-17 Merrick Blvd.

ST. ALBANS

LIQUOR STORE
Frank Mayhew, 119-06 Merrick Blvd

NIGHT CLUBS
Ruby, 175-02 Baisley Blvd.

STATEN ISLAND

WEST BRIGHTON

BEAUTY PARLORS
Ett's, 1652 Richmond Terr.

BARBER SHOPS
Dozier, 125 Broadway

NIGHT CLUBS
Williams, 293 Broadway

TAILORS
A. Higgs, 721 Henderson
Tucker, 260 Broadway

SERVICE STATIONS
Rispoli, 46 Barker St.



*Yes! We Can Arrange Your
Vacation . . . Everywhere in
the United States*

CRUISES TOURS TICKETS
WEST INDIES CALIFORNIA MEXICO
BERMUDA EUROPE CANADA
AFRICA SOUTH AMERICA

No Service Charge

VICTOR H. GREEN & CO.
200 West 135th Street Room 215A
New York 30, N. Y.

in Patronizing These Places

WEST CHESTER

ELMSFORD

TAVERNS
Clarke, 91 Saw Mill River Rd.

MT. VERNON

TOURIST HOME
Mrs. Lloyd King, 243 So. 10th Ave.

RESTAURANTS
Hambourger, 15 W. 3 St.
Friendship, 50 W. 3rd St.

TAVERNS
Mohawk Inn, 142 S. 7th Ave.
Friendship Center, 50 W. 3rd St.

NEW ROCHELLE

HOTELS
Huguenot, 242 Huguenot St.

RESTAURANTS
Harris, 29 Morris St.
Week's, 45 Winyah Ave.

BEAUTY PARLORS
A. Berry, 50 DeWitts Pl
B. Miller, 54 DeWitts Pl
Celia, 41 Rochelle Pl.

BARBER SHOPS
Field's, 66 Winyah Ave.
Pal-Mo-Ral, 56 Brook St.

LIQUOR STORES
A. Edwards, 112 Union Ave.

DRUG STORES
Dunne's, 57 Linclon Ave.

NORTH TARRYTOWN

BARBER SHOPS
Lemon's, Valley St.

TUCKAHOE

RESTAURANTS
Butterfly Inn, 47 Washington St.

BEAUTY PARLORS
Shanbana, 144 Main St.

BARBER SHOPS
Afr, 144 Main St.

YONKERS

RESTAURANTS
The Brown Derby, 125 Nepperham Ave.

WHITE PLAINS

HOTELS
Rei Rio, 122 Lafayette Ave.

RESTAURANTS
Walnard's, 79 Martine Ave.
Waldorf, 102 Grove St.
Tark's, 372 Central Ave.
Field's, 328 Tarrytown Rd.

BEAUTY PARLORS
Reynold's, 144 Main St.
Maudie's, 122 Martine Ave.

BARBER SHOPS
Mitchell's, 100 Grove St.

NIGHT CLUBS
Shelton's, 53 Grove St.

LIQUOR STORES
Martine, 129 Martine Ave.

TAVERNS
Field's, 525 Tarrytown Rd.
Sunny's, 237 Tarrytown Rd.

TAXI CABS
Martine, 85 Martine Ave.
Bower, 106 Grove St.

TAILORS
Johnson's, 121 Martine Ave.

NEVADA

RENO

TOURIST HOMES

HAWTHORNE GUEST
Catering to Tourists - Phone 2-7386
OPEN YEAR ROUND
Rec. by Chamber of Commerce,
also A.A.A.
J. R. HAMLET, Prop.
342 Valley Road Reno, Nevada

Floyd Garner, 551 E. 2nd St.

LAS VEGAS

TOURIST HOMES
Harrison's Guest Home
1001 North 8 'P' St.
Shaw Apts., 619 Van Buren St.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

WHITEFIELD

TOURIST HOMES
Mrs. Homer Mason, Greenwood St.

NEW MEXICO

ALBUQUERQUE

TOURIST HOMES
Mrs. Kate Duncan, 423 N. Arno St.
Mrs. W. Bailey, 1137 N. 2nd St.

RESTAURANTS
Aunt Brenda's, 406 North Arno St.

CARLSBAD

TOURIST HOMES
Mrs. A. Stierzel, 502 S. Halcouens

BARBER SHOPS
Gaeland Johnson, West Bronson St.

GALLUP

TOURIST HOMES
Mrs. Sonnie Lewis, 103 Wilson St.

ROSWELL

TOURIST HOMES
Mrs. Mary Collins
121 East 10th St.
R. Brown, 213 W. Math

RESTAURANTS
Sun Set Cafe, 115 E. Walnut St.

Figure 205. Negro Motorist Green Book listings for New Mexico (1954)

Tourist Homes: Mrs. Mary Collins, 121 East 10th St. and R. Brown, 213 W. Main.

Restaurants: Sun Set Café, 115 E. Walnut St.

Source: Negro Motorist Green Book Compendium, p. 175.

Your Friendly
FRONTIER THEATRES
 EXTEND A GREAT BIG
HOWDY!



to all
ELKS and their LADIES

On the Occasion of their
 26th ANNUAL CONVENTION
 May 12, 13, 14



Downtown Theatres
 ● PLAINS ● YUCCA ● CHIEF ● PECOS

Drive-In Theatres
 ● STARLITE ● BALLOJAK ● JINGLE-BOB

Figure 206. Advertisement local theatres

Your Friendly Frontier Theatres

Black theater-goers in Roswell were denied admittance, or were relegated to inferior seating and viewing sections

Source: Advertisement. *Roswell Daily Record*, 27 July 1905, p. 4.

Venerated Spaces Black Communities Roswell

NAME	TYPE	LOCATION
Yellow Pine Lodge No. 846	'Colored' Elks Lodge	Verify location
Joyce-Pruit Company	Company meeting hall	Verify location
Page Park*	Juneteenth, Little League	Verify location
Chihuahuita District	Historically Latinx and Black [?]	Boundaries detailed in text
Friendship Missionary	Church	1220 S. Johnson Rd.
Immanuel Church of God	Church	1002 N. Union St.
Mt. Gilead Baptist	Church	700 E. Summit
Smith Chapel C. M. E.	Church & 1st segregated school	206 S. Michigan
Ware Tabernacle Baptist	Church	900 E. Deming
Washington Chapel A. M. E.	Church	110 S. Washington
Galilee Baptist	Church	513 E. Matthews St.
Negro Motorist Green Book Site	Mrs. Mary Collins Home	Verify location
Negro Motorist Green Book Site	Sunset Café	Verify location
Hondo River east of Main Street	Cultural boundary	Verify Black community
George Washington Carver	Segregated school	Verify location
North Hill District	African American enclave	Verify location (downtown)
'Colored' Masonic Hall	Prince Hall Masons [verify]	Across street from Smith Chapel
'Negro' Baptist	Church	Verify location S. Kansas
Battery 'A' Armory	Black social center	Verify location
Haynes Park	Juneteenth celebrations	Verify location
Blackdom	African American settlement	Vicinity Roswell
Cahoon Park	Juneteenth celebrations	Verify location

Table 8. Venerated Spaces Black Communities Roswell

*Formerly historic Slaughter Ranch grove Moonlight Pavilion

BLACK COMMUNITY ROSWELL

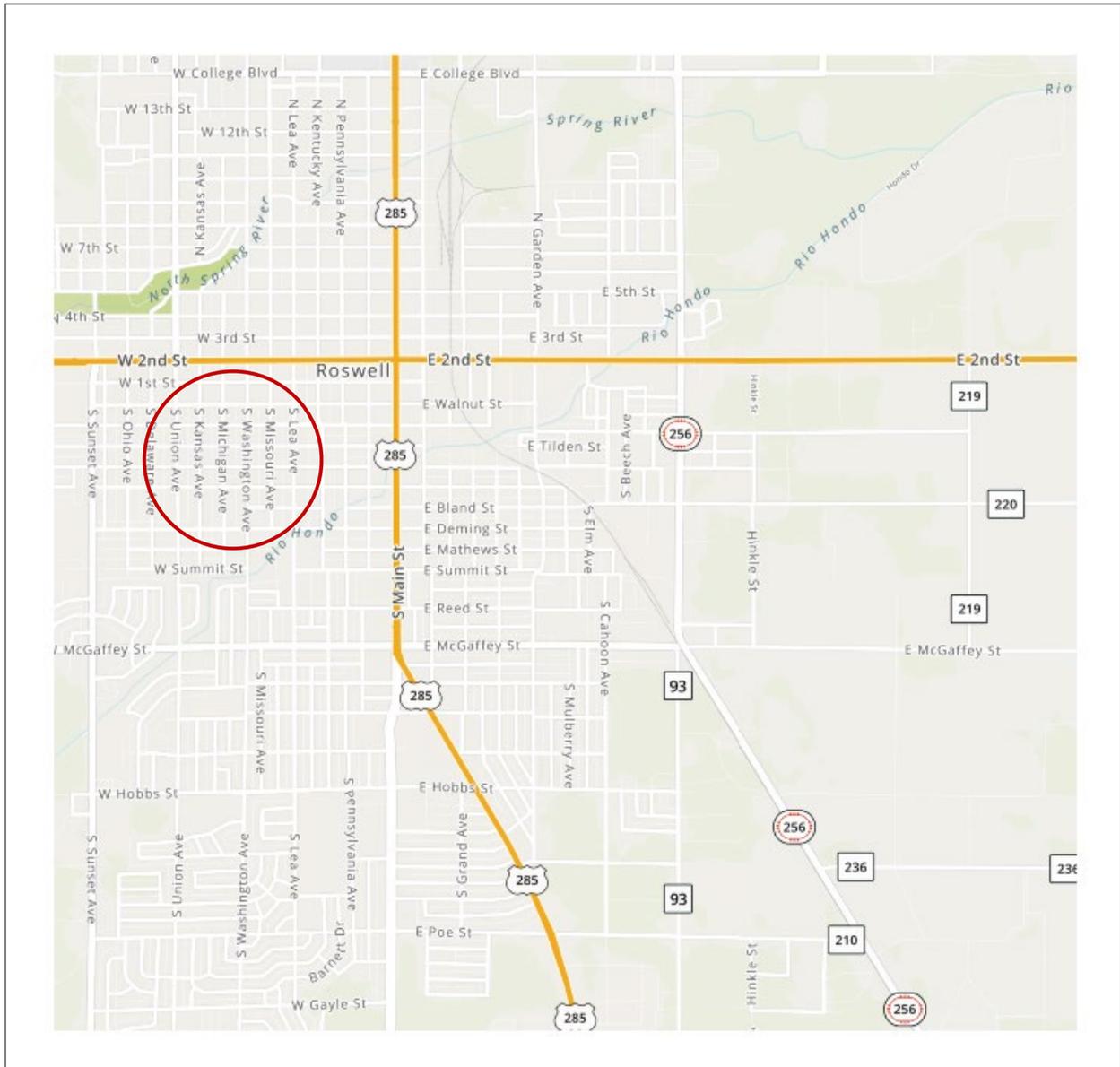


Figure 207. Map locating Roswell's historically Black neighborhood

Suggestions for Additional Research Roswell

- Who were the first Black permanent Roswell residents, and when did they arrive?
- Were there historical connections between the Black experience, health-seekers, and healthcare?
- Why were there no Black employees of the oil and gas companies in the first few decades of operation?
- Which pre-World War II businesses catered to Blacks? Were Black-owned? Discriminated against?
- How did local African American farmers and ranchers fare after submitting routine loan applications compared with local White farmers and ranchers?
- How did local press coverage of racial incidents compare with coverage of the same events elsewhere?
- What other magazines and newspapers did Roswell's Black residents subscribe to?
- In addition to the "Colored Elks" what other active fraternal lodges existed prior to the 1950s?
- What active women's social clubs thrived during this same time period?
- What is the economic and cultural history of the Joyce-Pruitt company?
- What was the history of the Mary Collins rooming house in welcoming all travelers?
- Does the Sunset Café listed in the *Negro Motorist Green Book* still exist?
- What are the connections between the Black experience and Roswell's National Register sites?
- What are the connections between the Black experience and Roswell's WPA sites?
- What is the history of the New Mexico Military Institute viewed through the lens of race relations?
- What more is known about Austin T. Cushman, NMMI graduate and chair of Sears and Roebuck Co.?
- Were there any connections between New Mexico's students and the Rosenwald Schools?
- Did some deeds and neighborhoods have restrictive covenants? If so, how long were these covenants on the books?
- What more is known about the Griffith Theatre company, especially regarding their views regarding the separation of the races? Do blueprints of their segregated theaters exist?
- Were all patrons welcomed at Roswell's public Carnegie Library once it opened?
- What were the effects of the Roswell Army Airfield on Roswell's Black community?
- What was the nature of the relationships between the Roswell and Blackdom communities?
- What more is known about the involvement of New Mexicans in the inter-racial Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish-American War?
- What role did the Battery "A" Armory play in providing a social center for Roswell's minorities?

TUCUMCARI



Figure 208. Map of New Mexico highlighting the city of Tucumcari

TUCUMCARI

Tucumcari (pronounced “two come carry”) is located in southeastern New Mexico’s Quay County, at the intersection of Interstate 40, US 54, NM 104, and NM 209. There is general consensus that the name may originate from a Comanche tribal word *tukamukaru* meaning “lookout” or “lying in wait” in reference to Tucumcari Mountain (4,956 ft) located some two miles south of town.¹

In 1901, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific (CRI&P) Railroad extended its line from Dalhart and Amarillo, TX to the Tucumcari location. Half the population of nearby Liberty moved to the unnamed tent city. Prairie winds scattered clothing and other remnants into the thorny desert scrub, lending the town its first nickname, “Ragtown.” Active saloons and gambling halls led to its second nickname, “Six-shooter Siding.” The town’s first formal name (1901-1902) was “Douglas,” for unknown reasons. The town has been called Tucumcari since 1902. As a depot town, Tucumcari flourished as an agricultural trading center and continues to serve Quay County’s legislative seat. With a U. S. Census population of 9,401 in 2010, Tucumcari is the largest city in Quay County.

Tucumcari was organized and planned on a north-south axis, with the railroad clipping the northwest corner of the otherwise square grid pattern at a 30-degree angle. Coal freight trains bound southward from Raton and Trinidad intersected in Tucumcari with passenger and freight trains heading east-west. In 1906, the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad built a distinctive Mission Revival-style train depot featuring clay tile roof shingles, curvilinear roof parapets, and vaulted interior wood timbers. The rail yard rapidly expanded to include a service roundhouse and other necessary outbuildings.

Within a few years, the Sands-Dorsey building and the Vorenburg Hotel at the corners of Second and Main Streets would serve as the commercial anchors for Tucumcari’s emerging downtown, soon followed by banks, hardware companies, dry goods stores, fraternal lodges, movie and performance theatres, and residences.

In contrast to many other New Mexico communities where adobe was the ubiquitous building material, the downtown Tucumcari architecture is characterized by brick and stone masonry.

¹ This section culled from multiple sources, including: chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn93061711; The *Tucumcari Main Street Master Plan* compiled by Consensus Planning, Inc.; nmcounties.org/counties/quay-county; U. S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Office of Price Administration, Record Group 188; The National Register of Historic Places Database (nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research); The New Mexico Living New Deal webpage (livingnewdeal.org/new-mexico/tucumcari); Samuel Gilbert, “Route 66: Decay and Resilience Along Iconic U. S. Highway” in *Al Jazeera* 10 December 2016 (aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/12/route_66_decay_resilience_iconic_highway).

Early architectural styles included Mission Revival, Classical Revival, and Art Deco, reflecting the dynamic period of commercial expansion from 1900 through the end of World War II in 1945. The Art Deco-style Quay County Courthouse, the Princess Theatre, and the Odeon Theatre are all surviving landmarks from this period. Early Twentieth Century Tukumcari homes were built using traditional Queen Anne stylistic features, in addition to Craftsmen bungalows, and Mission Revival cottages.

America's first transcontinental highway, Route 66, reached Tukumcari in 1926, initially utilizing downtown Main Street. Service stations, cafés, souvenir shops, and early motels were built along Main Street to service the needs of motorists. By 1937, however, a newly-paved and realigned Route 66 bypassed the heart of Downtown Tukumcari by seven blocks to the south, precipitating a new pattern of commercial building.

Just as Tukumcari and other cities in the southeast were gaining a foothold, a prolonged drought affected everything from livelihoods to how the federal government intersected with the national populace. In 1931, the state's most important crops were only worth about half of their 1929 value. The prolonged lack of rainfall dried up portions of New Mexico so badly that they became part of what was known as the 'Dust Bowl.' From Oklahoma to eastern New Mexico, winds picked up the dry topsoil and formed great clouds of dust so thick that it killed livestock, and destroyed crops. New Mexico's farmland dropped in value until it bottomed out at an average of \$4.95 an acre, the lowest value per acre of land in the United States. "The Depression also hurt New Mexico's cattle ranchers, for they suffered from both drought and a shrinking marketplace."²

Within months of taking office in March 1933, most of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 'New Deal' economic relief measures were passed by Congress to. "New Mexicans welcomed New Deal programs of all kinds."³ Some of the New Deal programs, such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), put people to work in varying jobs: writers, artists, historians, archaeologists, folklorists, and musicians practiced their trades as employees of WPA projects, while others who worked for the WPA built schools, promoted Native American arts and crafts, improved transportation and irrigation infrastructures and accomplished a wide variety of other public projects. By 1936, "more than thirteen thousand New Mexicans" were employed through this program.⁴ Additional research will be needed to understand how these federal programs affected the Black Experience during the period of legally-sanctioned segregation.

During the Great Depression, federal works programs such as the Public Works Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) produced many public facilities nationwide, and Tukumcari was no exception. "Five Mile Park," for example, was a WPA recreation facility

² New Mexico Museum of Art. "History: People, Places, and Politics – A Multicultural Society," available on-line at nmartmuseum.org/nmhistory/people-places-and-politics/a-multicultural-society/history-a-multicultural-society (2010).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

located ~5 miles west of downtown Tatumcari that featured the largest outdoor swimming pool in New Mexico at the time. Additional WPA projects include the Tatumcari Municipal Airport (WPA Project No. 165-1-85-164); the Arch Hurley Conservancy District Building (1940); sidewalks, including on East Center Street (1939); the former City Hall building located at the northwest corner of East Center St. and South Adams St., including a rock wall between the Hall and the street; a stone wall around the Memorial Cemetery (1939); Tatumcari Metropolitan Park, also known as Five Mile Park; and an armory and equipment garage for the New Mexico National Guard (WPA Project No. 165-1-85-163).

Thriving Tatumcari businesses listed by the Office of Price Administration during the decade of the 1940s include: Erskines, Tatumcari New Mexico Milk, Elder Shop, Hicks Bootery, Sanitary Laundry, The United, Inc., Sprouse-Reitz Company, Frock and Bonnet Shoppe, Hobby Shop, McCartt Super Market, Troup Coal Company, Tatumcari Ice and Coal Company, Tri-State Café, and the Grand Café.

Motels such as the Blue Swallow, the Palomino, Americana, Pow Wow Inn, Redwood Lodge and Buckaroo lured visitors with distinctive animated neon signs and “modern” ranch style architecture. Over time, downtown Tatumcari slowly lost its clientele as major anchors such as grocery stores and shopping malls re-located or were constructed along the bustling interstate highway south of the town center.

As of October 2020, the Tatumcari properties currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places include: Cactus Motor Lodge, Odeon Theater, Baca – Goodman House, Blue Swallow Motel, the Hurley, Arch, Conservancy District Office Building, the Metropolitan Park Bathhouse and Pool Historic District. The complete bypass of Tatumcari by Interstate 40 during the mid-1970s ushered in a decades-long period of economic deterioration resulting in a continuing population ebb and increased impoverishment.

A 2016 *Al Jazeera* news source interviewed several historic Route 66 hotel owners. "I bought it because it was cheap," says Malik, 67, a former United Nations worker from Pakistan, who moved to Tatumcari in the early 2000s. "An unlikely retirement home," he laughs. He bought his motel, the Palomino, located along a once-bustling portion of Route 66, the 4,000-kilometre highway between Santa Monica and Chicago that, for six decades, was the nation's major throughway, connecting the rural backwaters of western United States to the highway. "This town was four times its size back then," says Malik, standing out in the back of the motel beside a rusted playground and an empty 40s-era pool - "The first in Tatumcari" according to him.

One such business is the Blue Swallow Motel - one of a dozen or so historic Route 66 businesses that include neon-clad motels, diners and curio shops -- still open in Tatumcari. "You can come here and feel like you are back in the 50s," says Cameron Mueller, whose family owns the iconic Blue Swallow Motel, explaining the allure of the motel – first opened in 1939 - that has been reinvigorated by the resurgence of tourism along the old highway.

It is clear that Tucumcari was deeply segregated for much of the early- to mid-20th century. *Quay County, New Mexico* mentions John Wilson, the city's only black resident for decades, and John Chinaman (his real name lost to posterity), who was the town's only resident of Chinese descent for many years.⁵

Black Employment Opportunities

Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs describes job opportunities in Tucumcari the following way:

Black people held jobs in the service/menial labor field. They were housekeepers/maids, custodians, cooks, train porters, shoeshine "boys," etc. The only professional Black people were two (2) teachers in the segregated schools. Black people did start their own businesses such as a grocery store, ice-cream parlor, motel, and room/apartment rentals. There was always a Black woman available who could "do Black hair." They were not professionally trained but learned to "do hair" by learning the skill as it was passed down from generation to generation.¹

Homesteading (Brief Background)

In some 30 "public lands" states, including New Mexico, almost all lands are owned either by the Federal Government or by persons deriving their land titles from the Government. In each locale, the entity that effected the transfer of title of a piece of the public domain to private ownership was the district land office.²

When it was periodically decided to open to entry certain portions of the public domain, a land district was created, usually by an act of Congress, and all transactions connected with obtaining titles to land in that area was initiated and processed through that district land office. Until the 1920s, each land district ordinarily had two officials in charge, a Register and a Receiver, who jointly conducted the business of the office.

The Receiver was primarily responsible for the monies taken in at the office. The Register took care of all of the necessary record-keeping. A person wishing to make an "entry" (i.e., to initiate proceedings that if successfully completed would result in the issuance of a patent to a tract of land) visited the Register and indicated the tract of land to which he or she desired, together with the class of entry desired.

⁵ *Quay County, New Mexico, 1903-1985*. Edited by Moncus and Knapp.

¹ Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

² This section adapted from the National Archives catalogue finding aid. Available on-line at catalog.archives.gov/id/10499150.

The 'entry-man,' the Register, and the Receiver then filled out and signed a series of documents. In the early period these ranged from the simple applications to the purchase and the receipts executed on the spot in connection with cash purchases. This evolved into an elaborate series of applications, proofs, affidavits, public notices, and other types of documents executed over a period of years in later Homestead and Mineral entries.

When each requirement of the laws and of the General Land Office had been fulfilled, all papers executed or filed with the Register in the process of such fulfillment were forwarded to the General Land Office (GLO) in Washington, DC. These papers were always accompanied by a document which took varying forms but is now usually called a "Final Certificate." This document was a formal certification made by the Register of the district land office to the Commissioner of the General Land Office that an entry-man had fulfilled all legal requirements for obtaining a patent to a described piece of land, and that the patent holder was entitled to such ownership. The papers were then examined in the General Land Office and, if all was deemed proper, a patent was prepared and sent, usually to the Register of the district office where the entry had been made, for delivery to the entry-man.

The General Land Office was often so far behind in its work that there was an interval of six months to three years between the receipt of the land-entry papers and the issuance of the patent. The first district land office was opened at Steubenville, Ohio on 2 July 1800. The last new land office opened at Newcastle, Wyoming on 1 March 1920. In the interval, some 362 district land offices were opened. At peak operations in 1890, there were 123 active offices nationwide.

More than a century after the first office in Ohio began operations, the Tucumcari, NM district land office opened on 1 July 1908. Additional research will be required to understand the relationships between homesteading and the African American experience in New Mexico.

Businesses

Just five years after the town's 1901 founding, Tucumcari boasted of numerous grocery and merchandise stores, at least four lawyers and two surgeons, numerous eateries, two undertakers, three barbers, several drug stores, multiple real estate and investment firms, and more than half a dozen saloons. Further research is warranted to determine which businesses were Black-owned, employed African Americans, or served Whites only.

Businesses advertising in a *Tucumcari News* article dated 1906 included:

Street & Jones -- O. K. Meat Market, Jackson-Galbraith-Foxworth Co. Lumber and Building Materials, M. C. Mechem -- Lawyer, C. C. Davidson, Lawyer, W. J. Hittson -- Lawyer, Mattson & Mattson -- Lawyers, Teo. D. Martinez -- County Surveyor, B. F. Herring, M. D. -- Physician and Surgeon, Miss Lillian Pruitt -- Vocal and Instrumental Music, M. H. Koch -- Funeral Director and Embalmer, N. V. Gallegos -- U. S. Court Commissioner, Tucumcari Boot & Shoe Shop, Gross,

Kelly & Co. -- General Merchandise Wholesale and Retail, W. T. Nicholson -- Blacksmith and Horseshoeing, Jim's Restaurant, Rock Island Eating House, Top Notch Store -- Confectionery and Groceries, Pioneer Bakery, Wm. Troup -- Coal Dealer and Transfer, Legal Tender Barber Shop, Fowler Bottling Col -- Beer, Coal and Ice, The M. B. Goldenberg Co. -- General Merchandise, Wholesale and Retail, Knights of Pythias, A. F. & A. M., T. W. Heman -- Real Estate and Insurance, Tukumcari Townsite & Investment Co., Legal Tender Saloon, Tukumcari Telephone Exchange, First National Bank, Tukumcari Pharmacy, Street & Baker -- Livery, Sale and Feed Stable, Henry & Co. -- Lobby Saloon, S. C. Pandolfo -- Insurance and Real Estate, J. A. Street -- Coal Dealer, Barnes & Rankin -- Furniture and Undertakers, S. C. Campbell -- News Stand and Confectionery, Miss Emma Jahns -- Millinery, Coney Island Bar and Café, White Elephant Saloon, Tukumcari Water, Ice, & Power Co., The Plaza Hotel, Whitmore & Co. -- Staple and Fancy Groceries, Clint Rutherford -- Saddles and Harness, Stock Exchange Saloon, Monarch Saloon, Tukumcari Laundry, J. G. Russell -- Physician and Surgeon, Pioneer Drug Store -- Drugs and Medicine, The Racket Store, The K. C. Bar, The Phoenix Barber Shop, Bates Brothers -- Stockmen, Golden Rule Cash Store -- Dry Goods and Clothing, Texas & New Mexico Investment Co. Real Estate.¹

Mining

Mining operations, notoriously dangerous for many reasons, could rarely afford to be discriminatory in their hiring practices. In 1901 the Dawson coal mine opened some 17 miles northeast of Cimarron, NM. A railroad line was constructed between Dawson and Tukumcari, and soon thereafter the town of Dawson thrived.² A *Tukumcari News* article stated that there were, in addition to "a number of Americans," eighteen nationalities represented at Dawson, "the majority being Italians." Continued the article: "There are Slavs, Bulgarians, Mexican, Japanese, and many other northern Europe natives employed at these mines, *besides the negro colony.*"³ The Phelps Dodge Company bought the mine in 1906. On 22 October 1913, an explosion inside the mine killed nearly 300 miners and two rescuers. Nearly a decade later, another explosion killed 120 men.⁴

Railroad Industry

In an effort to disentangle inequities of pay among employees performing similar duties at different pay rates depending upon the locale, the railroad industry was one of the first to try and establish fair wages nationally. A minimum of 55 cents an hour was established for shop trades, including machinists, boilermakers, and blacksmiths; women were to receive the same

¹ "A Directory of the Business People Doing Business in Tukumcari and Quay County," *Tukumcari News*, 19 May 1906, p. 7.

² Available on-line at newmexico.org/places-to-visit/ghost-towns/dawson.

³ "Explosion in Dawson Mine 284 Men Entombed," *The Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times*, 23 October 1913, p. 1. Emphasis added.

⁴ *Ibid.*

pay as men for the same work, and “negroes” were to “get the same as white men for similar employment.”⁵

Service Jobs

In addition to the mining and railroad industries, service jobs were open to African Americans living in and around Tucumcari when not much else was available. The newspapers are replete with references to ‘colored’ miners, porters, and domestic workers, including “Tom, the negro servant at the Elk Club Rooms.”⁶ Mr. Harold Kent was a Pullman porter on the Southern Pacific Railroad for several years prior to opening his grocery store and working as a custodian at the First National Bank.⁷

Service Jobs as a Means to an End

Tucumcari-born Haroldie “Dee Dee” Kent Spriggs parlayed her willingness to provide service work for a White family into earning B. A. and M. A. degrees from Howard University near Washington, DC. Born in Tucumcari to Harold and Bessie Kent, Haroldie Spriggs was the eldest of four children, including Alice Kent Hoppes, Sammie J. Kent, and Frances Kent Thomas. She graduated from Tucumcari High School in 1956, and attended Eastern New Mexico University for two years.

Ms. Spriggs’ mother performed housekeeping duties for a White woman in town. When the woman’s daughter visited her, an arrangement was made whereby Ms. Spriggs would return to Hyattsville, MD and attend college while working as a self-described “live-in maid”⁸ with the daughter of the woman her own mother worked for. This situation allowed Haroldie Spriggs to maintain an income while earning a Bachelor’s degree (1960) and a Master’s degree (1967) from Howard University. She earned an Ed. D. from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1974. Ms. Spriggs returned to Albuquerque for ten years, and currently resides near her son back in the DC Metropolitan area again. Haroldie’s lifelong commitment to students and education manifested itself as an elementary school teacher, counselor, and teacher educator for the District of Columbia Public School System. She was transferred to the U. S. Department of Education where she worked for 20 years, retiring in 1994.

⁵ Source: “General Increase Nearly \$2 Million to Railroad Men,” *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 30 May 1918, p. 1.

⁶ *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 1 July 1915.

⁷ Personal communication with Haroldie “Dee Dee” Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021). The author is grateful to Ms. Spriggs for her willingness to participate, her remembrances, and her insightfulness.

⁸ Ibid.

Buildings, Structures, and Landscapes

Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad

The United States Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad was a freight and passenger railway also known as the Rock Island Line, or, in its final years, The Rock. Begun in 1851, by 1854 it was the first rail line to connect Chicago with the Mississippi River. Eventually, the Rock Island line stretched across Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Texas. Travelers boarding in Tucumcari, NM often chose Memphis, TN as their final destination. In addition to the Memphis – Little Rock – Oklahoma City – Tucumcari line, other primary routes included Chicago – Los Angeles, Chicago – Denver, and Minneapolis – Dallas.¹

Trains numbered 21 and 22 operated between Memphis, TN and Tucumcari, NM. In addition to passengers and heavy freight, the cars also handled a large volume of interstate mail. The passenger trains were segregated, and one traveler noted “... *the Black cars were not that nice.*”²

An American spiritual about the railroad called “Rock Island Line” was composed as early as 1929. The earliest known version of "Rock Island Line" was written by Clarence Wilson, a member of the Rock Island Colored Booster Quartet, a singing group made up of employees of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad at the Biddle Shops freight yard in Little Rock, Arkansas. The first known recording of "Rock Island Line" was performed in 1934 by inmates at the Arkansas Cummins State Farm prison.³

National Register of Historic Places

The following National Register of Historic Places and Works Projects Administration (WPA) sites need to be researched in order to understand their intersections and influences upon the Black experience in Tucumcari, NM. More than likely, the National Register nominations and WPA descriptions, including signage, will need to be revised to reflect the findings of the new research.

Cactus Motor Lodge
Odeon Theater
Baca-Goodman House
Blue Swallow Motel
Hurley Arch, Conservancy District Office Building
Metropolitan Park Bathhouse and Pool Historic District

¹ “A Rock Island RDC Train,” available on-line at trainorders.com (posted 16 October 2018).

² “A Rock Island RDC Train,” available on-line at trainorders.com (posted 16 October 2018). Emphasis added.

³ Available on-line at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_Island_Line.

Works Projects Administration (WPA) Projects

Tucumcari Airport
Hurley Arch, Conservancy District Office Building
Center Street Sidewalk
Center Street Wall
(Former) City Hall
Memorial Park Wall
Metropolitan Park and Pool
National Guard Armory and Garage
Quay County Courthouse and Mural
Waterworks Improvement

Negro Motorist Green Book Safe Havens

In the early decades of automobile travel, journeying across a “Jim Crow” segregated America was extremely difficult and often dangerous for African American motorists. Black travelers were forced to carry their own fuel, often camped out, and picnicked rather than risk being turned away from service stations, hotels, and restaurants.

Victor Hugo Green, a Black New York postal worker, created the Negro Motorist “Green Book,” an invaluable guide that mapped out Black-friendly safe havens. Published from 1936 through 1967, the Green Book became an indispensable reference for Black motorists traveling throughout the segregated South and beyond, including the infamous Route 66 and New Mexico. In addition to identifying friendly gas stations and places to stay, the Green Book listed barbershops, beauty salons, tailors, grocery stores, insurance companies, and other amenities. The guide allowed African Americans to travel with dignity, while avoiding potentially harrowing situations.

Research into the *Negro Motorist Green Book* listings is on-going. These ‘safe havens’ are symbols of a period in which discrimination in public accommodations was widely practiced. Extant safe haven buildings and landscapes must be recognized for their valuable role in providing safety, rest, and comfort to Black and other nonwhite highway travelers who journeyed along Route 66 before the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. The federal law outlawed discrimination based upon skin color, religion, or national origin in hotels, motels, restaurants, theaters, restrooms, and all other public accommodations.

Only recently has a larger population begun to recognize the key role that these businesses and private residences played in providing safety and comfort to early Black travelers, necessities and conveniences that were taken for granted by White motorists. As a result, attempts are being made to:

identify, inventory, and evaluate these motels, tourist homes, restaurants, and similar facilities, as well as to recognize the

travelers themselves for their courage and for paving the way for those who came after.⁴

Of the twenty-five New Mexico businesses that advertised to Black travelers before 1964, just six remain on the landscape today. In Tatum, Mitchell's Rooms and the Rocket Inn, both residential structures, remain; the La Plaza Court does too, although it has been substantially remodeled in recent years. In Santa Rosa, the Will Rogers Motel is still in business. In Albuquerque, the iconic De Anza Motel on Central Avenue has recently been redeveloped, and in Gallup, a two-story business building once known as the New Commercial Hotel stands near the railroad station.⁵

The following is a list of the Tatum *Green Book* listings:

1. The Cactus Motor Lodge at 1316 E Tatum Blvd was one of three Route 66-Tatum motels listed in the Green Book.
2. La Plaza Court motel at 1023 E. Tatum Blvd. is closed but remains part of the Roadrunner Lodge complex. According to the Park Service, it was listed in the Green Book in 1952.
3. The Cactus Motel, a long-closed part of the Cactus RV Park at 1316 E. Tatum Blvd., was demolished to sell the property to the O'Reilly Auto Parts chain. It was listed in 1953.
4. Amigo Motel and Café at 1823 E. Tatum Blvd. reportedly was demolished decades ago. A gas station stands at that site. The Amigo was listed from 1956 to 1963. Quay County assessor's records show that a motel never existed at that location and that a gas station was there since the 1930s. However, a 1955 phone book at the Tatum/Quay County Chamber of Commerce lists the Amigo Motel at 1823 E. Gaynell Ave., which became Tatum Boulevard.
5. A residence at 524 W. Campbell Ave. known as the Rocket Inn offered overnight lodging and meals. The residence still stands. It was listed in the Green Book from 1947 to 1963.
6. A residence at 520 W. Campbell Ave., known as Jones' Rooms for lodging, apparently vanished many years ago. It was listed in the Green Book from 1948 to 1963. However, county assessor records show no evidence that a home ever existed at that location.
7. A residence at 406 N. Third St., known as Mitchell's Rooms, offered lodging to all travelers regardless of skin color. The home stands but is abandoned. It was listed from 1953 to 1961.

⁴ Norris, Frank. "For African American Motorists in Jim Crow America, the Green Book Was Their Bible," in *Safe Havens* posted by *Edible New Mexico*, 1 June 2019 (Early Summer 2019). Available on-line at ediblenm.com/safe-havens.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Discrepancies in the park service list and assessor's office might be due to errors in the original *Green Book* editions or incomplete municipal data. In the case of 520 W. Campbell, perhaps another structure at the rear of 524 W. Campbell served overnight travelers.

David Brenner, co-owner of Roadrunner Lodge and the adjoining but closed La Plaza Court, owns probably the best-preserved of the Green Book sites in Tucumcari. According to his records, La Plaza was built in 1947.⁶

Poignantly, the "Introduction" to the *Negro Motorist Green Book* yearns for and predicts its own demise:

There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States. It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication for then we can go wherever we please, and without embarrassment.

Introduction Negro Motorist Green Book

The Green family ceased publication in 1967, three years after the federal Civil Rights Act was passed.

Churches

Mt. Calvary Baptist Church
408 West Campbell
Tucumcari, NM 88401

While there were several White churches, "Black residents were never invited to attend worship services"⁷ at those churches. Black residents attended the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church on West Heman Avenue on the north side of town. "The church was the hub of worship and social functions, and was open to anyone wishing to participate."⁸

Spriggs continues:

Most of the Black families who attended church went to Mt. Calvary Baptist Church. Today, it would be considered a non-denominational church. The church was started by a few Black people from the Methodist, Baptist, and Holiness traditions but agreed to "be a Baptist church" at some point. I recall that for a

⁶ Source: Ron Warnick, available on-line at qcsunonline.com/story/2019/01/09/news/green-book-traveling/19615.html, 9 January 2019.

⁷ Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

⁸ Ibid.

brief time, there were a few people (mostly family members) who started a Holiness Church. I do not know much about this church community; the people who started it are no longer alive.⁹

Neighborhoods

Ever since Tukumcari was founded, the railroad road tracks separated the Anglos from the Black residents. Black residents lived on the north side of the tracks and Anglos lived on the south side. Haroldie Spriggs remembers that it was simply the lay of the land. “The whole country viewed Black citizens as inferior,” she explains, “and thus relegated us to a substandard life. And so, it was the same in Tukumcari.”¹

‘Darktown’

A few examples should suffice in illustrating the point that local newspapers referred to the predominantly non-White Tukumcari neighborhood by a variety of offensive and dismissive names. Accounts often focused on petty crimes, or made light of situations that would have drawn more serious attention had they occurred in the White residential sections.

Friday Judge Hunter entertained a case from darktown. It seems a negro man, an employee of the Rock Island, became boisterous at the boarding house. The landlady proceeded to shoot the mischief out of the male disturber... Tukumcari’s best legalities had the case and quite a number witnessed the trials.²

Tukumcarian Haroldie Kent Spriggs remembers that “the small Black population lived on the north side of town or as was commonly known, ‘across the railroad tracks.’ We went to the south side of town to shop, go to the movies and to work as janitors, housekeepers, and in other menial labor.”³

There were several Black-owned establishments and services in Tukumcari, primarily on the north side. Harold and Bessie Kent built and operated a grocery store called “Harold’s Grocery Store.” Mr. Nolan and Mrs. Stella Jones owned a restaurant called the “Rocket Inn.” They also co-owned a motel on the south side that accommodated Black travelers. Mr. Joseph and Mrs.

⁹ Ibid.

¹ Personal communication with Haroldie “Dee Dee” Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

² “Darktown Has Trouble,” *Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times*, 20 September 1917, p. 1.

³ Personal communication with Haroldie “Dee Dee” Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

Ima Mitchell also rented rooms. Mr. Robert and Mrs. Gladys Richard owned an ice-cream shop called "The Oasis." Ms. Josie Ross owned a restaurant called "Josie's Café."⁴

Discrimination, Prejudice, and Persecution

Generally, while circumstances were not favorable to Black people in Tukumcari, we thrived with hard work and perseverance. Many of us "made it" with the help of our parents and community members. We were also supported by well-meaning White people. I am a clear example of the support provided by a White family who took me from Tukumcari to the east coast where I thrived. Of course, I have no doubt I would have met my goals even if I had not left Tukumcari.

-- Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs (b.1938)

The typical New Mexico town or city was segregated by law and by a tacit social contract. African Americans generally lived apart from Anglos, and each lived their separate lives. Black people "knew their place" and adhered to the norms established by White people.¹ "The racial pecking order in Tukumcari," recalls a Black resident in the 1940s, "included Whites at the top, the Spanish people next (because they were able to go to school with Whites) and then, at the bottom, were the 'colored' people."² Haroldie Spriggs recalls that while racism was "never overt," Black residents accepted what was the norm at that time. "We frequently heard the 'N' word which often came from the 'Spanish' people, many of whom also lived on the north side."³

Minstrels

Although regarded as harmless amusement by most White audiences, minstrel shows (performed at dinner parties, on campuses, at outdoor venues and elsewhere) were pervasive, unabashedly mocking, and an affront to most people of color. High school and college performances were often delivered as fundraisers:

The Negro minstrel was perhaps the best feature and the auditorium was filled to its capacity. The performers were far

⁴ Ibid.

¹ Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

² Wellington, Darryl Lorenzo. "Black in Santa Fe," *Santa Fe Reporter*, 29 October 2013. Available on-line at sfreporter.com/news/coverstories/2013/10/29/black-in-santa-fe.

³ Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

above the street carnival class. Their songs and sketches were rich with comedy and performed with rare ability for amateurs. Everybody was satisfied and each number was heartily encored.⁴

At the opening of the Tucumcari's new Evans Opera House in October 1910, the Elks staged a well-received 'black-face' production. The article named and reviewed each performer in the order of their appearance:

T. L. Welch did his stunts so well he would have made a negro ashamed of himself. Dr. Coulter never looked handsomer, and the single ladies in the audience were surprised to see how well he could sing to a colored infant... Donald Steward left off the Scotch brogue and played the part of the colored brother to perfection.⁵

More than 50 young people staged what was billed as a "minstrel" at a nearby Las Vegas high school. The second half of the performance featured "a Spanish group song and dance, ballet dancing, Negro farce, and rural song and dance, a monologue and the grand finale."⁶ The J. M. Busby minstrel show, which visited Tucumcari in 1915, was full of "tuneful and humorous acts" and kept the audience "in a roar of laughter from start to finish." The singing had all "the fascinating qualities which only the Negro can impart," and won loud applause.⁷

Probably because she was too young, Haroldie Spriggs does not remember anything about traveling minstrel shows, carnivals, or Wild West Shows. Her knowledge of minstrel shows and 'black-face' engender "disgust and anger"⁸ inside her to this day.

⁴ High School Carnival Declared a Big Success," *Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 14 March 1918, p. 1.

⁵ "Elks' Minstrel Show Was the Real Thing—Opening of the Evans Opera House Thursday Night Was Greeted With Crowded House – Oscar Sandusky Was Commended," *Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 29 October 1910, p. 1.

⁶ "High School to Offer Minstrel Here Tonight," *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, 27 October 1933, p. 6.

⁷ "Busby's Minstrels Won Loud Applause," *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 22 April 1915, p. 1.

⁸ Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

First 'Negro' Marriage

In 1914, the friends of Judge S. H. McElroy were surprised when he announced that "he had married a Negro." After grabbing the reader's attention, the newspaper article went on to say that, "This is said to have been the first wedding in Tukumcari or Quay County in which Negroes participated. The wedding was that of David Hilliard and Elsie Stoneham, both of Amarillo."⁹

Segregation Denial

The following *Santa Fe New Mexican* newspaper column dated 1909 was reprinted verbatim in the *Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times* and then flatly rebuked in the same article:

Friction which had arisen in Tukumcari over the segregation of native children with non-native children, has been settled by the admission of native children to all of the classes in the public school and serious trouble which has threatened there has been averted. Governor Curry and Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jas. E. Clark, took a firm stand in the trouble, both asserting that both the principle and law demand that the native children cannot be segregated from other children. This is the first action taken by the territorial executive to break up this practice, which although, unlawful and unjust, has prevailed to a greater or less extent in the democratic counties of southeastern New Mexico, where there is a large southern population. There is only one Mexican boy on the rolls of the Clovis public schools.¹⁰

A *Tukumcari Times* editor responded that the column was a "d----d lie," because there "are no negro children," and there "is no friction":

The foregoing seems to be a dispatch from Santa Fe, and is similar to the article which appeared in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* some days ago. All of them are liars with malice and aforethought. No such thing ever happened in Tukumcari or any where else that we have heard of, there is no friction; there has been no segregation; there are no negro children; there has been no trouble; there has been no threatening; there has been no stand by the governor, the superintendent of public instruction, the whole business is a d ---- d lie from start to finish. There has been no action here, territorial or otherwise; This is a democratic country and no such sentiment has ever prevailed here, *so shut up*.¹¹

⁹ "Negro Wedding," *The Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times*, 22 October 1914, p. 1.

¹⁰ "Mexicans Are Not to Be Segregated," *The Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times*, 16 October 1909, p. 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The following year, in 1910, the *Tucumcari News* published the following opinion piece regarding the town's segregated schools:

The negroes themselves are perfectly satisfied with the conditions. The sensible ones would resent the enactment into law of a 'mixed school' provision, and have no sympathy for the *spoiled coons of the metropolis who are seeking to get out of their place*. Even if the political buncombers did succeed in getting a provision to seat negro children in the white schools, it would not have any weight on this side of the mountains.¹²

Discriminatory and derogatory language appeared with relentless regularity within the pages of the daily newspapers, even disguised at times as scholarly fact. A lengthy article focused on Census Bureau statistics, mortality rates, and disease, for example, depicted a causal relationship between unsanitary conditions and the contraction of typhoid. The article casually concludes with racist sentiment cloaked as scientific fact:

Of course there is no need to prove that there is a direct causal relation between filth and typhoid... It is shown, for example, that the death rate among negroes from typhoid is greater than among the whites in the same community with but very few exceptions, a phenomenon which must be accounted for by *the less cleanly habits of the negro*.¹³

Derogatory Language

Those of Chinese descent experienced similar humiliation and degradation in print:

Mors Torp, the *colored porter and alleged chink smuggler*, and the four alleged Oriental smugglers, are still enjoying the services of jailer Crawford. All five prisoners are held in default of a bond of one thousand dollars each. The imprisoned Chinamen are in hard straits for their time is limited and if their bond is not made by Sunday their chance will be gone, and it will mean all aboard for Hong Kong and the chinks will soon be merrily on their way across the Pacific riding on a government deportation pass.¹⁴

¹² "The Magnificent Prize Was Won by Progress Editor – The Tenderfoot Breaks into a Funny Strain...The Convention and Negro Schools," *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 5 November 1910, p. 2. Emphasis added.

¹³ Typhoid a Result of Unsanitary Conditions," *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 5 July 1910, p. 2. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ "Judge Will Pass on Negro's Pass," *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 23 January 1909, p. 1. Emphasis added.

Albert C. Thompson, “a negro cook,” told the smugglers... to carry “Orientals” in the ice chest of the dining car after they had been put aboard the Golden State Limited of the Rock Island railroad at El Paso, TX. He said the box was “barely large enough to hold one Chinese.” According to the testimony, it was the regular practice “until one Chinaman was smothered to death.”¹⁵

Petty crimes were duly reported using the vulgar parlance of the day:

George Lee, a negro boy, who has been living with the old restaurant keeper, Raymon, on Smith Street, broke into the laundry of the Chink, Quong Wo, Wednesday night and relieved the cash drawer of \$3.75. The boy was arrested yesterday and tried before Justice Winter and fined \$10 and costs and thirty days in jail. The money was recovered. The chink is a happy man.¹⁶

A thorough investigation under the direction of the Collector of Internal Revenue Henry P. Bardsar, disclosed only one bootlegger in Prohibition Roswell, “and that was a negro.”¹⁷ Several New Mexico newspapers carried daily serials or book excerpts that depicted African Americans in demeaning roles, using the dialect of the undeducated.¹⁸ These excerpts are meant to provide a glimpse into how persons of color were treated in the press and viewed by mainstream Whites. A weekly opinion piece by columnist Will Robinson, under the nickname “Tenderfoot,” addressed a wide variety of topics in the opening decades of the 20th-century. Apparently popular and often crudely prejudicial, Robinson provided his take on race relations in this 1910 column for the *Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*:

A question that will never grow old in America is that of the negro, and a vast amount of hot air is being wasted, especially in the north, over the matter. In the south, where the black is best understood, you hear little about it, and the race is in better shape than anywhere else. The truth of the whole matter is that the negro is just what the white man makes him. If the community exalts him, he swells up, if it treats him in a common-sense way, *he keeps his place*. There is no middle ground and no one understands it better than the unspoiled negro himself. Adjusted among these lines there is never any friction, and the colored section is a really more or less an indispensable member of the community at large.¹⁹

¹⁵ “Smuggled Chinks Rode in Ice Chest,” *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 19 June 1909, n. p.

¹⁶ “Laundry Burglarized,” *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 10 June 1910, p. 5.

¹⁷ “No More Bootleggers at Roswell,” *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 12 February 1912, p. 7.

¹⁸ *The Price* by Francis Lynde, Illustrations by C. D. Rhodes, copyrighted by Charles Scribners sons.

¹⁹ Source: “The Race Question is Discussed...A Few Words About the Nigger,” Columnist Will Robinson (Tenderfoot), *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 24 May 1910, p. 2. Emphasis added.

The steady and persistent patter of derogatory misinformation, the absence of Blacks in advertising, the emphasis on Blacks engaged in petty crimes to the exclusion of other positive activities, and the lurid depictions of racially-motivated mob violence in neighboring states, all undoubtedly extracted an invisible psychic toll.

A National Black Press

Given the short shrift paid to the African American experience in local newspapers, it is no wonder that a vibrant Black press thrived nationally. Haroldie Spriggs remembers that her mother made sure that the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Crisis* magazine, and the *Black Dispatch* were a part of her family's everyday life:

She wanted us to know about the lives of Black people. She knew there was no other way for us to gain knowledge of and an appreciation for the lifestyle and accomplishments of our Black culture because it certainly did not exist in Tucumcari. I have no idea how my mother knew about these newspapers, but she made sure we read them when they arrived. I, for one, was enthralled by what I read and prompted to say that as soon as I could, I wanted to leave New Mexico. I had no idea that the segregated life I lived was the norm in the United States.¹

Segregation Discussion: Constitutional Convention Santa Fe (1910)

The Constitutional Convention convened in Santa Fe in 1910 to discuss, among other matters, whether or not to mandate the segregation of students by race. The Hispanic members of the committee opposed separate schools for children based upon skin color. The Anglo majority decided to leave the matter up to each community's school board. When the report of the majority was filed, "the three Mexican members of the committee filed a dissenting report."²

Local newspapers dismissed the question of segregation as a non-issue. "There is nothing to the Negro school question argument. That will satisfactorily settle itself in each community. It always has."³ The *Tucumcari News* article then justified segregation by stating that the "majority" would act in "good faith and justice" for "years to come."⁴

¹ Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

² "Separation of the Schools in New Mexico – Mexican Committee Members on Education Vote Against Segregating Whites and Blacks – Prohibition is in Foreground," *The Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times*, 6 November 1910, p. 6.

³ *The Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times*, 31 December 1910, p. 4.

⁴ Ibid.

Military Service World War I

Race relations crystallized as Black soldiers trained stateside and fought in World War I overseas. While facing prejudice and discrimination at home, they were celebrated abroad for their patriotism and strong work ethic. War correspondent Isobel Field described the situation this way: "Race prejudice is shifting from America to the battlefields of France. As the pride of our negro soldiers grows in this country, a very violent dislike for him is spreading all along the German front."⁵

George Freeman, an American labor contractor who took 1,500 African American stevedores to France, tasked with loading and unloading ships laden with freight for the war effort, boasted about his crew:

They are the finest workers you ever saw. One negro can do four times as much work as any other man, and have fun doing it. The French stevedores stand by and look on with amazement at my hustling gangs. The way they handle a 100-pound crate makes the Frenchmen's eyes bulge. In the shipbuilding yards the whirlwind methods of the negroes have caused a sensation in both this country and in England.⁶

When Charles Knight, a Black American ironworker, won a cash prize in an iron-riveting contest, he received a letter from Englishman Lord Northcliffe:

Your world's record feat of driving 4,875 rivets on May 16th has set for American shipbuilders the fast pace that is necessary for carrying on the war successfully. Such an achievement as yours carries across the seas an inspiring message of American domination and ability.⁷

Seven hundred African American women volunteered in France to work in the huts and canteens of the Y. M. C. A. and many served as secretaries in the same organization. The Red Cross placed trained Black nurses in the base hospitals.⁸

Nationwide, more than 12,000,000 Black Americans invested \$7,000,000 in three issues of the Liberty Loan bonds. They gave one million in the first Red Cross drive and two million in the

⁵ "The Color Line" by Isobel Field, of *The Vigilantes*, reprinted in *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 16 December 1915, p. 2.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "The Color Line" by Isobel Field, of *The Vigilantes*, reprinted in *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 16 December 1915, p. 2.

⁸ Ibid.

second, besides investing four million in Thrift stamps. "The spirit of the colored Americans," wrote Field in 1915, "is passionately loyal."⁹ Field continued:

The growing sympathy and appreciation of their patriotic efforts by the white people have given them confidence. The success of the colored troops abroad have thrilled them with a pride that will express itself in renewed efforts.¹⁰

It seemed to many observers that the involvement of Black Americans in the war effort helped make the ignominy of Jim Crow laws recede into the background as Americans pulled together to achieve the ultimate goal of winning the war. Although this unanimity proved to be short-lived, it did allow Americans to glimpse a future without daily discriminations.

Sports

In 1918, seven years before the Tukumcari schools were racially segregated by law, discrimination against Black individuals manifested itself in many ways. When the Albuquerque High School basketball team showed up with an African American player, the Tukumcari parents voiced objections, and four of the starters refused to take the court. A compromise was reached when, bizarrely, the Tukumcari coach was allowed to play as the official fifth man:

The Tukumcari High School has won two games of basket-ball the past two weeks from perhaps the best High school team in the state – Albuquerque. A little trouble arose after the team arrived and the parents of the boys objected to them playing against a negro who is rated as one of the best in the state. He is Albuquerque's star player but it's not much honor to win with him on the team although he is a clean player and a real athlete. On account of four of the first team refusing to play with the negro on the opposition team, it was decided to allow the Tukumcari coach, Prof. Jackson, to play with the boys... Prof. Jackson [played] center against the high-jumping dark boy.¹¹

The game ended with the score 36 to 32 in favor of Tukumcari.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Locals Defeat Albuquerque and Break Even with N. M. N. U.," *The Tukumcari News and Tukumcari Times*, 28 February 1918, p. 1.

Segregation

Remembering Segregation

Artist Eddie Dominguez was interviewed for the Smithsonian Institute in 2006. Born and raised in Tucumcari by parents who emphasized education -- although they were only able to attend elementary school -- Dominguez remembers growing up in Tucumcari this way:

My father was a bartender in a private all-white club, and my mother was a maid in a small motel. Tucumcari is filled with motel rooms. If it's famous for anything, it's that you can probably find a night's stay there... Well, I think the thing that public school offered me that was really pretty exciting was the change of culture. You know, all of the Spanish kids went to the Catholic school, and so you were really never integrated into any other culture than your own. Other than my father working in the all-white club, which seemed very separate and unavailable, and my mother cleaning houses for Anglo people, those were the only other people, outside of my family, that I was introduced to. Occasionally, I'd meet the tourists in the motels, and that was always interesting because they always represented another place that seemed really, really far away, and interesting, intriguing...

Growing up, I guess I never really thought much about my culture. It's what I was. I was made aware that there was separation, as I saw my father worked in an all-white club and my mother mainly a maid for Anglo families, so there was always this illusion in my head of separation of culture. Schools were segregated, that kind of thing. I never saw anybody of real success in my culture. I didn't know of an Hispanic artist that was successful. So, it somehow seemed harder and further away... I have a lot of real negative feelings about that place. And I don't blame anyone particularly, except that it didn't really have what I needed. And when I went to art school it had what I needed, and so it was not the fault of the town, necessarily. Art is a luxury and Tucumcari, it didn't have a lot of it, a lot of luxuries.¹

¹ Oral history transcript. Eddie Dominguez interviewed by Stephen Fleming on 27, 28 July and 1 August 2006 as part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America for the Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art. Contact: www.aaa.si.edu/askus.

Occasionally, the effort to discriminate backfired. In an article headlined “Look Who Asked for Anglos Only,” an engineer at the state highway department was ridiculed by a local editor for stating “Anglos preferred” in the job advertisement after it was learned that his name was Arturo Lucero.² Ironically, his Hispano surname would have prevented him from being hired for his own job posting.

‘Jim Crow’ and Route 66

Route 66 was one of the nation’s first continuous stretches of paved highway, serving as a major thoroughfare for those who migrated west. “The Mother Road” was established on 11 November 1926, and ultimately stretched 2,448 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles. Route 66 has a mystique all its own. Songs have been written about the experience, and for many, traveling the full length was a rite of passage. Not everyone, however, enjoyed the same degree of freedom while traveling along the Route. “White travelers were free to cruise Route 66 and stop at any side-of-the-road motel, steak-dinner restaurant, gas station, or reptile farm they might encounter” along the way:

But for African Americans, it was not so easy, because the prevalent racial attitudes of mid-twentieth-century America forced them to adapt, to be inventive, and at times to simply endure... Discrimination took place not only in the South but up north, in the Midwest, and even in western states such as New Mexico.³

Route 66 was established in 1926, but well before that, thousands of African Americans had begun migrating out of the rural south as part of the Great Migration. Many settled in New York, Chicago, Detroit, and other large northern cities, but considerable numbers also headed west to California. “However, for African Americans who were able to escape the South, life in the larger northern and western cities was by no means easy, and discrimination still existed.”⁴

On the whole, the country’s public accommodations, with only slight variations between southern and northern states, were hostile to African Americans. George Schuyler, an African American journalist, recalled, “Prior to 1945, the number of hotels, restaurants, motels and

² “Look Who Asked for Anglos Only,” *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, 15 July 1953, p. 6.

³ Norris, Frank. “For African American Motorists in Jim Crow America, the Green Book Was Their Bible,” in *Safe Havens* posted by *Edible New Mexico*, 1 June 2019 (Early Summer 2019, Foodshed). Available online at ediblenm.com/safe-havens.

⁴ Norris, Frank. “For African American Motorists in Jim Crow America, the Green Book Was Their Bible,” in *Safe Havens* posted by *Edible New Mexico*, 1 June 2019 (Early Summer 2019, Foodshed). Available online at ediblenm.com/safe-havens.

such establishments that welcomed Negro patronage outside the south was infinitesimal.” By 1949, “Negro travelers were welcome in not more than six percent of the nation’s better hotels and motels,” and there were “probably fewer than twenty cities in the country where Negroes [were] not completely barred from white-owned restaurants.”⁵

Given that hostility, African Americans survived while traveling by applying a broad range of well-honed strategies. Explains historian Frank Norris, many families simply drove straight through to their destination, driving all night long if necessary; they packed picnic baskets of food and stopped only to fuel their gas tank or when nature called. Some families stayed with friends along the way. One Albuquerque business owner recalls that, as a child, she overnighted in national park campgrounds while on cross-country trips. Others kept an eye out for the Black part of town. Some Black travelers went to the downtown train station and asked a train porter where to stay, while others drove down the main street, looking for a Black resident. Or they might ask a White passer-by, “Where can we get something to eat?” or “Where can we find a room for the night?”⁶

Different states and cities along Route 66 had varying laws and customs related to African American travelers, a situation that proved confusing. African American scholar Robert Russa Moton described the challenges of travel before World War II:

How a colored man . . . can be expected to know all the intricacies of segregation as he travels in different parts of the country is beyond explanation. The truth of the matter is, he is expected to find out as best he can.⁷

Given the humiliation of train travel in Jim Crow cars, and bus travel where African Americans were forced to take a rear seat, driving gave black travelers a considerable degree of flexibility, freedom, and anonymity—a “protective bubble,”⁸ as one historian calls it. They also knew, however, that the roadside could be fraught with challenges.

For brave Black motorists, travel along Route 66 could be every bit as difficult as it was elsewhere. Irv Logan Jr., a Black resident of Springfield, Missouri, remembers from personal experience that if you were a person of color traveling on Route 66 during the 1940s and 1950s:

between Chicago and Los Angeles, you couldn’t rent a room if you were tired after a long drive. You couldn’t sit down in a restaurant or diner or buy a meal no matter how much money

⁵ Norris, Frank. “For African American Motorists in Jim Crow America, the Green Book Was Their Bible,” in *Safe Havens* posted by *Edible New Mexico*, 1 June 2019 (Early Summer 2019, Foodshed). Available online at ediblenm.com/safe-havens.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

you had. You couldn't find a place to answer the call of nature even with a pocketful of money...⁹

The viewpoint of James Williams, who rode with a group of friends in 1942 from Louisiana to Flagstaff, was just as gloomy: "You'd have to drive all night and have to look for the colored part of town, maybe you could find a room." African Americans knew all too well that White hotel owners had a long list of ready-made excuses for refusing accommodations: 'We just rented our last room,' or 'We forgot to turn off the vacancy sign,' and, in at least one documented case, 'The rest of the motel owners will ostracize us.'"¹⁰

During the late 1920s, when Route 66 was a newly designated highway, Black motorists had few ways of knowing which hotels and restaurants would accept them. But in 1936 a new guide for Black travelers emerged called the *Negro Motorist Green Book*. Published by an African American postal worker, New York-based Victor Green and his wife Alma Duke Green, the *Green Book* quickly gained in popularity. With revised editions published annually, it offered hotel and restaurant listings for cities throughout the United States. The majority of its listings were for New York, Chicago, and other northern cities that had large black populations, however, it eventually featured sites in nearly every state. The *Green Book*, priced at a dollar or less, was distributed at Standard Oil and Esso stations throughout the country. It provided valuable options for travelers who hoped to avoid "embarrassment" and "inconveniences," as Green tactfully phrased it. By 1962, some two million copies of the Green Book were distributed to the traveling public. "Given the pervasive hostility and uncertainty imposed by White America, it was no wonder that Black-owned travel guides were used so widely."¹¹ The slogan on the cover of Greens' guide: "Carry Your *Green Book* with You; You May Need It," succinctly stated its inherent value.

Historian Frank Norris observes that within New Mexico, popular attitudes toward African Americans varied by location. Conditions in southern and eastern New Mexico were similar to those in Texas, while Santa Fe was reputedly more tolerant. Albuquerque was somewhere in between. In 1948, a protest at the local Walgreens forced the management to open its soda fountain to African Americans, but other public facilities refused to accept black patrons. In February 1952, the Albuquerque City Commission passed an ordinance that prohibited discrimination in places of public accommodation and, three years later, the New Mexico legislature passed the first statewide civil rights statute in the Intermountain West. Neither of these laws, however, carried a strong enforcement mechanism. As a result, there was

⁹ Norris, Frank. "For African American Motorists in Jim Crow America, the Green Book Was Their Bible," in *Safe Havens* posted by *Edible New Mexico*, 1 June 2019 (Early Summer 2019, Foodshed). Available online at ediblenm.com/safe-havens

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

occasional backsliding, such as an incident in October 1960 when an Albuquerque restaurant refused service to a University of New Mexico student from Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka).¹²

In New Mexico, hostelries advertising to African Americans were listed in Tucumcari, Santa Rosa, and Albuquerque. West from there, Black motorists who had previously traveled along the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway trusted that they could rely on meals and a warm bed at the various Fred Harvey Houses in New Mexico, Arizona, and California. “The Harvey Houses in these states, they knew, did not discriminate against African Americans or other minorities by denying service,” and they also refused to maintain ‘separate but equal’ dining facilities.¹³

Other than the Harvey Houses, however, early Black travelers had few lodging options between Albuquerque and Los Angeles. Before 1949, neither the *Green Book* nor any other Black travel guide listed hostelries anywhere along the eight hundred miles of road between the two cities. But by the mid-1950s, guidebooks advertised hotels and restaurants catering to African Americans in Gallup, New Mexico; Holbrook, Flagstaff, Kingman, Arizona; Needles, CA and Barstow, CA.¹⁴

Depending upon the town or city on the Black traveler’s route, New Mexico could be unwelcoming. A Black resident who lived in Tucumcari during the 1950s noted that a typical Black family driving through town probably would not have been able to stay in any of the White-owned motels on the main boulevard. In 1955, an NAACP official published the results of a survey in a local Albuquerque newspaper showing that less than six percent of the Central Avenue motels and tourist courts welcomed African American travelers, and that the city’s larger motels were “consistent in their refusal to accommodate” African Americans. According to one longtime Black Albuquerque resident, most Black travelers attempting to stay at a Central Avenue motel would have been refused service, while another longtime resident said travelers “could never tell what the reaction might be.”¹⁵

Historian Norris has identified twenty-five known Route 66 businesses in New Mexico that catered to Black patrons. In Tucumcari, two north-end hostelries advertised in the early Black guidebooks. By the early 1950s, Gaynell Avenue (now Tucumcari Boulevard) featured the **La Plaza Court**, which advertised to Black travelers. Shortly afterward two African American entrepreneurs—Nolan Jones and his partner Bob Richards—opened the Amigo Motel and Café at the east end of the motel strip. The nearby village of Santa Rosa historically had few Black

¹² Norris, Frank. “For African American Motorists in Jim Crow America, the Green Book Was Their Bible,” in *Safe Havens* posted by *Edible New Mexico*, 1 June 2019 (Early Summer 2019, Foodshed). Available online at ediblenm.com/safe-havens.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

residents; even so, the Will Rogers Motel, on the south side of Route 66, advertised to Black travelers.¹⁶

Further north, during the 1920s and 1930s, Albuquerque's Alvarado Hotel—with its Harvey House restaurant—may have been the only hostelry in town that welcomed Black travelers. By the late 1940s, the Black traveler could choose from two tourist homes, a hotel, a motel, and three restaurants. And by the early 1960s, two more motels, both located on west Central Avenue, catered to an African American clientele.¹⁷

Ku Klux Klan

Although it is difficult to uncover evidence of Ku Klux Klan activity in New Mexico due to under-reporting in the newspapers, and the secret nature of the activities, there are clues that the Klan was present in some capacity, particularly in the opening decades of the 20th century. A concerned citizen wrote to a District Judge in Hot Springs, for example, complaining of open 'gambling dens' operating in the community with impunity. The author of the letter let the judge know that there was talk of organizing the Ku Klux Klan to put an end to the gambling if legal action wasn't undertaken by the authorities:

I am writing in regard to gambling here in Hot Springs, that has been running wide open in defiance of the law. The citizens are talking of organizing a Ku Klux Klan if we can't get results from the courts. If the witnesses had been summoned before the grand jury the gamblers would have been indicted, and those dens closed... The neglect of the enforcement of the law has brought the K. K. K. to the state of New Mexico. *They had to organize it at Tucumcari and Deming, and will have to organize at Hot Springs.*¹⁸

Additional research will be required to more accurately gauge the full extent of the Ku Klux Klan's influence in New Mexico. There were known concerns noted at various times throughout the state, including in the rural community of Belen, south of Albuquerque. Governor Mechem wrote this response to a letter written to him in 1922:

I have heard with a great deal of concern of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, or irresponsible persons masquerading under that

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Letter dated 20 August 1923 to Hon. Harry P. Owne, District Judge, Hillsboro, NM from J. W. Green, Hot Springs, NM. New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Inventory of the Governor James F. Hinkle Papers, 1917 – 1924, Collection 1959-099. "Ku Klux Klan (1923), Box 6, Folder 219. Emphasis added.

name, in Belen. I think that we should not fail to take any possible steps to [fight] such influence...¹⁹

In a formal letter dated 19 July 1922, Executive Secretary of the American Unity League, G. K. Rutledge, appealed to New Mexico's Governor Merritt C. Mechem to speak publicly against the Ku Klux Klan. As Rutledge explained, in "cooperation with a number of leading citizens in this, and surrounding states, former Governor Edward F. Dunne of Illinois, launched a campaign last year to expose the un-American activities of the Ku Klux Klan. The program was inaugurated... in conjunction with the exposé of the Klan's activities made by the *New York World*." A subsequent Congressional investigation "as you know," wrote Rutledge, "resulted in nothing but considerable publicity for the Klan..." Rueful that he now believed the Klan was "more active and more of menace than ever before," he believed that not only was the Klan "taking a prominent part in politics" and was a "power in many communities." He feared that it had truly become in reality "an Invisible Empire." Mr. Rutledge then asked the Governor if he would accept membership on the American Unity League's National Committee.²⁰

Governor Mechem responded eight days later in no uncertain terms: "I have your letter of the 19th... and fully agree with you in all you say relative to the Ku Klux Klan. I am very glad indeed to accept membership in the National Committee; and suggest as Executive Chairman for New Mexico the name of Hon. Lucius Dills, Santa Fe, NM." Governor Mechem closed by declaring, "I am sure you will find him a sincere and fearless fighter of the Ku Klux menace."²¹

Although considerable research into the State's archives will be required in order to ascertain the full extent and influence of the Ku Klux Klan in New Mexico, there clearly was enough of a presence to cause concern at the highest levels of state government.

A year earlier, Governor Mechem had written the following statement to Herbert Bayard Swope, Executive Editor of the *New York World*: "I am absolutely opposed to the Ku Klux Klan and their law-breaking methods."²²

¹⁹ Letter dated 28 August 1922 from Gov. Mechem in response to a letter from F. C. H. Livingston, Esquire, Belen, NM. New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Collection number 1959-98, "Ku Klux Klan Activities - 1922," Box 6, Folder 217.

²⁰ Letter dated 19 July 1922 from G. K. Rutledge to NM Governor M. C. Mechem, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Collection number 1959-98, "Ku Klux Klan Activities - 1922," Box 6, Folder 217.

²¹ Letter dated 27 July 1922 from NM Governor M. C. Mechem to G. K. Rutledge, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Collection number 1959-98, "Ku Klux Klan Activities - 1922," Box 6, Folder 217.

²² Letter dated 26 September 1921 from Governor Merritt C. Mechem, Santa Fe, NM to *New York World* executive editor Herbert Bayard Swope, New York. New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Collection number 1959-98, "Ku Klux Klan Activities - 1922," Box 6, Folder 217.

Segregated Public and Private Places

Metropolitan Park Bathhouse and Pool

David Kammer, in preparing his 2003 National Register nomination, noted that Five Mile Park, once known for a large and elaborate swimming-pool complex, had not been used for 40 years. An arsonist destroyed the nearby bathhouse... The Civilian Conservation Corps built the Metropolitan Park Bathhouse and Pool, locally called Five Mile Park, in 1940 along Route 66 five miles west of Tucumcari's town center. The complex contained a 128' x 125' pool with a 400,000-gallon capacity (reputedly the largest outdoor pool in New Mexico), a bathhouse, a playground and a camping facility. Longtime residents recall that on summer weekends more than 500 swimmers and some 1,500 spectators often gathered at the pool. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. Abandoned since 1977, an arsonist destroyed the bathhouse in 2010. The New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance nominated the site to its annual list of the Ten Most Endangered Places statewide.¹ Although this issue is not addressed in the nomination, Haroldie Spriggs remembers that the municipal pool did not welcome Black residents, despite that fact that presumably everyone's taxes helped pay for the pool.²

Libraries

Although additional research is required, it does not appear that there was a public library during the decades in question. The only libraries were in the schools. Therefore, access to the best library resources were largely discriminatory due to the nature of the disparities between the Black and White school systems.

Schools

By 1910, the discussion of whether or not to segregate or desegregate the schools was well underway. More than one editor opined that the settlement would be a short process in Tucumcari. "There will be no 'mixed schools' over here so that you can notice it" wrote "The Tenderfoot columnist, "Delegate Mabry's classification as Caucasian all children not negroes, goes."³

The columnist continued his opinion regarding the establishment of racially "mixed" schools:

¹ National Register of Historic Places nomination form prepared by David Kammer, Ph. D. (30 September 1995). National Archives Catalogue ID 96000268; "Tucumcari Park on Endangered Places List," *Clovis News Journal*, 31 January 2003, p. 3.

² Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

³ "The Magnificent Prize Was Won by Progress Editor – The Tenderfoot Breaks into a Funny Strain...The Convention and Negro Schools," *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 5 November 1910, p. 2.

There is not going to be any, irrespective of what the constitutional convention does or does not do. The other towns of the valley will doubtless follow the example of Roswell when the need arises.⁴

Haroldie Kent Spriggs attended the segregated schools in Tucumcari from the primary through the eighth grades, remembering that “The provisions for our school were substandard and meager.” The two schools, named North Side and Dunbar were “sub-standard buildings with little to offer in the way of comfort and safety.” She recalls that the “items sent for our use including furniture, books, and playground equipment were used hand-me-downs from the White schools. Much of what was needed was purchased by the parents of the Black students.”⁵ Fund-raisers were held to buy items that were not provided by the school system.

In 1951, Haroldie Spriggs completed eighth grade in Tucumcari and was ready to matriculate to high school. Although both African Americans and Hispanos lived in a segregated area on the same side of the railroad tracks in Tucumcari, they did not share a segregated school. The Latinx students attended Tucumcari High School with the Whites. “If Black children wanted to attend high school, they were forced to travel out of town, to Clovis, Hobbs, or one of the other towns in Little Texas that had a Black population large enough to support a separate school for them.”⁶ Haroldie’s father, not wanting his daughter to attend high school elsewhere, appealed to influential Whites who sympathized with him. They convinced the school board to integrate Tucumcari High School, and Haroldie completed her high school in her hometown.⁷

Theatres

There were two theaters on the south side, the Princess and the Odeon. Black residents were relegated to the balcony “where the noise from the filming booth was so loud, it was difficult to hear the movie dialogue.”⁸

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Personal communication with Haroldie “Dee Dee” Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021)

⁶ Cooper, George M. “The Modern Civil Rights Movement in New Mexico, 1955 - 1975,” in Bruce A. Glasrud (ed.) *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits From Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), pp. 205-6.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Personal communication with Haroldie “Dee Dee” Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

Restaurants and Hotels

As discussed elsewhere, Tucumcari's restaurants and hotels were segregated. Spriggs remembers that there were boarding rooms offered by residents such as Mr. John Wilson (the only Black resident who lived in Tucumcari for many years.) Haroldie's father, Mr. Harold Kent, Mr. Joseph Mitchell, and Mr. Nolan Jones also provided boarding rooms for Black people traveling through Tucumcari. They accommodated the train porters who had to 'lay over' in Tucumcari between their work shifts. Mr. Nolan Jones and Mr. Robert Richard owned the Amigo Motel and Café on Highway 66 for a few years.⁹

Medical Facilities

Although medical services were provided to Black residents, there were no Black doctors available. The Black population relied upon White doctors.¹⁰

Drugstores and Grocery Stores

Haroldie Spriggs recalls that Black residents could shop in all the retail facilities.¹¹

Banks

Although lending practices have not been studied, it does appear that regular banking services were extended to all residents.

Parks

The parks were segregated. [Q. Where was Juneteenth celebrated?]

Alliances, Organizations, and Inspirations

Haroldie Spriggs remembers that her father was a member of the Prince Hall Masons and acquired the highest degree as a Mason. Her mother was an Eastern Star, and she was also a member of the NM Federation of Colored Women's Clubs.

Spriggs also remember that "there was a White woman who started a 'Sunshine Club'" for young Black girls:

⁹ Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

We would meet at her house (south side) where we learned social graces and played games. I remember this because there were only Black girls in attendance. My guess is, she was doing her Christian duty by extending kindness to the young Black girls.¹

If there were Scout activities, Spriggs surmises that, “Black children were not invited to participate during the segregated era. To my knowledge, there were never any scouting activities for Black children.”²

Entertainment

By the turn of the twentieth century, world-class entertainment arrived in Tucumcari and the surrounding towns in many forms, including the Wild West Shows, rodeos, circuses, musical, vaudeville, and other dramatic and comical performances.

The Circus

Between 1901 and 1903, for example, Howe’s London Shows was the first circus to exhibit at Tucumcari, Santa Rosa and Alamogordo.³ It is not known if the shows were segregated or exclusionary in any way.

Black Entertainers

Black entertainers also came to Tucumcari. A banjo duet by Mr. and Mrs. Hermon in 1910, for example, delighted mixed audiences. Performing at a venue known as The Electric, it was reported that “Herman is a typical negro and his jokes are not chestnuts, but are rich, fresh and up-to-date.”⁴

Juneteenth

Haroldie Spriggs remembers that Tucumcari’s small Black community celebrated Juneteenth:

¹ Personal communication with Haroldie “Dee Dee” Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

² Ibid.

³ *Billboard Monthly* (1901-3). Available on-line at billboard.com. The prices were \$1 for adults, 75 cents for children, 75 cents for reserved seats, and 75 cents for the concert and side show.

⁴ “The Hermons at the Electric,” *The Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times*, 10 June 1910, p. 4.

celebrations were primarily driven by the Jones and Richard families who were from Taft, Oklahoma where the tradition was prominent. I vaguely recall the implementation of musical plays in the church, and the preparation of lots of food that was shared with participants. All were welcome and we often had Hispanic people join us. I believe some White people came at the behest of the men and women who worked for them. I remember it being a fun time, but I do not remember any discussions around the purpose and importance of Juneteenth.⁵

Desegregation

At least one source believed that there was only one Black Tucumcari resident in the 1930s. As others arrived, they gravitated toward, or were relegated to the same neighborhood, separated from the predominantly White residents by the railroad track and yard. The following remembrance from Tucumcari attorney J. V. Gallegos was posted on-line by his granddaughter Laura Love in 2018:

When I came to Tucumcari in the 1930s, it was a city of some several thousand in population (five or six perhaps?) and there was only one Black person living in this town. He was a middle-aged man and earned his living by shining shoes at the barber shop for 5¢ a shine. He saved his money and built a home. As time went on, more Black people came to Tucumcari.¹

Mr. Gallegos went on explain how one Black student integrated Tucumcari's segregated elementary school:

The school superintendent was Mr. L. H. Rhodes. He came to see me [in 1938?] for advice one day since I was the city attorney. Mr. Rhodes was a very kind man, not controversial, a slow speaker and made decisions slowly. He told me, 'There is a boy of school age here in Tucumcari, living with his parents and he desires to go to school.' He continued, 'The boy is Black and he fears what some of the White people would do to him or say if he went to a school attended only by White students.' I asked, 'Who is objecting to this boy going to school?' He didn't want to say who it was. I insisted, I needed to know all the facts. He named an

⁵ Personal communication with Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs through e-mail, USPS mail, telephone conversations, and a written questionnaire (2020-2021).

¹ Love, Laura (granddaughter). "A Remembrance Offered by J. V. Gallegos -- Tucumcari's Attorney," Posted 15 October 2018. Available on-line at lostnewmexico.com/lost/2018/10/15/the-black-boy-goes-to-school.

individual who was to say the least not a leader in this community, but was apparently uneducated and perhaps racially biased.

Mr. Rhodes reminded me we had a law in New Mexico which followed the United States Supreme Court law, that Black people could be compelled to go to school under the doctrine called, 'separate but equal.' The 'equal' was quite important in this case, meaning the facilities, etc. had to be equal and separate or apart from the other students. I told Mr. Rhodes under this doctrine, the school would have to put this one boy in a good well-kept brick building and have a qualified teacher. Perhaps with a Master's degree to teach him. The school will have to also have a library equal to the other one for this one boy. 'It is not only ridiculous but very foolish to deny the right to go to the existing school to this boy,' and I continued, 'and if this boy does not get an education, he will likely have to be supported by the taxpayers. If he gets an education, he will be a contributor to the community and a taxpayer.'

The decision was made. The boy was going to the same school with the rest of the children. I would take the responsibility to have it done. I called the sheriff and Chief of Police to be on the watch for the boy when we made the trip to the school the next morning. All went smoothly and there was no need for the authorities, the other children accepted him. This young man finished high school at Tucumcari High and as I recall, he was elected president of his senior class. Later he entered the service. After some years, I had heard he was a captain in the Army.²

This one accommodation, offered by an empathetic White school superintendent effectively ended school segregation in Tucumcari years before the Supreme Court decision to integrate the nation's schools.

Biographies Tucumcari

The following brief biographies of individuals with ties to Tucumcari are meant to personify societal and cultural themes that permeate the current research: Discrimination and perseverance, imposed racist indignities, personal virtues and resiliency, and familial fortitude. This section is intended to serve as a factual inspiration for this and future generations, and as a beginning for additional biographical research into other Tucumcari families who experienced and resisted segregation or were influential in affecting racial equality.

² Love, Laura (granddaughter). "A Remembrance Offered by J. V. Gallegos -- Tucumcari's Attorney," Posted 15 October 2018. Available on-line at lostnewmexico.com/lost/2018/10/15/the-black-boy-goes-to-school.

Alice Faye Kent Hoppes

Alice Faye Kent Hoppes -- the second of four children of the late Harold and Bessie Kent -- was born in Tucumcari, New Mexico, on 20 May 1939. Ms. Hoppes was reared in a strong family personifying the ideals of hard work, honesty, and independence. The Kent children attended the segregated school earmarked for Tucumcari's small black student population. Faye graduated in 1958 from the integrated Tucumcari High School.

From an early age, the disrespectful treatment that African American citizens endured merely because of skin color was troubling and unacceptable to her. When Ms. Hoppes and her family moved to Albuquerque in 1967, she began her quest to provide a voice on behalf of black citizens in the community. She fervently and fearlessly fought to make the political, social, and governmental systems accountable to its Black citizens not only in Albuquerque, but throughout the state as well.

Ms. Hoppes was elected president of the NAACP Albuquerque Branch in 1984. She served in this position for 12 years. During her tenure, she spearheaded efforts to create an African American Day at the annual State Fair, organized civil rights marches to protest unfair practices, and spoke out in a variety of venues about prison reform, biased media reporting, unfair labor practices, fair housing, and equal access.

Although actively committed to a number of organizations, perhaps her most notable accomplishment was her appointment in 2003 as director of the Office of African American Affairs by Governor Bill Richardson. New Mexico lost Ms. Hoppes on 21 October 2003 to cancer. For her many years of tireless work on behalf of African Americans and others in New Mexico, Governor Richardson decreed that the African American Pavilion at the NM Expo Fairgrounds be named the 'Alice F. Hoppes African American Pavilion.'

The Alice Faye Kent Hoppes Statewide Essay Scholarship was developed in honor of and in gratitude for Alice Faye Kent Hoppes for graduating seniors of African American descent across the state of New Mexico. The scholarship is given every other year in February during African American Day at the Legislature by the African American Legislative Council.

Source: Jackson, Joycelyn Pegues. "Alice Faye Kent Hoppes Statewide Essay Scholarship" In *Making Connections Language, Literacy, Learning* published by the Albuquerque Public Schools (March 2009), p. 2.

M. H. Koch

M. H. Koch, funeral director and embalmer of Tucumcari, was born in the city of New Strelitz, Germany, on 28 February 1850. He was graduated from the New Strelitz high school in 1867. He then took up his father's occupation of house building and cabinet making. Mr. Koch affiliated with the Masonic fraternity, was a member of the Eastern Star and also of the

Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, and attended the Presbyterian church. He believed in “the equality of all people, which is “one of the many reasons why” he emigrated to the United States.

Source: *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History, Vol III, 1917*. Excerpts posted by whiteoaksnmgoldrush.com/max-k-koch.

J. J. Simmons Family

When J. J. Simmons III returned from World War II, where he had been injured fighting in the China Sea, the Chicago Rock Island and Pacific train taking him home to Oklahoma stopped in Tucumcari, NM. There, the Black passengers were expected to move to a segregated train. Simmons, “the third generation in the proud and powerful oil family that founded the Simmons Royalty Co., refused.” When the conductor informed Simmons that a sheriff would be waiting for him in McAlester, OK to remove him from the train, Simmons confided, “I would not move, because as a disabled veteran I had paid my dues and I was not about to get off that White car.” Despite his active war duty and his family’s multi-generation and international business successes, Simmons and his family experienced generations of racial discrimination. Serving as president of the Oklahoma NAACP during the early 1960s, J. J. Simmons III spent most of his adult life fighting to redress the imbalances he encountered in America’s racially polarized society.

Sources: Trescott, Jacqueline. “Like Forefathers, Like Son: J. J. Simmons III Represents Latest Chapter in a Proud Family History,” *The Washington Post*, 26 May 1990; Greenberg, Jonathan D. *Staking a Claim: Jake Simmons and the Making of an African American Oil Dynasty*. New York City: Atheneum Press, December 1989.

Daniel D. Villanueva

Daniel D. Villanueva, a former professional football player, who as a founder of Univision Communications, Inc. network, built an international Spanish-language broadcasting empire. His death at age 77 caused by a stroke was announced by his *alma mater*, New Mexico State University. After graduation in 1960, he was teaching at Las Cruces High School as a 22-year-old ex-football player, when he received a surprise phone call from the Los Angeles Rams. Mr. Elroy “Crazy Legs” Hirsch, kicker-turned-NFL- scout had seen him kick a 49-yard field goal during his tenure at NMSU.

One of the first Hispanic-Americans in the National Football League, Mr. Villanueva was a kicker for the Rams from 1960 to 1964, and for the Dallas Cowboys from 1965 to 1967. He was also a television sportscaster and an executive of the Spanish International Communications Corporation, a forerunner of Univision

One of 12 children raised by itinerant Mexican missionaries, Daniel Villanueva was born in a two-room earthen hut in Tucumcari, NM on 5 November 1937. His father was a Methodist minister, and Danny, as he was known, was reared wherever the elder Mr. Villanueva was

assigned a pulpit, including Phoenix, AZ and Calexico, CA. As a boy, he helped support the family by picking asparagus, watermelon and cantaloupe.

In his years with the Rams, Mr. Villanueva, who in 1962 led the league in punting yardage, was made unremittingly aware of his ethnic heritage. By all accounts he bore with good grace the nickname, *El Kickador*, bestowed on him by the news media, and the bullfighting music that was played whenever he took the field at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

“We had a black bus and we had a white bus in those days; we were segregated,” Mr. Villanueva told ESPN.com interviewers in 2008. He recalled a teammate once announcing, “All black guys get on that bus, white guys get on that bus, and Danny, you take a cab.” “I understood,” Mr. Villanueva continued, “that I was neither fish nor fowl.”

Villanueva remembered that he had to re-learn his native Spanish while entering the network profession. “We were that transitional generation that thought that by distancing ourselves from our culture, our language and our background and our roots, we were going to somehow magically be accepted by the general community,” he said in a 1985 *Los Angeles Times* interview. “It didn’t work.”

Sources: Merrill, Elizabeth. ESPN Senior Writer. “Villanueva Saw NFL as a Path to Greater Opportunity,” 12 October 2008; Fox, Margalit. “Daniel Villanueva, a Creator of Univision, Dies at 77,” *The New York Times*, 22 June 2015 (nyti.ms/1GDpSI).

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Virgil Ivan McCasland and Ralph Lawrence Neafus

The Lincoln Battalion was the 17th battalion of the XV International Brigade, also known as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. While most Americans battled the hardships of the Great Depression at home, ultimately some 2,800 Lincoln volunteers fought for Spanish Republican forces against Franco and the Spanish Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). It was organized by the Communist International, although efforts were made to conceal or minimize the communistic character of the effort at the time.

Volunteers with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, also known as “Lincolns,” were drawn from all walks of life, and all regions of the country – including the tiny town of Tucumcari. Composed of men and women, seamen, students, the unemployed, miners, fur workers, lumberjacks, teachers, salesmen, athletes, dancers, artists, ranchers and scientists, they established the first racially-integrated military unit in United States history and were the first to be led by a Black commander. At least 60 percent were members of the Young Communist League or the Industrial Workers of the World, and socialists, although the unaffiliated also joined.

While much of America did not heed their warnings regarding the dangers of fascism and Nazi encroachment, returning Lincolns continued their passionate fights for humane international relationships, ethical politics, and racial equality.

Brief biographies of two White Tucumcari-born Lincolns are included in this research by virtue of their having served in the first non-segregated American military unit under the leadership of commander Oliver Law. In Texas, Commander Law had served six years with the Buffalo Soldiers, "U. S. Colored Troops." He unfortunately lost his life in Spain.

Born 4 July 1910 to J. H. and Lucella McCasland, Virgil Ivan McCasland was raised on a small ranch two miles west of Tucumcari and attended public school there from 1926 to 1933. He was described as a "quiet sort of fellow" with an interest in politics. He sailed for Spain on the *S. S. Berengari* on 21 July 1937. No details of his service are known. He refused upon his return to discuss his "Spanish experiences."

Ralph Lawrence Neafus was born in Tucumcari sometime during February 1910 to James Oscar and Laura Whitmore Neafus, a ranching family from Newkirk, NM. Most of his secondary education between 1925 and 1929 was accomplished at Las Vegas, NM. While in college at the University of Michigan, he became good friends with playwright Arthur Miller, who drove him to New York to board a ship to Europe. Neafus sailed for Spain on the *S. S. Aquatania* on 16 June 1937. The 27-year-old evidently became a proficient soldier. One anonymous observer described him as being "an ace scout, and altogether an o.k. guy."

Sources: "Shouts from the Wall: Posters and Photographs Brought Back from the Spanish Civil War," Exhibit, Albuquerque Museum (8 September to 27 October 1996). abavolunteer.org/2020/03/new-mexico-volunteers-ralph-lawrence-neafus. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) is an educational non-profit dedicated to promoting social activism and the defense of human rights. Also: Katz, William Loren and Marc Crawford, *The Lincoln Brigade: A Picture History*, Eugene, OR: WIPF & STOCK, 2013 (Preface by Robin D. G. Kelley).

Haroldie Kent Spriggs

Haroldie Kent Spriggs is a retired educator and a former resident of Tucumcari. She helped organize Martin Luther King's historic 1963 march on the nation's capital. "It was a very hot day that day in Washington. It felt like it was 195 degrees," Spriggs said, "but we all felt so happy to be listening to Dr. King and knowing that the world was listening."

Spriggs was one of three black students to integrate Tucumcari High School in the early 1950s. "Before 1952, Black kids had to travel to Clovis if they wanted to attend high school," Spriggs said. "The integration of Tucumcari High School happened two years before the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case required all schools to be integrated. Tucumcari was ahead of the curve."

Spriggs said Tucumcari's early school integration was due to the cooperation of "stable Black families," and influential White citizens of Tucumcari who petitioned the State of New Mexico to allow integration of the local high school. School integration was just one issue, however, as Spriggs remembers well. "The Black people had to sit in the balcony of the Odeon Theater," Spriggs said. "We could barely hear the movie because it was so loud up there near the

projection booth.” Spriggs said Black people “knew their place” in 1950s Tucumcari. “There were businesses Black people could not work in,” Spriggs said. “We knew the boundaries between Whites and Blacks, and we knew not to infringe on those boundaries.”¹

Spriggs said the 1963 march on Washington, DC changed the mindset of America, but having spent her professional career in the District of Columbia she confirms that she is all too aware of continuing discrimination.

Spriggs received a doctorate in education from the University of Maryland College Park in 1974 and went to work for the U. S. Department of Education. She retired as a supervisory education program specialist in May of 1994. After a brief position as a visiting professor at the University of New Mexico’s College of Education, afterward serving as an Albuquerque education consultant before moving to her current residence in Silver Spring, MD.

¹ Personal phone communications (October 2020); *Quay County Sun*, 19 January 2005 (qcsunonline.com/story/2005/01/19/publishnews/marchers-honor-king/1663). Frazier, Lori. “NAACP Honors Local School Employee,” *Clovis News Journal*, 3 October 1999, p. 1.

SELECTED IMAGES TUCUMCARI, NM

A MEMORIAL
EXPRESSING CONDOLENCE TO MR. WILLARD HOPPES AND FAMILY ON THE DEATH OF
ALICE FAYE KENT HOPPES

WHEREAS, Alice Faye Kent Hoppes was born in Tucumcari, New Mexico, on May 20, 1939, the second of four children of the late Harold and Bessie Kent; and

WHEREAS, Alice's parents instilled in their children the ideals of hard work, honesty and independence; and

WHEREAS, Faye, as she was known then, grew up in a segregated society and attended the segregated school established for the small black population of Tucumcari; and

WHEREAS, when she graduated from the then-recently integrated Tucumcari high school, she was the only African American in her class; and

WHEREAS, the indignities of discrimination made Alice Faye Kent Hoppes a vocal advocate for civil rights, and, after moving with her family to Albuquerque, she became even more involved in the quest to provide a voice to black citizens throughout New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, she began her work with the national association for the advancement of colored people in 1975 as chairwoman of the youth committee, was elected president of the New Mexico chapter in 1984 and served in this position for twelve years, and she served two terms as president of the Albuquerque chapter of the national council of Negro women; and

WHEREAS, Alice dedicated her life to the fight against injustice, particularly racial injustice, and her leadership was evident in the many honors she received, including the 2000 Martin Luther King, Jr., freedom award from the national association for the advancement of colored people, the Albuquerque human rights award and outstanding black women from the commission on the status of women; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Hoppes was instrumental in the creation of the African-American village at the state fair; African-American Day at the legislature; the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday and commission; and the office on African American affairs, for which she was serving as director at the time of her death; and

WHEREAS, Alice Hoppes died October 21, 2003, after a valiant battle with cancer, and she is survived by her husband, Willard; four daughters, Ladonna Hall-Gamble, Toia Morgan, Diedra Faulkner and Linda Hoppes; nine grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, many public officials, including past and present governors, legislators, mayors and others, will eulogize the life of Alice Faye Kent Hoppes, but it is the recognition in the hearts of ordinary people whose lives have been made better by her tireless efforts that will ennoble the life of Alice Hoppes;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that its heartfelt sympathy and condolences be extended to the family and friends of Alice Faye Kent Hoppes.

Source: nmlegis.gov/sessions/04%20Regular/final/HM0020. Emphasis added.



Figure 210. Integrating Tucumcari's schools

School Superintendent L. H. Rhodes worked with City Attorney J. V. Gallegos to Integrate the Schools

Source: <https://lostnewmexico.com/lost/2018/10/15/the-black-boy-goes-to-school>.



Figure 211. Tucumcari and Route 66.

A Chevrolet Apache parked along old Route 66 in Tucumcari

Although a beacon for motorists, only a few hotels along Route 66 in New Mexico catered to Black patrons.

Source: Photo by Gabriela Campos. "Route 66: Decay and Resilience Along Iconic U. S. Highway" in *Al Jazeera* 10 December 2016, p. 4. (aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/12/route-66-decay-resilience-iconic-highway).

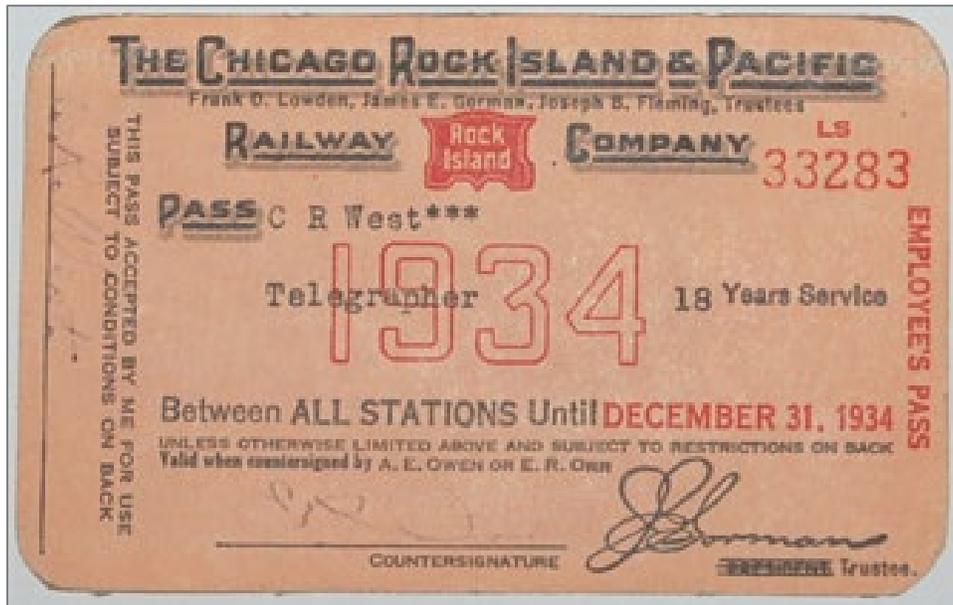


Figure 212. Employee railroad pass

Employee pass, Chicago Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company (1934). Printed with black and red ink. Railway pass #33283 for C. R. West, 18-year telegrapher. Courtesy of Las Cruces Museum System On-line Collections. Object ID: 2004.7.6.

The railroad passenger system was segregated. One traveler observed that “the Black cars were not that nice.”



Figure 213. Route 66 Esso gasoline station

Esso Gasoline Station on Route 66 (Tucumcari, NM)

The *Negro Motorist Green Books* were sponsored by Esso and sold at the stations.

Source: Northern Arizona University. Cline Library. Available on-line at azarchivesonline.org/xtf/view?docId=ead/nau/evans_route_66. Image: 168270.jpg



Figure 214. Abandoned Route 66 gas station

Gasoline Station on Route 66, between Newkirk and Tucumcari, NM (April 1986)

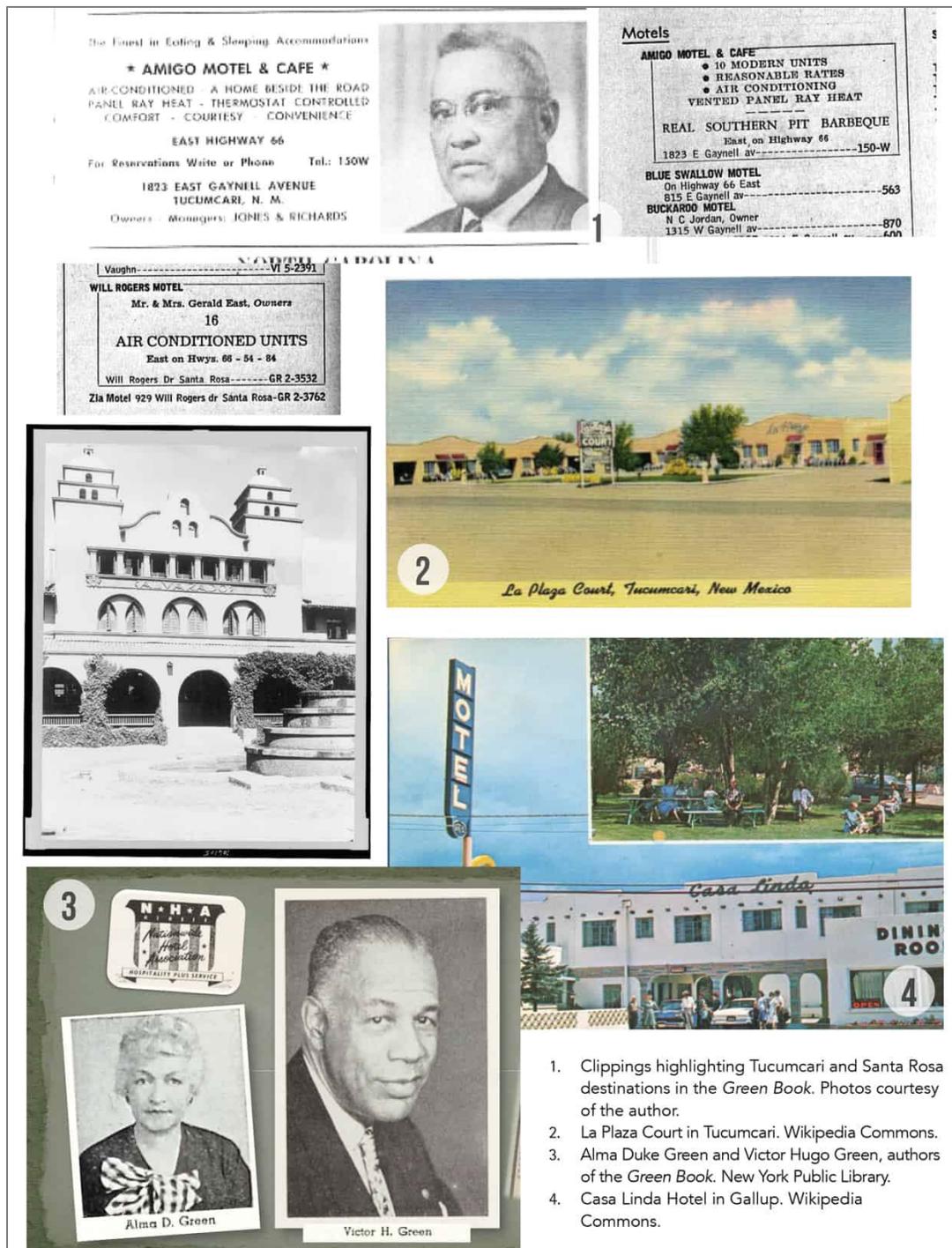
Source: Photo by William J. Lucas, ZIM CSWR Pict Colls PICT 986-012. Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico. (rmoa.unm.edu/docviewer.php?docId=nmupict986-012).



Figure 215. Route 66 through Tucumcari

Golden Dragon Café on Route 66 in Tucumcari, NM (April 1986)

Very few restaurants along Route 66 in New Mexico were listed in the
Negro Motorist's Green Book.



1. Clippings highlighting Tucumcari and Santa Rosa destinations in the Green Book. Photos courtesy of the author.
2. La Plaza Court in Tucumcari. Wikipedia Commons.
3. Alma Duke Green and Victor Hugo Green, authors of the Green Book. New York Public Library.
4. Casa Linda Hotel in Gallup. Wikipedia Commons.

Figure 216. Tucumcari safe havens for African American travelers

Source: Norris, Frank. "For African American Motorists in Jim Crow America, the Green Book Was Their Bible," in *Safe Havens* posted by *Edible New Mexico*, 1 June 2019 (Early Summer 2019, Foodshed). Available on-line: www.ediblenm.com/safe-havens. Tucumcari safe havens included Casa Linda Motel and Dining Room, La Plaza Court, Amigo Motel and Café, Blue Swallow Motel, and the Buckaroo Motel.



Figure 217. Rural southeastern New Mexico

“High Plains between Las Vegas, NM and Tucumcari, NM”

Source: Jackson, John Brinckerhoff, 1909-1996 Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico. ZIM CSWR Pict Colls PICT 000-866-2-E-02 (elibrary.unm.edu/cswr).

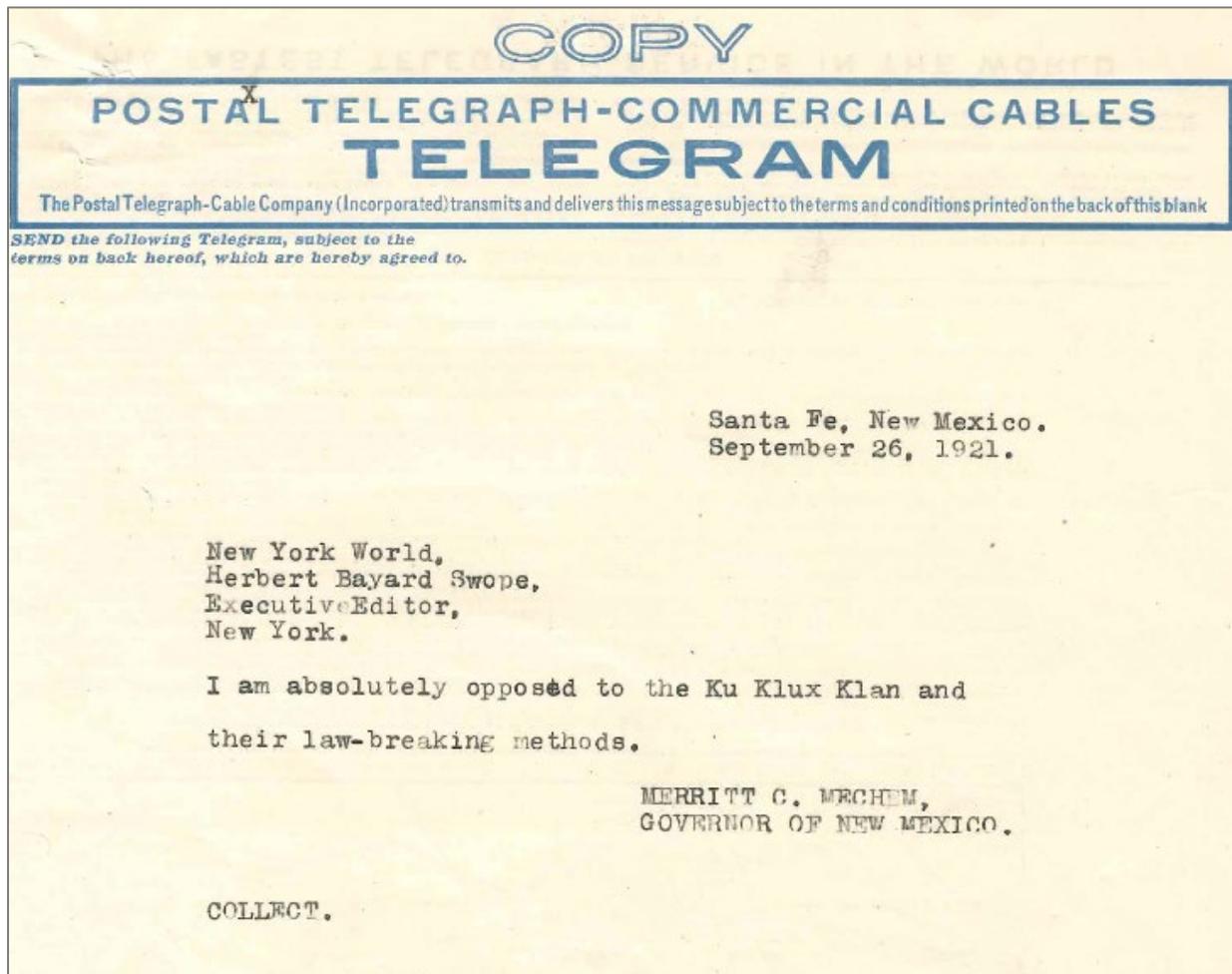


Figure 218. Telegram from Governor of New Mexico regarding Ku Klux Klan

Source: Telegram dated 6 September 1921. New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Collection number 1959-98, "Ku Klux Klan Activities - 1922," Box 6, Folder 217.

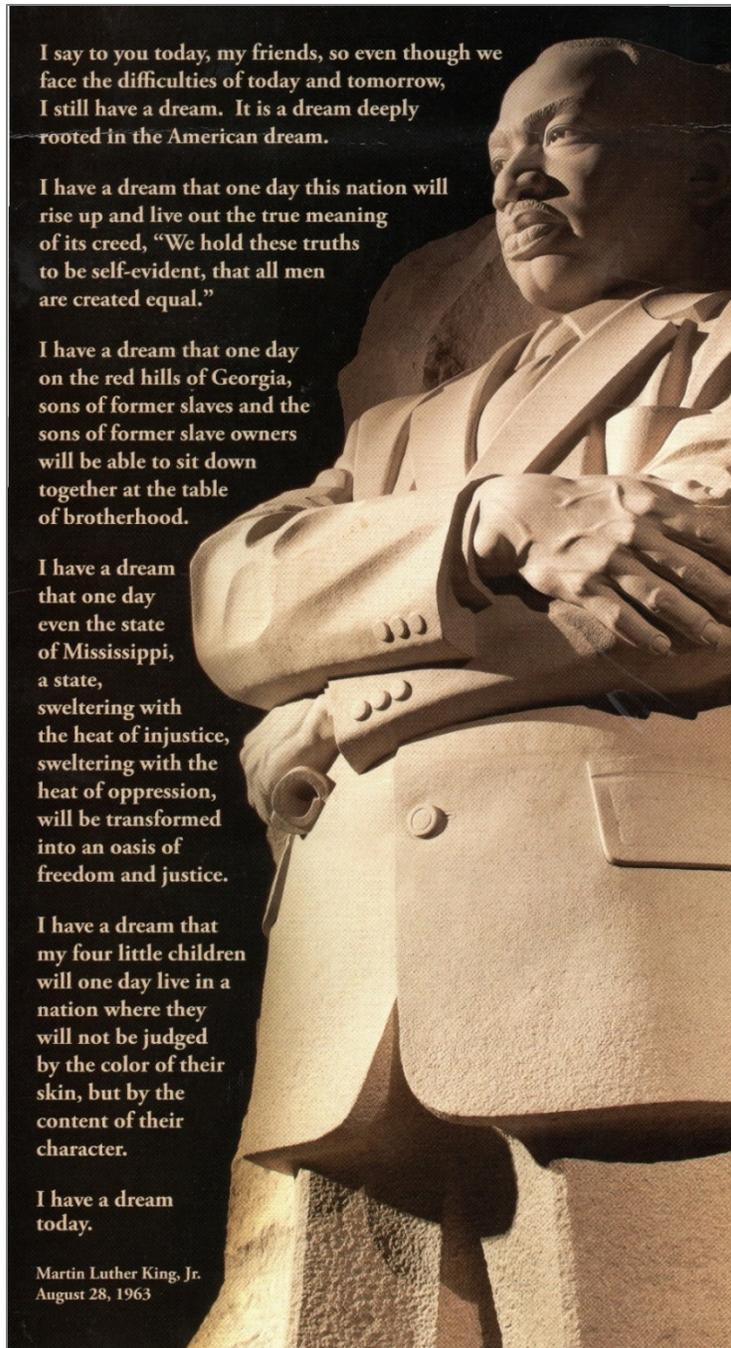


Figure 219. Postcard Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech

Tucumcari born and raised Haroldie "Dee Dee" Kent Spriggs witnessed the August 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, DC. She believes that the event caused her and others to finally question Jim Crow separatism, and to fight for racial equality.



Figure 220. Owner of the Palamino Hotel

Muhammed 'Palamino' Mailik, owner of the Palamino Motel

Very few Tucumcari establishments welcomed African American Route 66 travelers during the era of Jim Crow

Source: Photo by Gabriela Campos. "Route 66: Decay and Resilience Along Iconic U. S. Highway" in *Al Jazeera* 10 December 2016, p. 3. (aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/12/route-66-decay-resilience-iconic-highway).

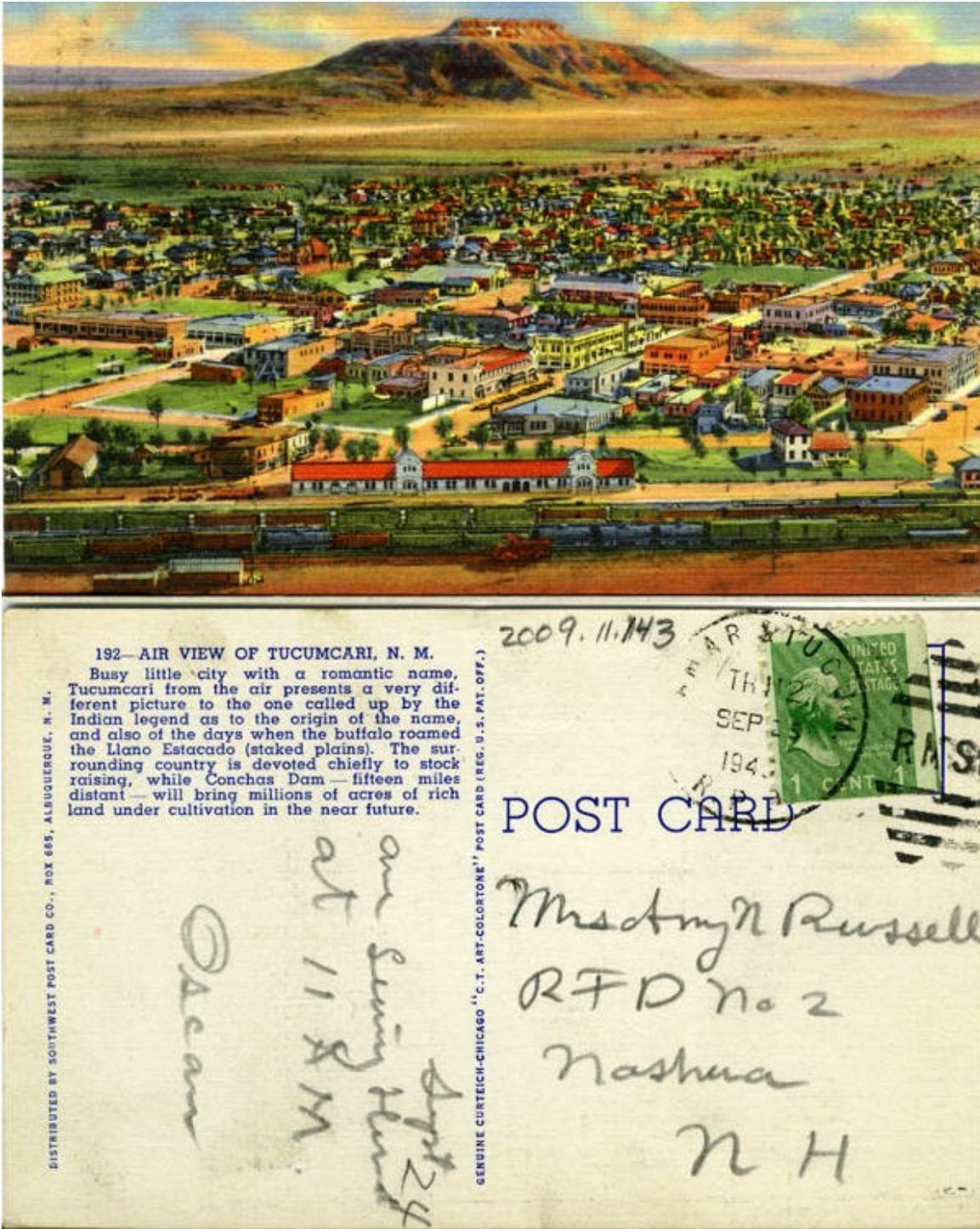


Figure 221. Post card. Tucumcari's built environment

Southwest Post Card Co., Albuquerque, NM: Color halftone, matte-finish linen cardstock. Message on reverse. Postcard of "Air View of Tucumcari, N.M." Postmarked 1 cent stamp 1943. Genuine Curteich-Chicago "C.T. Art-Colortone." Source: Hubbard Museum of the American West, New Mexico Centennial Project, 2009.11.164.



Figure 222. Rodeo Tucumcari

Rider on bucking steer, rodeo at Tucumcari, New Mexico (1941)

Source: Barnes and Caplan Collection, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico (palaceofthegovernors.org/photorequest).



Figure 223. City officials 1936

Banquet Given by Mayor J. W. Bullington for City Officials of Tucumcari, New Mex.

27 January 1936

Until recently, African Americans were excluded from official Tucumcari municipal representation.

Venerated Places Black Communities Tucumcari

NAME	TYPE	LOCATION
Mitchell's Rooms	<i>Negro Motorist Green Book</i> Safe Haven	406 N. Third
Rocket Inn (Residence)	<i>Negro Motorist Green Book</i> Safe Haven	524 W. Campbell Ave.
La Plaza Court Motel	<i>Negro Motorist Green Book</i> Safe Haven	1023 E. Tucumcari Blvd.*
Cactus Motor Lodge	<i>Negro Motorist Green Book</i> Safe Haven	1316 E. Tucumcari Blvd.
Amigo Motel and Café**	<i>Negro Motorist Green Book</i> Safe Haven	1823 E. Tucumcari
Mt. Calvary Baptist	Church	408 W. Campbell***
'Darktown' 'Colored Section'	Neighborhood	Boundaries TBD
The Electric	Bar and Lounge[?]	Verify relevance and location
Harold's Grocery Store	Food Market	Verify location
Rocket Inn owned by Mr. Robert and Mrs. Stella Jones	Motel and Restaurant	524. N. Campbell Ave.
The Oasis owned by Richards	Ice-cream Shop	Verify location
Josie's Café Josie Ross	Restaurant	Verify location
Tucumcari Cemetery	Segregated	Verify name and location
NM Federation of Colored Women's Club	Civic Association	Verify meeting place[s]
Eastern Star	Fraternal Organization	Verify meeting place[s]
Sunshine Club for Black girls	Organized by a White woman	Verify name and place of residence
John Wilson Residence	Boarding Room	Verify location
Crescent Creamery	Sold the milk to Kent's store	Verify location
Local Esso Stations	<i>Green Book</i> vendor	Verify location(s)

Table 9. Venerated Places of Black Communities Tucumcari

* Formerly Gaynell Ave.

** Demolished

*** Formerly W. Heman Ave. [verify]

Note: Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Ima Mitchell owned Mitchell's Rooms. John Wilson was Tucumcari's sole Black resident for many years.

BLACK COMMUNITY TUCUMCARI

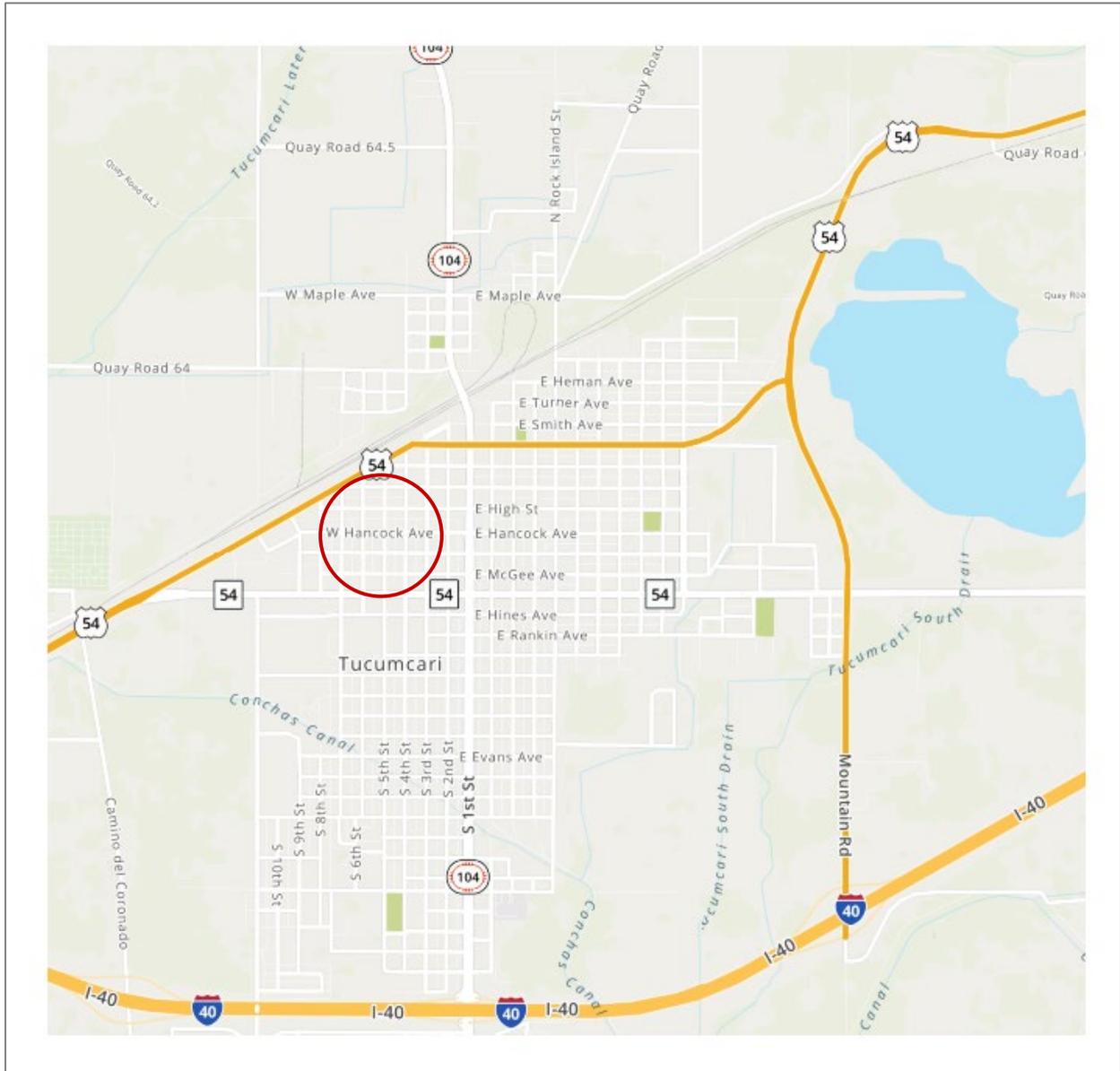


Figure 224. Map locating Tucumcari's historically Black neighborhood

Suggestions for Additional Research Tukumcari

What more is known about John Wilson, Tukumcari's sole Black resident for decades?

Were there African American homesteaders in and around Tukumcari?

What early businesses were owned by Blacks? Employed Blacks? Discriminated?

What are the connections between the Black community and Tukumcari's National Register sites? WPA sites?

What more is known about the properties and their owners listed in each edition of the *Negro Motorist Green Book*?

How important were Esso gas stations to the Black community?

What magazines and newspapers did Black Tukumcari residents historically subscribe to?

What were the relationships between the Black community, New Mexico, and the Red Cross?

What more is known about how Fred Harvey treated the Harvey Girls and handled race relations at his establishments throughout the Southwest?

Was there a known Ku Klux Klan presence in Tukumcari or the surrounding vicinity?

Prior to the 1960s, was there a public library in Tukumcari available to all residents? Was there a history of bookmobiles?

Which individuals were credited with integrating Tukumcari's schools?

What successful strategies were employed during the civil rights movement?

Were local financial lending practices fair?

Where were the Juneteenth celebrations held, and what did a typical celebration look like?

What more is known about the local 'Sunshine Club' for young Black girls?

Were the rodeos, circuses, and other forms of itinerant entertainment discriminatory to certain audiences?

How did the history of the Pullman train porters affect Tukumcari's Black experience?

What do eyewitnesses remember as being the events that ushered in the local civil rights movement?

What more is known about the local establishments that catered to predominantly Black customers?

Who were the first local Black officials elected or appointed to office and when did this shift occur?

Which non-religious fraternal and social organizations with mostly Black memberships continue to flourish?

VADO



Figure 225. Map of New Mexico highlighting the city of Vado

Background: Blackdom

Francis (Frank) Marion Boyer was the son of Henry Boyer, who had served as a wagoner with Alexander Doniphan's Missouri Volunteers in 1846. Upon returning home to Pelham, GA, Henry regaled his family with tales of New Mexico, remembering "head high grass... antelope, buffalo, and whitetail deer."¹ He also recalled that the entrenched racism he and his family encountered in Georgia was less pronounced out West. He regarded New Mexico as a place "where the color of a man's skin didn't belittle him."²

After learning of the murder of a Black barber who had accidentally razor-nicked the skin of a White patron, Francis Boyer, at his father's urging, departed Georgia in 1900 with his brother-in-law Daniel Keyes.³ Apparently the acquittal of the shooter by an all-White jury was the final straw for the younger Boyer.

Accounts generally agree that Boyer and Keyes took more than a year to walk just under 2,000 miles, working along the way, first settling in Roswell. His first job was as a "cookie" on a chuck wagon, followed by a stint as a ranch hand on the famed Chisum spread. Finally, after retrieving his family, he helped establish -- and then settled in -- Blackdom.⁴

Thirteen African Americans incorporated the Blackdom Townsite company in 1903. Its Board of Directors included: Francis M. Boyer, Isaac W. Jones, Daniel G. Keys, Burrel Dickerson, Charles C. Childress, John Boyer, Charles Thompson, James Jackson, Charles Clifton, Albert Hubert, George White, Benjamin Harrison and Joseph Cook. The objectives of the company were to establish and operate the town of Blackdom in Chaves County, and to "conduct a negro colony in that section."⁵ The settlement began in earnest around 1909. The following year, the

¹ Giles, C. R., "Boyer Envisioned a Black City; Vado – Chance for Dream Dying," *El Paso Times*, 26 October 1975, p. 1A.

² Giles, C. R., "Boyer Envisioned a Black City; Vado – Chance for Dream Dying," *El Paso Times*, 26 October 1975, p. 10-A.

³ Berg, Jeff and M. A. Walton, "Black Communities in New Mexico," in Glasrud, Bruce A. *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits from Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 2013, p. 112.

⁴ Giles, C. R., "Boyer Envisioned a Black City; Vado – Chance for Dream Dying," *El Paso Times*, 26 October 1975, p. 1A.

⁵ "Articles of Incorporation," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 9 September 1903, p. 10. Please consult the following publications for additional information regarding Blackdom: Maisha Baton, "The Community of Blackdom, N.M.," A Site Survey, Oral History, and Historic Review Project (No. 35-95-10009.09); Elvis E. Fleming, "Pioneer Klan No. 15: The Ku Klux Klan in Roswell, 1924-1934," *Southern New Mexico Review* (September 1999); Charles L. Harris, *Charles L. Harris' Public Land Guide: A Compilation of Public Land Laws and Departmental Regulations Thereunder* (Chicago: Peterson Linotyping Co. 1912); Timothy E. Nelson, "The Significance of the Afro-Frontier in American History: Blackdom, Barratry, and Bawdyhouses in the Borderslands 1900-1930" Ph. D. dissertation (El Paso: The University of Texas at El Paso, 2015); Daniel Gibson, "Blackdom," *New Mexico Magazine* (February 1986); Flora L. Price, "Forgotten Spaces

Superintendent of Public Instruction, James E. Clark, received a letter from Blackdom asking for school curriculum advice. "The community has built a commodius school house and now asks for assistance in arranging for the curriculum and a teacher."⁶

The Blackdom townsite consisted of 166 lots. The residents raised lettuce, tomatoes, and apples, and supplemented their farming incomes as cowboys, day laborers and railroad workers.⁷ A severe water shortage, due to drought and regional overdrilling, ultimately caused the town's demise. The Boyer family (ten children in all) left the Pecos Valley around 1920. They and several others Blackdom families eventually relocated to the little town of Vado south of Las Cruces the following year.⁸

VADO

Prior to the establishment of its first Post Office, this small, predominantly Hispanic farming community was probably known as *Vado* ("ford" in Spanish and Latin) due to its location near a Rio Grande River crossing 12 miles south of Las Cruces and 40 miles north of the United States – Mexico border. Prior to the construction of Elephant Butte dam, this location was one of the few places that the previously untamed river could be crossed by wading. Vado's first Post Office (1886-8) was called "Herron," for Samuel Herron and his family, who owned and operated a broom factory. In 1866, a flood created a lake from hill to hill in the Vado vicinity that "left little evidence of a heavily populated town reported to have had a dye factory."¹

From 1888 until 1911, the Post Office changed its name to "Earlham" after the Indiana town from which some Quaker residents had arrived. A postmaster changed the name again in 1913 to "Center Valley." W. A. Sutherland, a prominent attorney in Las Cruces, suggested that the name be returned to its original name, "Vado" in 1927. Although the Post Office was moved to La Mesa in 1967, the original name Vado finally stuck. By the end of the Civil War, the population consisted of Latinx families and a few African-Americans mustered out of the Union Army. Around 1921, Francis and Ella Boyer, along with numerous other African-American residents moved to Vado from the failing community of Blackdom. Succeeding when Blackdom

and Resident Places: New Mexico Black Towns and Communities (1897 – 1930)" Ph. D. dissertation (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, August 2003).

⁶ "Blackdom Wants a School, Only Exclusive Negro Settlement in Territory of New Mexico," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 13 October 1910, p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 113.

⁸ Berg, Jeff and M. A. Walton, "Black Communities in New Mexico," in Glasrud, Bruce A. *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits from Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 2013, p. 113.

¹ Richardson, Barbara J. *Black Directory of New Mexico: Black Pioneers of New Mexico -- A Documentary and Pictorial History*, First Volume (Panorama Press: Rio Rancho, NM, 1976), n. p.

had not, Vado was for many years New Mexico's only predominantly African-American community.²

Black Employment Opportunities

Military Service

On 5 March 1941, Adj. Gen. Russell C. Charlton, State director of the selective service program, "issued a call for volunteers to fill New Mexico's first Negro call for men for a year's training with the army."¹ Charlton announced that "Colored registrants who want to be among the state's first contingent should apply to their local board at once."² The *Las Cruces Sun News* reported that, "Although the colored registration in New Mexico is small – less than one percent -- officials hope to fill the call by volunteers."³ Although always a tiny farm town, dozens of Black Vado residents have served in the military, from the Buffalo Soldiers, to contemporary active service. Their framed photographs are hung with pride at the Laurence Dunbar Elementary School, which currently serves as the local Head Start and community center.

Wartime Women Riveters

A sense of patriotic duty inspired many local women to become involved in the war effort in a variety of roles. Revealed Mrs. Marguerite Pederson, while in training to serve as an aircraft riveter:

I figure it this way: by the time I've paid for somebody to stay with the children while I work and paid my income tax I won't have much of anything left. But I will be doing a job which is helping with the war.⁴

"There are the two negro girls, Fleta Mae Gardner and Rachel Shiver," reported the campus *Round-Up* newspaper, "who used to be cooks in Vado" before they started their training.⁵ The welding and riveting instructor Mark McMahan told the reporter that, "Women aren't so mechanically minded as men. But they're neater – [they will] take more pains with a job than a man will. And they'll get along all right."⁶

² Julyan, Robert. *The Place Names of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico), 1998.

¹ "Issues First Call For Negro Soldiers," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 5 March 1941, p. 1

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Women Riveters Want to do Part in War," *The Round-Up*, 28 October 1942, p. 1.

⁵ "Women Riveters," *The Round-Up*, 28 October 1942, p. 3.

⁶ Ibid.

Farming

Most African Americans owned their own farms in the Vado area; few worked as field hands.⁷ When the Santa Fe Railway was constructed through the lower Rio Grande valley in the early 1880s, the high grade of the tracks blocked the flood waters from draining back into the river channel. The slow drainage left the soil increasingly saturated with salts. Eventually, only mequite and tornillos desert scrub could tolerate the alkalai.⁸ Farming became nearly impossible. Land companies were only too happy to sell what they saw as worthless farmland to the Boyers and other settlers.⁹ In order to renew the soil, the newcomers dug canals and drainage ditches by hand, and brought the river water in to wash the salt away.

Remembers Hobart Boyer,

I'd work another man's land for nine or ten hours and then go home
and work my own, clearing mesquite and tornillos by hand until
dark.¹⁰

Once the soil was cleansed, they introduced a Southern staple to New Mexico. Frank Boyer and his family are credited with being one of the first to successfully cultivate cotton in the state.¹¹

Discrimination, Prejudice, and Persecution

John Holguin remembers that, as a Latinx, he did not attend Laurence Dunbar Elementary school. However, he and his brother were allowed to “go play with the Black children during their recess.”¹ Holguin does not remember if Black kids were treated differently by White kids. He regarded Black children simply as playmates. He does remember the all-Black baseball team, the Vado Blacksnakes during the 1950s. Later, the Vado Giants and a Vado-Mesquite team had Black, Hispanic and White kids on the rosters.

Holguin recounted what he regarded as “casual racism” at the Junior and High School levels once the schools were integrated. “Here comes the negroes from Vado,” called out Latinx students as he arrived. He remembers that he was called a “negro” or the “N” word even

⁷ Melzer, Richard. “Roberta Scott: A Farmer’s Favorite Daughter Part II,” *La Vida* column, in the *News-Bulletin.com*. Available on-line at news-bulletin.com/news/features/roberta-scott. (February 2018).

⁸ Kurtz, Don. “Refuge on the Rio,” *New Mexico Magazine* (July 1980), p. 65.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹¹ Berg, Jeff and M. A. Walton, “Black Communities in New Mexico,” in Glasrud, Bruce A. *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits from Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 2013, p. 114.

¹ Personal communication with John Holguin (October 2020). Written responses to project questionnaire.

though he was “Mexican American just like them.”² Holguin vividly remembers passing through a classroom that had the word and punctuation “Segregation!” chalked on the board.³ The teacher in the classroom, Ms. Giles, was formerly the principle at Vado’s segregated Laurence Dunbar school. Holguin remembers that Gadsden High School’s principal and other teachers were talking with Ms. Giles.

The interactions between Vado’s residents revolved around farming and assisting one another with daily needs. Since Vado was somewhat isolated, it was imperative that everyone pitched in together. John Holguin remembers that he and the other children, joined by Hispanic and Black workers, helped his grandfather cultivate cotton, chile, tomatoes, corn and onions at different times throughout the life of his large farm. Some of the younger Boyers worked at the Garage, while others worked at the Pioneer Grocery Store.⁴ The younger generations pulled together to assist their parents and grandparents in achieving successful livelihoods, for the benefit of the entire community.

“Race relations in Vado generally were friendly,” Roosevelt and Bobbie Boyer recall. “There used to be one White family on the east end of town, another in the middle, and a third on the west end. Whites visiting Vado had to adhere to our rules,”⁵ Roosevelt remembered.

Buildings, Structures, and Landscapes

Once the town of Vado was rejuvenated by former Blackdom residents, it reached its zenith as a successful farming community during the late 1930s, and early 1940s. Later, as farms failed and jobs disappeared, local residents moved away to look for work elsewhere.

The Henry Boyer family compiled the following details regarding early Vado. Their complete memories are available on-line at boyerhenryreunion.com/vado-part-2:

During its heyday, Vado had two grocery stores. The first was Connors’ Store, which was next to the Vado Garage and the Vado Co-op. The Co-op was four houses or so north of Connors’ store, and across the road. Local farming families organized, bought shares, and then they sold and bartered their goods to everyone. The Co-op enjoyed only a short period of success. After it closed, the building was bought by Sam Fuller, who then opened a second commercial grocery

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Personal communication, John Holguin (October 2020).

⁵ Berg, Jeff and M. A. Walton, “Black Communities in New Mexico,” in Glasrud, Bruce A. *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits from Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 2013, p. 115.

store.¹ After Connors sold his store, Carrie Sykes, a Mexican woman, who was the wife of a white farmer, opened a large grocery store in the middle of Vado.

Vado had three cafes: Fuller's Café, Palmer/Scotts Café & Bar, and Jim Connors' cafe. Fuller's café had a bar, a dining room and a room for dancing. Palmer café featured sit-down food services and an ice cream parlor. Palmer was a schoolteacher. She sold the café to a man by the name of Scotts. Scotts added a bar and a pool hall to the cafe. Located at the south end of Vado, Jim Connors' cafe was very small, offering in-house dining with no alcohol.

Frank Boyer's oldest son, Francis owned the only garage in town, which was also located in the southern part of town. Some of the men from Vado had the tradition of gathering early Saturday morning at Francis's garage. They would sit in the small office where they would talk, argue, laugh, tell stories, and eat cinnamon rolls and baloney and drink pop. The garage was the information headquarters for the men.

Once Frank's Institute no longer served as Vado's school for Black students, it became the Community House. It was occasionally used as temporary housing for newcomers to Vado. It also served as emergency housing in addition to hosting many cultural events. Hobart Boyer, who was the builder of the first house in Vado, temporarily moved his family into the Community House after his own home was nearly destroyed by fire.

Vado had two churches. The Valley Grove Baptist Church was built first. Later, the New Hope Church was constructed by some people who had left Valley Grove congregation due to some type of disagreement.

On Sundays, nearly everyone would go to church... Valley Grove Church celebrated Christmas and Easter in conjunction with the school. The children at Dunbar School would recite a speech for Christmas program at school and recite a different speech for the church program. The speeches would be a contest among the students themselves. They will do the same for Easter. Both, the school and the church would give out Christmas goodies bags which were filled with a variety of nuts, candy, an orange and an apple. For Easter, both the school and the church held Easter hunts. They were exciting and a lot of fun.

Initially, Vado's black kids attended school in Berino, a small farming community about a mile south of Vado. Because of racial tensions at the school in 1923, Frank Boyer built a one-room adobe building across the street from Valley Grove Church to serve as a school for Vado's black kids. Many of the black kids attended Frank's Institute until a public school was built.

¹ John Holguin remembers that Sam Fuller's store was called the Pioneer Grocery Store. He stopped by there frequently, "because my father and I loved to drink Barq's chocolate sodas." He reminisced that his father and grandfather would visit the local garage, run by Francis Boyer and Robert "Skeeter" Boyer, to have their tractors repaired. He recalls that the other vibrant business during that time period was the cotton linseed plant. Personal communication with John Holguin (October 2020).

In 1928 the county built a brick school building for Vado's black kids. The school was named Dunbar School after Paul Lawrence Dunbar, a famous black poet. Dunbar School was the schooling for students from Vado and surrounding area. When the school first open up, it had students from grade one to grade twelve. Some of the first students who were in the high school room were Helen and Clara Sims, Verse Brady, John McCrimmon, T. C. Conley, Bernice Fuller, Margaret and Utte Williams, Albert Brooks, Larcene Cooper, and Edmond and Giles Shivers. Florence McTire [McTire or McFie?] taught grades nine through 12. Years later, Dunbar enrolled students from grade one to grade eight. Black high school students attended a school called Mt. Olive Academy, and were taught by Reverend Hughes. He was the pastor of Valley Grove Baptist Church. The Academy, a two-story building located near the eastern edge of Vado, had students from ninth to twelfth grades. When the Mt. Olive Academy closed, some of the high school kids went to the New Hope Church for high school.

After arrangements were made with the Las Cruces School District, the high school students from Vado attended a Black high school in Las Cruces. This was about a 20-mile round-trip for the students. The Gadsden School District was legally obligated to furnish transportation for these students. This schooling process was continued until Gadsden High School (Anthony, NM) was integrated in 1953.

Segregated Public and Private Places

The following narrative is cited from the National Register of Historic Places nomination form, on file with the State Historic Preservation Office, Historic Preservation Division:

Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School

The Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School is a single-story, rectangular (32.5' x 102.5') fired-brick building that is utilitarian in design and function; asymmetrically fenestrated, and features a hipped, asphalt shingle roof. Numerous chimneys hark back to a time pre-dating central heating, ventilation, and cooling (HVAC) systems. As a beneficiary of the New Deal program to improve rural neighborhoods, decorative lettering "WPA 1939" embosses the concrete sidewalk near the front entryway. The historic building maintains a strong feeling and association with its long past as a vibrant community center and a place of continued activity and learning.

Dunbar Elementary, named for renowned black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (who participated in President McKinley's inauguration and traveled with Booker T. Washington) represents the culmination of several important national social trends. The complex forces that brought African-Americans to New Mexico from the South include persecution, poverty, and the hope for a better life. After 1925, with the imposition of ethnic segregation, a school for the county's Black children was built in Vado. Giels Grimes, a certified teacher, served as the school's principal. Other teachers included Ora Forbes, Eggerton, and Thomas Conley. Dunbar Elementary School attendee Bobbie Boyer remembers that Conley had a college degree.

Although the building was wired for electricity, the school did not have indoor plumbing. It did not have a library, a cafeteria, or central heating. The same individuals and their families who persevered in their new setting despite being denied access to the best educational facilities, including a college they could attend locally, is testimony to their resiliency and perseverance. Dunbar Elementary School graduates have gone on to serve their community, state, and country, enjoying all avenues of success. The simple, one-story, unembellished brick building is more than just a symbol of perseverance in the face of unjust inequality. It continues to be revered and used today as an educational center for preschoolers as part of the federal “Head Start” program sponsored by New Mexico State University.

Alliances and Associations

4-H Club

The 4-H Club for youths was initiated by A. B. Graham in Clark County, OH in 1902. Originally known by several different club names, the clover logo was developed in 1910. Each leaf sported an “H” which stood for Head, Heart, Hands and Health. The goal of the club has always been to help young people and their families “gain the skills needed to be proactive forces in their communities and develop ideas for a more innovative economy.”¹ Although expressing universal brother and sisterhood, it appears that some 4-H clubs excluded children of color, while others did not. At a June 1946 gathering at the base of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC that hosted hundreds of nationwide club members, the delegates recited the 4-H oath promising in unison to “never allow tyranny and injustice.”² One observer noted that “there was not a single black child among them.”³ Carl Boyer, a three-year member of the Vado 4-H club and an honor student at Gadsden High School was “the first Negro to compete in a 4-H contest in New Mexico.”⁴ He won the tractor operating contest with an almost perfect score at the age of fifteen.

Most 4-H clubs remained segregated long after the 1954 Supreme Court decision to desegregate the schools. Separate African American 4-H clubs were run by Black agricultural colleges and extension agents, who earned “significantly less than their white counterparts.”⁵ When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made segregated 4-H clubs and camps illegal, a number of the African American chapters shut down.⁶ Remarkably Alberta Dishmon, a former home-demonstration extension agent, “We did not get integration, we got disintegration, a feeling that you would gradually disappear.”⁷

¹ Available on-line at 4-h.org/about/history.

² Available on-line at smithsonianmag.com/innovation/complicated-growth-4-h-180964191.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Tractor Driver from Vado Wins District Meet,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, 9 July 1952, p. 4.

⁵ Wessel, Marilyn. 1982 book, *4-H: An American Idea, 1900–1980*. Published 1982. Available on-line at smithsonianmag.com/innovation/complicated-growth-4-h-180964191.

⁶ Wessel, Marilyn. 1982 book, *4-H: An American Idea, 1900–1980, published in 1982*. Available on-line at smithsonianmag.com/innovation/complicated-growth-4-h-180964191.

⁷ Ibid.

Boy Scouts

Vado hosted two Boy Scouts troops during its heyday. Olin Boyer served as one of the Scoutmasters. A Cub Scouts Unit was led by T. C. Conley. Edmond Shivers II was a member. He recalled the overnight camping trips they took to Bishop Cap Mountain, Elephant Butte Dam and other places. Robert (Skeeter) Boyer served as the second Scoutmaster, and Henry Boyer was the assistant.⁸

Bible School

Ruth Boyer and Emma Flournoy visited each Vado household to provide information regarding their upcoming Bible School. John Holguin remembers that he was about nine years old, and “not anxious to keep going to school during the summer.”⁹ To his chagrin, his parents sent him and his sister Hope to Bible School anyway, despite his protests that “it was a Baptist Bible School and we were Catholic.”¹⁰ He recalls that they ended up enjoying the school once they arrived, and that they “integrated well with the mostly Black children from Vado.”¹¹ Aside from praying, he recalls with fondness the snacks that were provided, including cookies, candy oranges, apples, and Kool-Aide.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Similar to each of the other eight study cities, Vado seems to have benefitted from a strong PTA alliance. John Holguin remembers that this mother and Ruth Boyer were both members of the PTA at the Mesquite Elementary School.¹²

⁸ “Vado Part 3 – Henry Boyer Family Reunion Group, Inc.,” available on-line at boyerhenryreunion.com/vado-part-3.

⁹ Personal communication with John Holguin (October 2020).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Personal communication with John Holguin (October 2020).

¹² Ibid.

Entertainment

Vado didn't publish a newspaper, but another small town, Anthony published a newspaper that "had news about all the small towns in the area including Vado. The paper was called *Valley News*."¹ Preliminary research into the *Valley News*, archived on microfilm reels at NMSU's Branson Library, reveals precious little information regarding Vado or its inhabitants. Instead, rare but rich oral histories provide most of what is known of this town's unique history. The following narrative is excerpted nearly verbatim from the Henry Boyer Family remembrances, posted on-line at boyerhenryreunion.com/vado-part-3:

Vado was a very active town for Blacks during its glorious days. It was the most popular place where Black people could enjoy freedom and warm fellowship. When you consider life in those times, Vado was a very exciting place to live even though times were hard.

Picnic Trips

Valley Grove Baptist Church would take picnic trips to recreational places all over the southern part of the state. Some of the memorable places were White Sands National Monument, City of Rocks, Caballo Dam, Percha Dam, Ascarity Park, and other recreational areas.

Juneteenth Celebrations

The Vado Juneteenth commemorations were revered as the most celebrated events between the 1930s and the 1950s. The families would pitch in money to buy a medium-sized calf and a pig for barbecuing. There were several men who could mix up some good-tasting barbecue sauce. Many remember Vado has having the best barbecue in the valley.

Vado's Black residents took 19 June off from work to commemorate the day. The men would do the barbecuing the night before, and local residents brought all kinds of food to share with attendees. Celebration organizer Frank Boyer gave speeches about why Juneteenth was so important. People would come from all over the area of southern New Mexico and the El Paso vicinity to celebrate in tiny Vado. Many remember fondly that it was the largest and the most meaningful Black celebration in the state. Long-time Vado resident John Holguin did not attend the events, but remembers that Pat Braddy would cook barbecue all night the night before the celebration. "My father would go at night and talk to Mr. Braddy who at that time was Vado's constable. Sometimes I would see a small bottle of liquor and they both talked and shared drinks from that bottle. My father would get up early the next day and purchase barbecue from Mr. Braddy."²

¹ "Vado Part 3 – Henry Boyer Family Reunion Group, Inc.," available on-line at boyerhenryreunion.com/vado-part-3.

² Personal communication with John Holguin (October 2020).

Swimming

Vado had a swimming hole or a so-called swimming pool. It was actually the irrigation canal, which ran through the east side of Vado. Sometimes the boys would swim in the Rio Grande River when the water in the river was high enough to swim. It was located on the west side of Vado across the railroad tracks. There was also a drainage ditch, which ran through the center of Vado. The boys would go wading in it to catch crawfish and bullfrogs. At times they were able to catch enough for a meal.

Movies

In the early days, on some Friday's nights, Olin Boyer would show movies at the Community House and the schoolhouse. In later years, the parents showed cowboy movies at Mr. Fuller's café.

Games and Parties

Sometime, the kids would go to the community house, which was across the road from the church, and play games or have parties.

Dancing

Sometimes they would go to Fuller's or Ben's café for dancing.

Joy-riding Borrowed Horses

Aristotle Boyer remembers the guys would ride their horses to 'Queen of Sheba,' Frank Boyer's homestead, located in the desert about 4 miles outside of the Vado townsite. The ranch was given various names. They would mischievously catch and ride the horses owned by ranchers who had their horses grazing freely in the desert. They rode the borrowed horses back to Vado, which was about a two or three miles trip. Hobart Boyer had two horses and a mule, Eustace Boyer had two Clydesdales, and a neighbor, Mr. Fuller, had two or three horses. There were other local farmers who also had horses that the boys would ride.

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Ice Cream

After church, the kids would go to the ice cream parlor or Mr. Connor's store for ice cream. During the later years, they went to the Fuller or Sykes stores for ice cream or popsicles.

Baseball

Many times the boys -- and sometimes the girls -- would play baseball at the Community House lot.

Centennial Celebration

Q. Was there a centennial celebration commemorating Vado's establishment in 1911?

Weekend Entertainment

After World War II, Vado became a magnet for Black soldiers stationed in the El Paso, TX vicinity:

They would come to court the young Black women and dance at one of the café's in the community on weekends but were shooed off by 6:00 pm on Sunday because 'we all went to church,' Bobbie recalls.³

Bars

The Uribe and Medina families owned the Malibu bar. Bill Stephens owned the Frontier bar. John Holguin remembers that farmers often stopped by while they were irrigating at night to "pass the time away,"⁴ and that both bars welcomed all patrons regardless of skin color.

Traveling Shows

Although John Holguin does not remember traveling shows wending their way through Vado, he does remember that a band of gypsies would stop for several days at a time. They provided entertainment. Braddy, the local constable, warned John's grandfather Pilar that they might steal chickens or attempt to burglarize residences.⁵

End of an Era

When another drought struck Vado in the late 1940s and early 1950s, many families were forced to sell their farms. Several moved further West, including Arizona and California, to find new livelihoods. Hobart Boyer remembers that his father rued the day he no longer heard babies crying during the church services:

³ Berg, Jeff and M. A. Walton, "Black Communities in New Mexico," in Glasrud, Bruce A. *African American History in New Mexico: Portraits from Five Hundred Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 2013, p. 115.

⁴ Personal communication, John Holguin (October 2020).

⁵ Ibid.

He knew it wasn't going to be a lasting thing, but he knew it was all over when he didn't hear the babies crying in the church anymore. When the community stopped making babies, he knew it was coming to an end.⁶

As the town grew smaller, young people not bound for the military were forced to look elsewhere for employment. "After awhile, they all grew up and floated away like feathers in the wind,"⁷ recalls Hobart's brother Eustaces.

Present-day Vado is a quiet community, bypassed by Interstate-10. Members of the Vado Historical Society recently listed the Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School in the National Register of Historic Places.

Biographies Vado

Biographies

Francis 'Frank' Boyer, Henry Harold Boyer, Maude E. Craig Sampson Williams, Vado 'lady riveters,' Jean Boyer, brief mention Laurence Dunbar (school's namesake) and others.

Near the end of his life well-lived, Frank Boyer remarked:

When I came here, I had three dreams – to farm my own land, live in my own house, and put all of my children through college. Now I can say I've done all three.¹

Oral Histories

Living Histories

John Holguin and Juan H. Ytuarte

⁶ Giles, C. R., "Boyer Envisioned a Black City; Vado – Chance for Dream Dying," *El Paso Times*, 26 October 1975, p. 11- A.

⁷ Ibid.

¹ Kurtz, Don. "Refuge on the Rio," *New Mexico Magazine* (July 1980), p. 68.

SELECTED IMAGES

VADO, NM



Figure 226. Valley Baptist Church congregation

“Churchgoers at Valley Grove Baptist in the 1960s.” Courtesy of the Vado Historical Society.

Source: Villagren, Lauren. “A Community that has Stuck Together,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 27 February 2016.



Figure 227. Interior Pioneer Grocery Store

“Bobbie (Fuller) Boyer is a baby in her mother’s arms at the family’s Pioneer Grocery Store in Vado.” Courtesy of the Vado Historical Society.

Source: Villagren, Lauren. “A Community that has Stuck Together,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 27 February 2016.



Figure 228. First cotton bale Doña Ana County

“First Bale Doña Ana County’s \$4,000,000 Cotton Crop (1927)”

Source: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
Negative Number: 005159
Creator: New Mexico State Tourist Bureau

Q. Since Vado was the epicenter of New Mexico’s fledgling cotton industry during the 1920s, was the unidentified man at the far right a Vado resident?

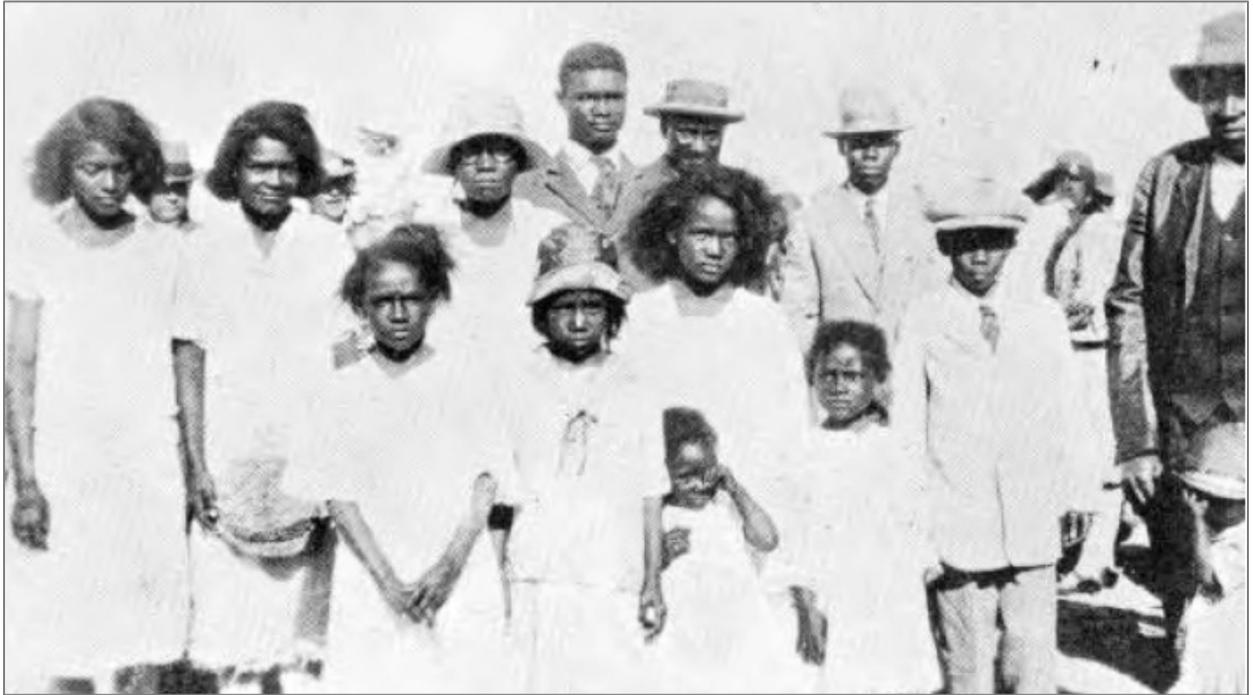


Figure 229. Blackdom Baptist Church

“Sunday school class at Blackdom Baptist Church, c1925.”

Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, Office of Archaeological Studies.

Source: Nott, Robert. “Long Before King, Black Settlers in New Mexico Had a Dream,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 19 January 2020.



Figure 230. Vado cotton delinting plant

Vado's Cotton Seed Delinting Plant Opened in 1950

(Left to right) Unknown local Black family member, Roosevelt Boyer, Sr., Fredrico Villa, Rodolfo Holguin (John Holguin's father), unnamed plant owner. Contributed by: John Holguin (October 2020).



Figure 231. Blackdom teacher and schoolchildren

Blackdom School

Blackdom school teacher Loney K. Wagoner (far right) with his students

Source: Historical Society of Southeast New Mexico

Available on-line at: [nps.gov/articles/000/vado-new-mexico](https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/vado-new-mexico)



Figure 232. Vado Juneteenth celebration

Juneteenth Celebration (Vado, NM)

Source: NMSU Facebook



Figure 233. Francis "Frank" Boyer

Available on-line at: nps.gov/people/francis-boyer



Figure 234. The Vado Giants baseball team, c1948

Source: NM Historic Preservation Division, *Historic Preservation Plan* (October 2017).

Venerated Spaces Black Communities Vado

NAME	TYPE	LOCATION
Riverview	Cemetery	West of I-10. Verify location.
Laurence Dunbar Elementary	School	Currently the Head Start Center
Connor's	Grocery Store	Verify location
Vado Garage	Shop and social center	Verify location
Pioneer Grocery	Store owned by Sam Fuller	Verify location
Fuller's Café & Bar	Restaurant/Dance room	Verify location
Palmer/Scott's Cafe	Café, ice cream parlor, pool hall	Verify location
Carrie Sykes	Grocery Store	Verify location
Jim Connor's Café	Restaurant	Verify location
Valley Grove Baptist	Church	Verify location
New Hope	Church	Verify location
Frank's Institute	School and Community Center	Verify location
Mt. Olive Academy	High School	Verify location
Mesquite, East, and Del Rio	Drains	Fishing, crawdads, baptisms?
	Ballfield	Verify location

Table 10. Venerated Spaces Black Communities Vado

Suggestions for Additional Research Vado

In addition to Francis Boyer, were there additional African American homesteaders in the Vado vicinity?
Moultrie? Olin Boyer? Fields? McMaster?

What other businesses were owned by Blacks? Employed Blacks?

What magazines and newspapers did Black Vado residents historically subscribe to?

While nearby El Paso had a chapter, was there a known Ku Klux Klan presence in Anthony or the surrounding Vado vicinity?

Where were the Juneteenth celebrations held, and what did a typical celebration look like?

Once researched historically and archaeologically, would the entire community of Vado be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a National Landmark?

What are the histories of every Vado resident who has served in the military?

What do the non-Black residents (current and former) remember about their experiences living in and around Vado?

Are there any remaining Blackdom descendants or former Vado residents available for oral histories?

What memories do residents of nearby communities (Las Cruces, Anthony, La Mesa, El Paso, etc.) have regarding their experiences with Vado during its heyday?

Has deeds research been conducted for any of the relevant properties? Census research? Precinct 10 and Precinct 11 records?

What role did the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) play in Vado and the other study cities in improving race relations?

Please note: At least one respondent to interview questions believes that all of Section 20 of Township 25 should be considered when researching Vado

Endnotes

J. Fulton

TimeSprings, Inc. (Mesilla)

15 November 2021

Robert R. Weyeneth's insightful exposition entitled, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past"¹ analyzes how the ideology of White supremacy influenced our national architectural landscape during the first half of the twentieth century. His conclusions neatly dovetail with the findings regarding New Mexico's Jim Crow past. Both discussions can be used to identify and assess buildings, structures and landscapes associated with the Black experience with an eye toward listing eligible properties in the National Register of Historic Places.

Weyeneth begins his narrative by identifying "isolation" and "partitioning" as the two most prevalent techniques employed during the era of Jim Crow to physically separate Blacks from Whites. Isolation or exclusion was achieved most often through signage. "Whites Only," "No Negroes, No Mexicans, No Dogs," and similar rude admonishments kept handmade and commercial sign makers busy from about the 1910s through the early 1960s. Often, however, signs were unnecessary because decades of social custom already defined the spaces. Visiting Fort Bliss soldiers, unsure of whether or not to enter a downtown Las Cruces eatery, were denied service once they finally went inside. Local residents in each of the nine study cities didn't need a "Whites Only" sign. They knew where they were welcomed and where they were not. They also knew that whether or not they were accompanied by Whites could also determine whether or not they were permitted entry.

America's public schools have a history of being set apart as White space. Each of the nine study cities was selected because they continue to maintain once-segregated schoolhouses for different purposes. Hospitals, libraries, and municipal recreational areas were also spaces widely recognized as being off-limits for non-Whites. Mental hospitals, homes for the aged, orphanages, prisons, cemeteries, public parks, playgrounds, amusement parks, billiard rooms, wrestling and boxing arenas, phone booths, and a whole host of other places and spaces were either wholly exclusionary, or segregated in some way in certain regions throughout the country. Thus, we witnessed as a nation the arbitrary establishment of the 'colored' wing of a hospital, the 'Negro' area of a state park or beach, and separate public housing based upon skin color. Roswell's Army air field maintained separate living and recreational areas for its soldiers, as did each of the other military establishments throughout the state. Las Cruces and Hobbs maintained segregated cemeteries. Black Alamogordo residents were not allowed to live north of Tenth Street. Hobbs-born Charles Becknell and his classmate James Arthur 'Jeep' Smith

¹ Weyeneth, Robert R. "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past." *The Public Historian*. 27.4 (2005): 11-44. Special thanks to Steven H. Moffson, Historic Preservation Division (Santa Fe) for sharing this important article.

remember that they and their Black neighbors lived “here” and that their White counterparts lived “there.” To varying degrees, particularly in southeastern New Mexico, the White majority and people of color thrived in separate spheres.

Duplication of buildings and services became the odd and costly norm. Las Cruces Bobbie Green remembers being the only child on a bus, traveling past White schools near her house to attend the segregated school further away. A satellite pool was constructed in at least one study city to accommodate Black swimmers. Sadly, separate services were rarely equivalent in terms of quality even when state or municipal funds were involved. Secondary recreational areas were notoriously underfunded. An extensive study of New Mexico’s segregated school systems in 1949 found the Black schools woefully lacking. Separate ‘Negro’ sports leagues suffered from equipment shortages, inferior facilities, and truncated schedules. Black churches, fraternal orders, women’s societies, and neighborhood associations were formed to provide the services that should have been provided by municipal governments. In open resistance to the new and adapted construction that excluded them, Blacks – often in collaboration with White philanthropists – eventually built their own architecture to serve their own communities. In Hobbs, this meant that the “Harlem Heights” residents dug their own sewer lines.

It remains to be seen whether or not New Deal Works Projects Administration (WPA) endeavors perpetuated or helped quell racism in New Mexico. It is not known, for example, if African Americans were involved in the design, development, construction, or benefitted in some way from the completion of these federal projects when Jim Crow held sway over much of the nation.

Each of the physical artifacts of segregation were created either through (1) the adaptive use of existing buildings and structures, or (2) through consciously designed new construction. In addition to signage and physical barriers, contrived separation was also achieved temporally: Who used a particular space could be determined by a certain day of the week, a time of the year, or the time of day. Alamogordo’s Black residents used the public swimming pool on certain days at certain times. Roswell residents used a local roller-skating rink only on Tuesdays. So-called “Sundown” towns advertised that Blacks could work and shop during the day, but could not be seen outside after dark. Portales and Artesia were sundown towns.² Blacks relegated to the balcony next to the noisy projection booth were expected to wait as Whites seated on the main floor exited first. An incident reported in the Roswell newspaper revealed that White voters freely cut in line ahead of Blacks at the polls.

While signage, separate entrances, and fixed partitions were used most often to segregate populations, effective boundaries could be much flimsier. Charles Becknell remembers that his Hobbs high school football games were segregated by a rope tethered to the bleachers. Interracial friends sat on either side of the rope to watch the game together. Partitions could also be malleable. In at least two of our study cities, Blacks could sit anywhere on the city bus until a

² Gene Bundy, retired Special Collections Librarian at Eastern NM University, remembers seeing photographs of the Portales ‘Sundown Town’ signage in the archives. His search last year to relocate the photographs, however, was not successful. Hopefully, the photographs and other Jim Crow period relics and remembrances have not been purged. Personal e-mail communication with Geni Flores (Fall 2020).

White rider boarded the bus. Then, the Black riders were consigned to the back. Weyeneth refers to another form of partitioning as “behavioral separation.”³ In spaces that were frequented by both races, for example, it was an accepted practice that White customers would be waited on first. Clothing stores made no provisions for Black fitting rooms. Park benches were understood to be reserved for Whites.

Each of the nine study cities feature places that represent this singular and dark chapter in the history of the American built environment “when racial ideology influenced design form.”⁴ They also embrace spaces that were or still are venerated by African Americans. Juneteenth parks, the Sunshine Club on the “Chittlin’ Circuit” in Hobbs, the ‘colored’ USOs, favorite restaurants, hair salons, and grocery stores, Alamogordo’s Prince Hall Lodge, entire neighborhoods, and other fondly-remembered landmarks should all be assessed for their eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Each contributed in some way to the often painful yet rich and unique Black American experience.

While no one who was subjected to Jim Crow would choose to celebrate or glorify the period of sanctioned discrimination, those who bore the indignities of segregation and daily prejudices want their children and grandchildren to understand what that atmosphere was like. One Vado resident remarked, “Our children look at us as though we have horns when we talk about separate water fountains and restrooms.” Haroldie Spriggs Kent remembers that her mother subscribed to *The Black Dispatch* and *The Pittsburgh Courier* to ensure that her children had a wider view of the world than the local Tucumcari media provided. In a world of White dominance, Black media provided rare and treasured glimpses into what the future could look like. The participants in this research unanimously believe that the younger generations now have little to no understanding of what their parents and grandparents endured.

It is important to note that like education and health care, “*traveling* presented a particular set of challenges that, in turn, inspired the establishment of an entire geography of black hotels, motels, boarding houses, and ‘tourist homes.’”⁵ In addition to the *Negro Motorist Green Book*, there was the *Go, Guide to Pleasant Motoring* by Andrew F. Jackson (Washington, DC), William Butler’s *Travelguide* published in New York, and the *Hackley & Harrison’s Guide for Colored Travelers* (1930). During a period that was fraught with challenges for the African American motorist, *Travelguide’s* poignant motto was, “Vacation and Recreation without Humiliation.”⁶ Each of our nine study cities had restaurants, hotels, or boarding houses listed in at least one of the travel guides written for African American travelers during the Jim Crow era. In addition to the properties already alluded to, each safe haven will also need to be researched for possible inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

³ Weyeneth, Robert R. "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past." *The Public Historian*. 27.4 (2005), p. 23.

⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

⁶ *Travelguide* cover image archived by the New York Public Library available on-line at libguides.nypl.org/c.php?g=655303&p=7164024.

This and future efforts will create a deeper comprehension of an epoch in our country's history that is rarely talked about much less understood. It will unearth additional examples of resiliency, and it will commemorate the ability of an oppressed segment of society to flourish despite imposed daily hardships. Researching, preserving, and interpreting all of these remnants of the African American Jim Crow experience will inspire this and succeeding generations to do better, and to never regress.

Weyeneth reminds us that preserving the architecture of racial segregation confronts the challenges of "disappearance, invisibility, and selectivity."⁷ Clearly, in the decades following the civil rights movement, signage and separate water fountains were removed, public transit passengers sit anywhere they want to, and basement toilets became janitor's closets. Once-segregated entrances or parking lots may be difficult to discern. So-called "urban renewal" during the 1960s removed entire sections of predominantly Black neighborhoods and shopping districts. The blank space above a restroom door or the plate glass storefront may have at one time posted Jim Crow signage. The rear alley entrance to the Plaza bar in Alamogordo served Blacks in a storage room behind the kitchen, but no physical evidence of that fact remains. This dismantling of physical boundaries, the disappearance of signage, and the invisibility of extant but obscured features make it critically important to collect remembrances from eye witnesses.

Interviewed during the mid-1950s, NAACP director Hobart LaGrone stated, "There was a time in Albuquerque," when you went to a public place, "your color didn't matter." He remembered that "things began to tighten a bit as Southern customers" in bars and cafes complained about having to eat and drink with "Negroes."⁸ These customers threatened to not return.

LaGrone's generation -- who endured the incremental imposition of Jim Crow, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s -- witnessed a transition from relative egalitarianism and acceptance to daily discriminations imposed by an influx of Southern segregationists. This unexpected imposition was enabled by business owners, politicians, and public managers unable or unwilling to offset the changes.

The succeeding generations of Black sons and daughters underwent a counter-transition. They coped with Jim Crow throughout the opening decades of their lives, and then witnessed and participated in a nationwide civil rights movement as young or mature adults. Approaching their eighties and nineties and beyond now, we owe it to this generation to capture their stories for the historical record.

We also must collect the remembrances of those community leaders and extraordinary neighbors who helped bring about integration and positive social change despite strong oppositional forces to maintain the status quo. As the national quest for racial equality

⁷ Weyeneth, Robert R. "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past." *The Public Historian*. 27.4 (2005), p. 37.

⁸ Rosenfeld, Albert. "New Mexico's Fading Color Line: Albuquerque Shows the Way," Abrams, Nathan, ed. *Commentary Magazine, 1945-59: "A Journal of Significant Thought and Opinion,"* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1955), p. 204.

continues, the information contained in these historic contexts can provide the impetus and the resources for asking very specific questions regarding New Mexico's segregated past.

Travelguide Cover

1955

"Vacation & Recreation Without Humiliation"

Source: New York Public Library.

Available on-line at

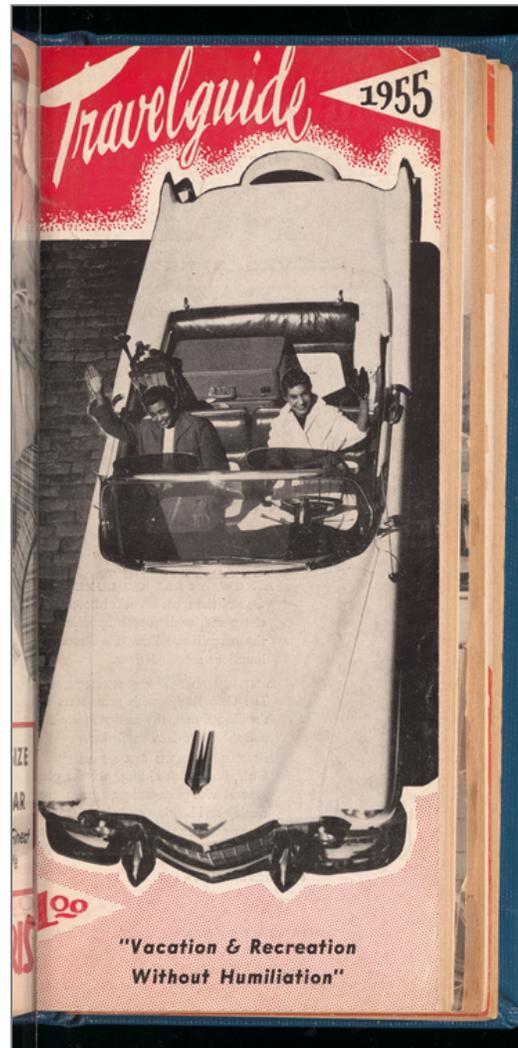


Figure 235. *Travelguide* 1955 cover

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