

Springfield's Ethnic Heritage: The Black Community

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**An Interpretation Of The Black History
Of Springfield, Massachusetts
-- from the mid-1600's through 1940 --**

Jeanette G. Davis - Harris



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An Introduction

History can be a stimulating and fascinating subject. This particular historical account attempts to trace and interpret the social, economic, and political growth of the black community in Springfield, Massachusetts. The period of time examined is limited to the mid-1600's through 1940. The researchers continually have been made aware of the depth of involvement of black people in the growth and development of this urban center. Such awareness quickly reinforces the need for an additional historical study. There is every hope for an up-dating of facts, figures and persons in order to scan the period of the 1950's to the present.

The following pages merely scratch the surface of the numerous events and numbers of individuals representing Springfield's black experience. Bearing in mind the limitations on the printing space available and the volunteer nature of the project, in conjunction with the numerous resources which are still being collected and examined —

this history is not definitive —

this history is a beginning —

this history is an interpretation of a human experience.

Jeannette G. Davis-Harris

July 4, 1976

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Springfield, Massachusetts
July, 1976

Kathryne A. Burns

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B O S T O N, APRIL 20th, 1773.

S I R,

THE efforts made by the legislative of this province in their last sessions to free themselves from slavery, gave us, who are in that deplorable state, a high degree of satisfaction. We expect great things from men who have made such a noble stand against the designs of their *fellow-men* to enslave them. We cannot but wish and hope Sir, that you will have the same grand object, we mean civil and religious liberty, in view in your next session. The divine spirit of *freedom*, seems to fire every humane breast on this continent, except such as are bribed to assist in executing the execrable plan.

WE are very sensible that it would be highly detrimental to our present masters, if we were allowed to demand all that of *right* belongs to us for past services; this we disclaim. Even the *Spaniards*, who have not those sublime ideas of freedom that English men have, are conscious that they have no right to all the services of their fellow-men, we mean the *Africans*, whom they have purchased with their money; therefore they allow them one day in a week to work for themselves, to enable them to earn money to purchase the residue of their time, which they have a right to demand in such portions as they are able to pay for (a due appraisment of their services being first made, which always stands at the purchase money.) We do not pretend to dictate to you Sir, or to the honorable Assembly, of which you are a member: We acknowledge our obligations to you for what you have already done, but as the people of this province seem to be actuated by the principles of equity and justice, we cannot but expect your house will again take our deplorable case into serious consideration, and give us that ample relief which, *as men*, we have a natural right to.

BUT since the wise and righteous governor of the universe, has permitted our fellow men to make us slaves, we bow in submission to him, and determine to behave in such a manner, as that we may have reason to expect the divine approbation of, and assistance in, our peaceable and lawful attempts to gain our freedom.

WE are willing to submit to such regulations and laws, as may be made relative to us, until we leave the province, which we determine to do as soon as we can from our joyn't labours procure money to transport ourselves to some part of the coast of *Africa*, where we propose a settlement. We are very desirous that you should have instructions relative to us, from your town, therefore we pray you to communicate this letter to them, and ask this favor for us.

In behalf of our fellow slaves in this province,
And by order of their Committee.

PETER BESTES,
SAMBO FREEMAN,
FELIX HOLBROOK,
CHESTER JOIE.

For the REPRESENTATIVE of the town of *Northampton*

The Early Black Experience

Black settlement in Massachusetts dates back into the early 1600's. Throughout this early period blacks arrived as indentured servants, as slaves, and as free men and women. In Springfield the black population has increased from a 1754-1755 distribution estimate of 27 blacks to the 1970 census of 20,673. Growth has occurred not only in numbers but also in economic value and political strength. On the inception of the Bicentennial celebration, the Springfield black community is in a positive position to institute social change for the betterment of blacks as well as for the total community.

What was the position of blacks in the early days of Springfield? According to the 1936 Hampden County Historical study . . .

The negro in Springfield goes far back in the dusty pages of history. There were negro slaves in this city as early as 1680, not long after William Pynchon and his followers came. Slavery at that time was still in its infant stage in America, but was a recognized institution in the North as well as the South. It was not until 1808 that the last Springfield slave was purchased and freed by local citizens.

The situation of slavery in Springfield, as throughout the state of Massachusetts, was a precarious one. A paper written by Henry Morris and presented to the Connecticut Valley Historical Society on June 2, 1879, comments extensively on the slavery issue in the Connecticut Valley and especially in Springfield. Morris states that:

Negro slavery came into existence in Massachusetts without legislative sanction. It was introduced not only without law, but contrary to law. As early as 1641, the General Court adopted an order, in these words: "It is ordered by this Court and the authority thereof, that there shall never be any bond slavery, villanage or captivity amongst us, unless it be lawful captives taken in just wars, as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us."

The Colonial Legislature finding it had gained a foothold, recognized and undertook to regulate it.

After a sickly and precarious existence of about one hundred and forty years, it came to its end.

There is evidence that black slavery existed in Massachusetts somewhere between 1624-1630. However, historical research indicates that the system of slavery in colonial New England probably took hold following the colonial and Pequot Indian War in 1637. This conflict decimated the Pequot population. Then, in order to prevent any retaliatory action by the Indians, enslavement was the final move to destroy the Pequots. Primarily, the women and children were enslaved in New England, while the men and boys were shipped to the West Indies. This action had a direct relationship to the black slave trade into New England, and, hence, to Springfield.

John Winthrop's *Journal* recorded on December 12, 1638, "the return to Boston of Captain William Pierce in the Salem ship, *Desire*. Pierce had gone to Providence and Tortugas in the West Indies with a cargo including some captive Pequot Indians, who he sold into slavery there." In exchange, Pierce returned with "salt, cotton, tobacco and Negroes . . .".

Quick to recognize the economic profits of the system, Massachusetts took the lead not only in the slave trade between New England and the West Indies but moved in 1664 to obtain slaves directly from the west coast of Africa — and, eventually the east coast of Africa. Hence, the foundations for the slave trade in the United States were laid in New England. Even though the numbers of blacks physically bonded in the New England territory were to remain minimal, the area was a primary instigator in the evolution of the southern slave system. Furthermore, in qualifying slavery in New England, Morris states that —

. . . while the slavery that formerly existed in the Connecticut valley was of the mildest type, comparatively free from the brutality that has characterized it in some other latitudes, it had still some of the odious features of what has been called the patriarchal institution, and which are its inseparable attendants.

There is documentation that while the New England merchants were primarily concerned with the West Indies and southern markets, the New England markets were not neglected. Limited numbers of blacks were brought into New England and sold. The Connecticut valley, including Springfield, was not excluded. In 1664, in the old county of Hampshire, the county court in session at Springfield passed on the value of a slave of the Richard Fellowes estate in Hadley. And, on July 1, 1681, in a magistrate's record, John Pynchon reported on Jack, a Wethersfield slave who had escaped to Springfield. On December 1, 1687, Pynchon solemnized the marriage of *his negroes*, Roco and Sue. Slaves, or servants as many were called, were not numerous and primarily were found in the most

prosperous households. According to Morris, slave holding families bore such known surnames as — Pynchon, Breck, Dwight, Church, Bliss, Chapin, Sikes, Parsons, Warner, and Munn. For, at that time, Pynchon “hired out his colored ‘maid Elizabeth’ to Samuel Ely, for two years . . .” and, “Mr. Breck left at his death a negro slave named Pompey.” One also hears of Mr. Dwight who “was a slaveholder to the extent of one African.” And, when inventory was taken of Mr. Pynchon’s estate note was made of . . .

two negro slaves, a man and a maid. Tom, the man servant, lived to a good old age, and at his death, the simple record of his outfit was — ‘A parcel of old clothing of black Tom, negro, ten shillings.’ The digging of Tom’s grave cost three pence, and while there were no troopers to attend the last rites, the servants and slaves on the Pynchon estate were given one quart of rum to drink to old Tom’s memory.

Slavery in Springfield gradually faded, yet ended dramatically. In 1808, the last Springfield slave was purchased and freed by a number of local people. Jenny, the fugitive, who had been living in the town for a few years, had been married by the Rev. Bezaleel Howard to a black man known as Jack. Jenny did washing and other types of service work for several people and, therefore, was familiar to many throughout the town. One day, a Dutchman, Peter Van Geyseling of Schenectady, New York, arrived in Springfield to claim his property. According to the fugitive slave law, Geyseling had the right to demand that Jenny be returned to the state of New York. Townspeople rallied to help the poor woman. The most logical solution was to purchase Jenny’s freedom. A subscription paper and a bill of sale were drawn up accordingly. On February 16, 1808, the legal papers were processed, and Jenny, alias Dinah, age thirty, was sold to the Springfield selectmen, John Hooker, Thomas Dwight and George Bliss. Eighteen other persons added their signatures to the subscription paper.

The signers were: Bezaleel Howard, \$10.00; Oliver B. Morris, \$5.00; J. Byers, Jr., \$10.00; Daniel Lombard, \$10.00; Ebenezer Tucker, \$4.00; H. Dwight, \$10.00; James Byers, \$5.00; W. Cooley, \$3.00; Simon Negro, \$2.00; Mary Smith, \$3.00; Sarah Hooker, \$3.00; Mary Lyman, \$5.00; Jemima Lyman, \$3.00; Daniel Bontecou, \$5.00; Solomon Warriner, \$5.00; Mrs. Worthington, \$5.00; Mrs. Dwight, \$5.00; Wm. Pynchon, \$2.00; and George Bliss, \$5.00.

Jenny, now legally a free black woman, settled west of Goosepond, an area which became the Winchester Square vicinity. Later Jenny and her husband became famous through the development of a fine grade

It is hereby certified that the within named sum of one hundred Dollars was paid by sundry persons for the purpose of liberating the Jenny from slavery into my hand.
Daniel Lombard

I hereby certify that the within named sum of one hundred Dollars was paid by sundry persons for the purpose of liberating the Jenny from slavery into my hand.
Daniel Lombard

I hereby certify that the within named sum of one hundred Dollars was paid by sundry persons for the purpose of liberating the Jenny from slavery into my hand.
Daniel Lombard

I hereby certify that the within named sum of one hundred Dollars was paid by sundry persons for the purpose of liberating the Jenny from slavery into my hand.
Daniel Lombard

The Bill of Sale for Jenny.

spruce beer. However, as indicated, the black situation was one of servitude, in which the individual was called by only a first name — Jack, Jenny, black Tom, Pompey, or ‘maid Elizabeth’ — and, it was one of seeking settlement in a selected area of the town.

We the subscribers to ~~the~~ to pay the
 sums affixed to our respective names, for the
 purpose liberating Jenny from servitude.

Bezaluel Howard	\$ 10	+
Oliver B. Warner	5	+
J. M. [unclear]	10	+
Daniel Lombard	10	+
Benjamin Tucker	15	+
H. G. [unclear]	10	+
James Byers	5	+
W. [unclear] & Cooley	3	+
Simon Negro	2	+
Mary Smith	3	+
Jannah Hooker	3	+
Mary Lyman	5	+
<hr/>		
Semina Lyman	3	+
X G. B. [unclear]	5	+
X J. [unclear]	5	+
W. W. [unclear]	5	+
M. [unclear]	5	+
M. [unclear]	5	+
J. [unclear]	5	+
J. [unclear]	5	+
\$ 100		

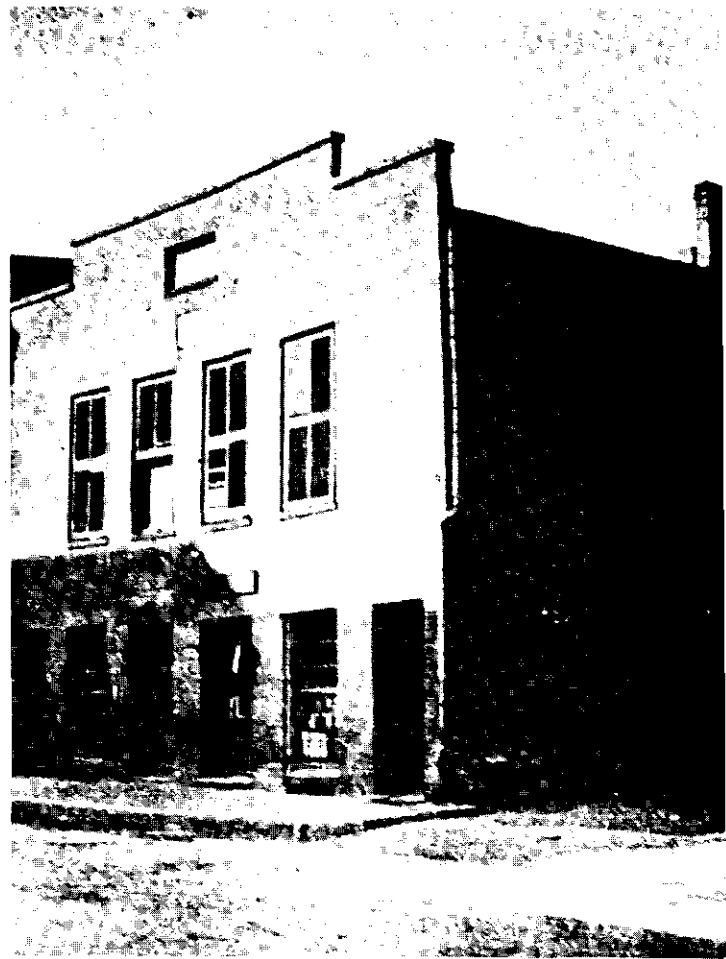
The signatures of those townspeople who subscribed various sums of money to "liberate Jenny from servitude."

Early regulated to a prescribed position in the town of Springfield, blacks sought strength and probably solace within a socially enforced confinement. Along with the social discrimination blacks could readily recognize the lack of economic and political power. A sense of power could only be obtained if and when blacks increased in numbers and gained relief from a national policy which legally enforced a state of bondage — whereupon, would follow the base to organize some action for black peoples' empowerment.

In Springfield the black population increased as both blacks and whites challenged the slavocracy. In the 1700's agitation for colonial self-government did not undermine agitation for liberty by the slaves in Massachusetts. The wave for liberty was contagious and many blacks sued for their freedom and won their case. And, as a result of a shortage of troops, blacks were accepted in the Continental Army in the War for Independence, and, thereby, gained freedom. The revolutionary cause resulted in the initiation of the abolition of slavery in the North. The bells sounded in favor of 'natural rights' as expressed in the eloquence of the Declaration of Independence. However, the move for universal human rights became doubtful as the 1787 Constitutional Convention settled down to practical matters and seriously considered the political and economic needs of a new nation. Foremost was the issue of slavery. True, the black man was to become an integral part of the new nation — however, not for social and moral betterment through human understanding; but for economic development through physical prowess. The Constitutional fugitive slave law which demanded the return of escaped blacks to slave owners was a giant step backward. Black response was immediate as petitions quickly circulated and the Underground Railroad soon 'roared' northward. However, the cause for blacks' rights fluctuated and gradually faded as technology, in the form of a New Englander's cotton gin, re-enforced the economic need for the Constitutional ruling.

Regardless, the intangible Underground Railroad ignored the legality of the fugitive slave law. Springfield became a station on the Railroad — a stop-over point for the many black slaves journeying to Canada. Conductors on this secretive system offered food and shelter to the blacks. The fugitives were hidden in cellars, attics, deep holes, or in Samuel Osgood's little back room called 'the prophet's Chamber' located on South Main Street. Also heavily involved in this underground system was the early black church.

About 1840, a few fugitives, finding blacks who had previously settled in Springfield and a number of receptive whites, decided to take up permanent



The Zion Methodist Church on Sanford Street.

residence regardless of the danger of recapture. As the numbers were to increase, blacks would seek greater solidarity and work for empowerment within the bounds of the church. With this development, the black experience in Springfield took on new meaning.

Very soon the black population in Springfield became sufficient to start the first black church. The institution resulted not only out of a peoples need for spiritual guidance and solace but also as an overt reaction to the issue of slavery and community policies which condoned prejudice and discrimination. In Springfield's early history blacks were relegated to residence in selected areas in the town. In time this became the norm. At first blacks lived in groups in the Cross and Willow Street area, Hancock Street and Eastern Avenue. The black church's beginning was on Sanford Street — the site of the present Civic Center. The Free Church, as it was called, had its roots in Methodism. The name Free Church was used interchangeably with Zion Methodist. This small church was an outgrowth of the Pynchon Street

Society, which consisted of anti-slavery members who as a result of dissident views on the slavery issue, had withdrawn from the earlier First Methodist Society. Throughout its history, Free Church, which evolved into today's St. John's Congregational Church on Hancock Street, identified itself with community issues. The first 118 years in the development of this church has been documented extensively by Cummings et al in *The History of St. John's Congregational Church, 1844-1962*.

It has been assumed that blacks were allowed the opportunity to worship with whites in the early Pynchon Street Church. However, history cannot deny that subtle prejudice and open hostility from whites often occurred. Free blacks as well as slaves suffered from white indifference in the Springfield community. Perhaps the Springfield blacks, who numbered approximately 150 in 1844, realized that until they organized they would remain powerless. With the church as a base, subsequent moves were made to organize self-help and self-protection groups to aid blacks in the community. In general, the Springfield black community has moved through time as a church-centered community. Even today a large proportion of black people in this community continue to draw on the church for social activities and communal solidarity.

A number of developments in the history of the present day St. John's Congregational Church have highlighted the spirit and industriousness of the black community in Springfield. The church was instrumental, for example, in . . .

- a) engendering the realization and the growth of black pride and resourcefulness;
- b) encouraging the emergence of black leadership;
- c) fostering the development of other churches and of fraternal organizations;
- d) formulating the development of community social services;
- and,
- e) building community concern for black history.

As the black population grew in the 1840's and through the Civil War Period, individuals emerged who influenced the life within the community. One of the earliest and most dedicated community leaders was Eli Baptist who helped to carry the infant Sanford Street Church into its early stages as St. John's Congregational Church. Born free in Cumberland County near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1820, Baptist moved to Springfield in the 1850's. Baptist appeared to have been concerned with the future of blacks in the United States, for in the early 1860's, he,



Eli Baptist.

with his wife, took an active part in the colonization of blacks in Druria, Haiti. Failing in this endeavor due to his own sickness and poor health within the small colony, Baptist returned to Springfield in 1863. In 1866, he was instrumental in founding the branch of the Sumner Lodge of Masons and in establishing the Union Mutual Beneficial Society.

Springfield also has the distinction of having been the home of John Brown, the nationally known abolitionist. Brown arrived in Springfield in 1846 where it is believed he planned much of the Harper's Ferry insurrection. A wool dealer while in Springfield, Brown was characterized as quiet and religiously dedicated, but, as an obstinate and stubborn business man. An ardent abolitionist, he quickly associated with the small black community and with his eldest son, John Brown, Jr., readily attended the black church in Springfield. Furthermore, Brown's former home on Franklin Street was believed to have been a station on the Underground Railroad as a tunnel was found when the house was torn down. John Brown's legacy to Springfield, however, is his Lectern Bible

which is kept at St. John's Congregational Church.

While living in Springfield, John Brown and Thomas Thomas became acquainted. Thomas Thomas, a slave in Oxford, Maryland, moved to purchase his freedom in the mid-1830's on an installment plan. There is some question as to the outcome of this attempt. In 1844, after a roving career as a servant and as a steward on a trading boat moving between New Orleans and Indian territory, Thomas settled in Springfield and became a member of the Free Church. In time, his association with John Brown involved Thomas with the Springfield Gileadites. This organization moved to prevent the capture of fugitives. Mr. Thomas became an active member of the Underground Railroad. However, seemingly restless, Thomas, in 1853, left Springfield and moved about the country for a period of time. He settled in Springfield, Illinois temporarily and made the acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln. When Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency in 1860 Thomas returned to Springfield, Massachusetts, for the rest of his life. On June 24, 1866, Thomas, along with Eli Baptist, became one of the first members of Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Springfield. During his later years Mr. Thomas became well known for his restaurant on Worthington Street. In January 1893, he retired from active life.

Another well-known black at this time was Primus Mason. An early relative of Paul R. Mason, former City Councilman, Mason was born in Monson but moved to Springfield at an early age. A shrewd businessman, he early gained respect from the community. Mason went west during the gold rush. In time, he accumulated a small fortune in the process of which he acquired a considerable amount of property in the Hill area. On his death in 1892, Primus Mason left funds for the establishment and maintenance of the Springfield Home for Aged Men on Walnut Street.

Throughout the 1840's and 1850's, individual black leaders emerged from within the Springfield community. They joined forces with nationally known leaders as spokesmen for civil rights. Orator Frederick Douglass, well known to both Thomas Thomas and John Brown, was a frequent visitor at the Free Church in Springfield. Also, Sojourner Truth, anti-slavery speaker and women's rights advocate, visited the small but growing church. As this nation moved into civil strife, black men and women presented themselves for service.

In 1860 the census records reveal that 276 blacks lived in Springfield. Females outnumbered males in this small community which was isolated from the white establishment and centered in two main sections; the upper State Street area, often called "Little Hayti", and on Cross and Willow Streets.



Thomas Thomas.

After Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in rebel territory as of January 1863, blacks in Springfield collected money and clothing to send to their newly freed brethren. When the Proclamation was announced the local black population held a celebration at City Hall and invited "all lovers of liberty" to attend.

The service of Springfield blacks during the time of the Civil War went beyond all these activities. Once permitted to enlist, many black males in Springfield saw active military service during the war. Early in 1863, the War Department announced that "colored citizens" were eligible for service in the Union forces. Blacks were promised the same wages as white soldiers (\$13.00 a month) and the same bounties for enlisting (\$325.00). Members of the Springfield community responded enthusiastically to the government edict. There were approximately 57 black men in Springfield between the ages of sixteen and forty-five in 1863; yet, in the months between January and April, at least twenty-five of these men enlisted in the Union Army. Thus, almost half of the eligible black males answered the Union's call to arms.

Springfield was not the only location from which



Primus Mason.

blacks responded vigorously to the Union's need for men, as all across the state blacks enlisted in such large numbers that two regiments were created. The 54th Regiment was the first all black military unit formed in the state, while the 55th Regiment was made up of men left over from the 54th. A third black unit formed was the First Regiment 5th Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry, the only black cavalry unit in the state.

While blacks responded enthusiastically to the government's need for troops, they did not get appropriate remunerations. Instead of equal pay, black soldiers received only \$10.00 a month. It took eighteen months of petitioning Congress to get back pay for these men. Black soldiers were also given different duties. They were frequently assigned to cooking and cleaning details or to building fortifications for use by

white troops. In addition, these black units were commanded by white officers.

Also, the black units ran into hostile receptions from some communities. The 54th Massachusetts Regiment, assigned to build fortifications in South Carolina, had to travel there by sea because mob violence was threatened if the troops journeyed through New York City. This major urban center had been the scene of some bitter, bloody draft riots. Hence, the regiment avoided the area.

Despite all these difficulties, black men of varying backgrounds were attracted to the Union Army. In Company A of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment there were several blacks from Springfield. Peter Johnson, age 29, was one of those who never returned to Springfield, having sacrificed his life for the Union cause. Eli Wilson, one year Johnson's junior, served until the end of the war and was appointed a corporal. For some, like William Oliver, the war was not what they had expected. Oliver, a 20 year old ice peddler, enlisted in March 1863 and deserted a month later.

The 54th Regiment under the command of Captain Robert Shaw saw considerable action. In July 1863, the 54th was involved in an attack on Fort Wagner located near the entrance to the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. The black regiment suffered heavy casualties, including twenty-three men killed, more than 125 wounded and 100 men missing in action. Two months later, after another assault, the Confederates surrendered the fort. While the initial battle was a military failure, the actions of the black soldiers were meritorious. The 55th unit under the command of Colonel Hallowell, combined with the 54th regiment in another action in South Carolina in which more than thirty men lost their lives and well over a hundred more were wounded.

The only black cavalry unit in Massachusetts also had a distinguished service record. The 5th Massachusetts Cavalry aided in the defense of the nation's capital and guarded Confederate prisoners in Maryland. The 5th also had the honor of being the first Union troops to enter Richmond, the Confederate capital, after it was evacuated on April 2, 1865. Among those to enter the city on that day was a Springfield man, Gustaves Booth, a carpenter. Age 26 when he enlisted, Booth was mustered out as a sergeant. Other Springfield men were not so lucky. Isaac Dorsey, a member of Company D of the cavalry unit, served more than a year only to contract a disease and pass away at age 20. From local civilian activities to distinguished military careers, Springfield blacks sacrificed far out of proportion for their number during the Civil War.

The Turning Northward

The turning northward and westward by southern blacks following the pronouncements of freedom which had emanated from out of civil strife was, at first, minimal. However, this population shift within the next decades following the war grew to major proportions. Just as European people flocked to these shores 'yearning to be free', so blacks flowed across state lines with hopes for social, economic, and political freedom. These two groups sought the same ultimate goal — expanded opportunity. As a people, blacks, in the drive to move towards achieving this over-riding goal were to stumble and fall, but, slowly and arduously, mount the steps that were studded with social proscription and violence. Blacks in the South were citizens, yet, openly, were denied the civil liberties not only granted in the Constitutional Bill of Rights, but reiterated in the 14th Amendment. In the immediate decades following the Civil War, freedom, to most blacks, was an issue to be questioned.

Many first generation freed blacks were not prepared psychologically or economically to deal with a shift in their life style. The restraint of life was exemplified in the necessity of remaining as laborers, tenant farmers or sharecroppers in the environment in which they had been reared. However, there were also the ambitious who sought change — the unfulfilled professional, the desperate unemployed, and the challenging youth. Black migration out of a hostile South was occurring. The full effect of this mass movement would not be realistically interpreted and dealt with for decades. In the late 1890's and early 1900's youth and maturity — the unskilled and the skilled — the "funsters" and the serious-minded intellectuals — the social derelicts and the socially minded — migrated. On the scene were those ripe for participation in an American society that was not prepared for the arrival of black challenge. Henceforth, the migration of blacks from out of the South would continue until the decade spanning the 1960's and the 1970's. Then, slowly, the trend would begin to reverse itself as many blacks returned South.

The mass movement of a disenchanting, disillusioned, desperate people has not been known to catalyze a reaction for immediate success. Social proscription and violence move people away more

quickly — hope for expanded opportunity hastens the speed. However, in this move one wonders if most blacks anticipated that they were to encounter an action of social pervasiveness that was lessened from that restrictive racial policy throughout most of the South, only by an element of subtleness.

As black groups inched northward they traveled along major transportation routes — one of the most accessible being the waterway along the Atlantic coast line. The majority of blacks, at times total southern communities, moved toward the larger urban areas — Newark, Philadelphia, New York, Boston. Smaller cities also offered sought for opportunity to black people. Springfield, Massachusetts was one of those smaller urban communities in New England which for well over a century had shown concern for black people. Ardent abolitionist activities fostered by the appearance of such notables as John Brown, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth; and substantiated with known stops on the Underground Railroad had rendered Springfield a prime area for black settlement. The black population in the early 1840's of approximately 150 persons had allowed for the beginning of a black church. From that period the increase in the black population was steady. Hence, the arrival of a sizable number of blacks into Springfield from out of the South during the so-called Great Migration augmented an already developing black community.

Of interest is the number of other blacks already on the Springfield scene during the 1860's who were actively encouraging the development of black organizations and broadening community participation. Available records and "word of mouth" accounts present valuable information about the experiences of a few of the black people during this period of time.

Mrs. Anna (Jones) Adams was born July 4, 1817, on a Maryland plantation. Both of her parents were slaves. As a child she was playmate and companion, but, still a slave to the planter's daughter. In 1840, Anna Adams escaped to the North with her two children to prevent having the youngsters taken from her. Later she was joined by her husband. Mrs. Adams died December 12, 1913 at the age of 96.

Ira Waterman, Civil War veteran, served with the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers from 1863 to the peace. In Springfield he worked as a paper hanger. Mr. Waterman became a member of Mount Calvary Baptist Church and was active in the Knights of Pythias and the Working Men's Aid Club.

Emerson and Charlotte Emma (Davis) Brown, free people, arrived from Pennsylvania, also, in the early 1850's. Of interest is the point that Emerson, prior to his marriage, had volunteered for service in a Connecticut Regiment during the Civil War. However, he

soon left the regiment in protest over not being given pay equal to white men. The Brown's daughter, Mary Emma, was born on Mulberry Street and attended the Springfield public schools. W.W. Johnson used to walk from Wilbraham to Springfield in order to court his future bride, Mary Emma.

W.W. Johnson, son of a slave, was brought to Wilbraham from New Bern, North Carolina, in about 1863 when he was 12 years old to serve as a water boy to a Colonel Johnson. In Wilbraham, Johnson gave his surname to William which the younger man carried the rest of his life. In the 1880's, W.W. Johnson went into business, establishing the Armory Hill Steam Carpet Cleaning Co. of W.W. Johnson and Son at 227 Quincy Street. In time, Johnson became very active in the growth of St. John's Church as his home became an early meeting house for the church group.

A number of blacks moved into Springfield just prior to the more massive black migration. These individuals helped to further the social, economic, and political activities of the existing black community. Many initiated new social programs trying to strengthen black communal solidarity and attempting to awaken total community awareness of the black presence and needs.

Who were some of Springfield's black post Civil War arrivals? Timothy, or, "Papa" Lyons, grandfather of contemporary Albert Mullins, was born in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1848 and moved to Springfield shortly after the Civil War. He and his wife, Jenny, lived at 711 Union Street. Lyons became a well known chef in the area. Mrs. Celestine Thornton, who married James Thornton, had been born free in Warren, Ohio and migrated to Springfield in June 1865 when she was 18 years old. Her husband had also arrived about this time. The year 1866 witnessed the arrival of 17 year old Charles Ireland from North Carolina. Actively civic-minded, Ireland became acquainted with notable settled blacks.

John H. Clarkson, father of today's Attorney J. Clifford Clarkson, moved here from Easthampton, Massachusetts in 1870. The earlier Mr. Clarkson was employed as coachman for a Dr. Corcoran on Federal Street. This gentleman was also well known as the city drum major for many 4th of July parades.

In 1875, Thornton Johnson, then 17 years old, arrived to join the Springfield community. Johnson had been born a slave in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Mr. Johnson soon became involved in the restaurant and catering business. At one time he was a candidate for membership on the Springfield Board of Health.

Mrs. Rosa Patterson arrived from Hartford in 1876. She became involved in a mutual beneficial society which had been organized in 1866, holding the position of president for five years. She became well

known in the area as an accomplished elocutionist for community cultural programs.

The influx of blacks following the Civil War also brought Henry Clay, a veteran of the war. Clay was born a slave in Montgomery, Alabama in 1841. According to the account by Clifton Johnson in *Hampden County, 1636-1936*, Clay served his master as a body servant early in the war. When his master was shot Henry Clay escaped, enlisted in Rhode Island and held the position of a non-commissioned officer in the 11th Regiment of the U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery. At one point in his service career Clay was commissioned to enter the Confederate lines as a spy. Clay assumed the role of a bread and pie vendor and secretly gained valuable information. Soon captured, he readily escaped and lived off of grasses, roots, and rain water.

Later, upon receiving an honorable discharge, Henry Clay moved to Springfield and married Sarah Waters, a Springfield resident by birth. Mr. Clay soon established a furniture repair business on Worthington Street. The Clays resided on Hancock Street in a house owned by Charles Wenks, a local florist. Active in civic affairs, Mr. Clay was known to have marched in every parade. On Clay's death, Mrs. Clay and her daughter continued to live in their home. However, Miss Clay preceeded her mother in death and rather than have the older woman live alone, Wenks arranged for Mrs. Clay to reside in the Primus Mason home. Mrs. Clay remained there for four years — the only woman to reside in the home intended for aged men.

Another black who arrived immediately following the Civil War was William Hughes, who settled on Congress Street. Hughes was born a slave in Tulane County, Virginia, December 25, 1825. He was bought and sold several times, remaining with his last master, James C. Spott of Richmond, until Lee's surrender at Appomattox. After the Civil War Hughes first went into the service of a woman in Richmond. Later he worked for his brother in the white washing business in Buffalo, New York. When Mr. Hughes moved to Springfield, he opened a small store on Willow Street.

Hughes made five return trips to Virginia for the purpose of importing black domestic help. Since he became a principal provider of domestic help, it is believed that he received support from many whites. On each of his trips, Hughes contracted ten to fifteen blacks for domestic work in Springfield. Several of these Virginians settled in the Willow and Cross Streets area. William Hughes became active in church work. One of the founders of the Third Baptist Church, Hughes held the position of deacon from the inception of the church until he died in 1915.



William Hughes.

Extensive information is available on one post Civil War arrival. In 1881, Alexander Hughes moved to Springfield and settled on Monson Avenue. One of thirteen children, Hughes was born a slave four years prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. He spent his childhood as a slave on the plantation of John B. Young of Henrico County, Virginia. After the war he remained on the plantation to do chores. Hughes left the plantation when he was a teenager and went to work in a tobacco factory where he had the task of steaming tobacco leaves. The young Hughes worked from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., earning 25¢ a week. After the first week he was given a raise of 10¢. He soon worked up to a peak of \$1.25 a week. Alexander Hughes remained in Richmond doing odd jobs until he was 24 years old. Then he traveled to Springfield where a brother and sister had previously settled.

In Springfield, Mr. Hughes went to work as a "wagon driver" for the wholesale grocery firm of West, Stone and Company. He also did odd jobs, such as tending furnaces and shoveling walks. At night he



Alexander Hughes.

attended the old Elm Street School and learned to read and write.

In 1888, Hughes was hired in the shipping department of Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, on the recommendation of their Secretary John J. Hall. Hughes' association with Massachusetts Mutual lasted through nearly 38 years. During this time Mr. Hughes received additional help in the basic 3-r's from William Sargent, later president of the insurance company. This endeavor helped to move Hughes on the road to becoming head of the supply department. In the spring of 1926 Mr. Hughes was deprived of his eyesight due to an accident which forced him to accept a pensioned retirement.

Other than his work, Alexander Hughes was involved in a number of side interests. He and his wife catered for exclusive social functions, becoming well known for their sweetbreads, patties and ices. Also, Hughes developed an interest in horticulture. For three successive years he received the *Springfield Union* award for the finest floral display in front and

back yards of city homes. Hughes, it seems, was most enthused about his flowers. He even rented or borrowed vacant lots for planting. Often, Alexander Hughes distributed his flowers to invalids and the aged.

Alexander Hughes was extremely civic-minded and well received in the Springfield community. According to Mr. Hughes, he entertained Booker T. Washington when this well-known personage visited Springfield. Hughes was a diligent church worker and was affiliated with St. John's, Third Baptist, and Hope Congregational churches. He joined the Y.M.C.A. when it was first organized and was later honored with a life membership. In honor of his individual achievement and untiring devotion to the Springfield community, Alexander Hughes was awarded the Order of William Pynchon Medal on March 25, 1941.

William Gauntt arrived in Springfield in 1888. He was born in Maryland, the son of a former slave, and spent much of his youth in Washington, D.C. When he was 17 years old he became the coachman of a Colonel Porter at the Washington navy barracks. On many occasions he also drove President Garfield about the capital city.

Gauntt came to Springfield as the representative of the *Colored Catholic Weekly* and went to work for the Springfield Street Railway. He remained with the company for forty-nine years. Mr. Gauntt had the distinction of being one of the few men to take part in the changes from the horse car to the electric trolley system and then to the present bus line. William Gauntt was a member of the Trolleyemen's local union 148. He was also a special policeman and a member of the auxiliary police force. In addition, Mr. Gauntt showed particular interest in civilian defense work.

Mr. Gauntt maintained a strong religious affiliation as a member of the Massachusetts Catholic Order of Foresters through participation in the Gallagher Court; and, as a member of the Holy Name Society of the Holy Family Church. He also belonged to the Passionist retreat group of St. Michael's Cathedral.

At the close of the century, in May 1899, Springfield welcomed the Rev. Dr. William Nelson DeBerry. Born in Nashville, Tennessee on August 29, 1870, DeBerry attended public school in Nashville and then moved on to Fisk University. During summer vacations he conducted institutes for black teachers and taught school in rural districts of Tennessee. DeBerry completed his undergraduate requirements and was graduated from Fisk in 1896. Following graduation he was appointed as principal of a black public school in Fayetteville but resigned to enter Oberlin Theological Seminary. There he became active in Sunday school work and the Y.M.C.A.



Dr. William N. DeBerry.

program. One week following the completion of his theological studies at Oberlin, Rev. DeBerry assumed ministerial duties at St. John's Congregational Church. From the beginning of his term in Springfield, Dr. DeBerry became a very vocal and pivotal member of the total community. The William N. DeBerry elementary school, located in the area where Dr. DeBerry did the major portion of his work, is a monument to his achievements.

The Foundations of Black Experience

At the beginning of the 20th century the Springfield black community was well established. The seeds for social, economic and political growth had been planted and had taken root. The black community was in a position to grow. A number of specifically black developments were evident: professional men and women were becoming residents of Springfield, civic organizations were beginning, small business enterprises were flourishing, fraternal organizations were firmly founded and church memberships and activities were flourishing under continued northward migration. In retrospect, the prognosis for the advancement of the Springfield black community would have been — good. However, black achievement and total community involvement was not supported actively by other ethnic groups in the city.

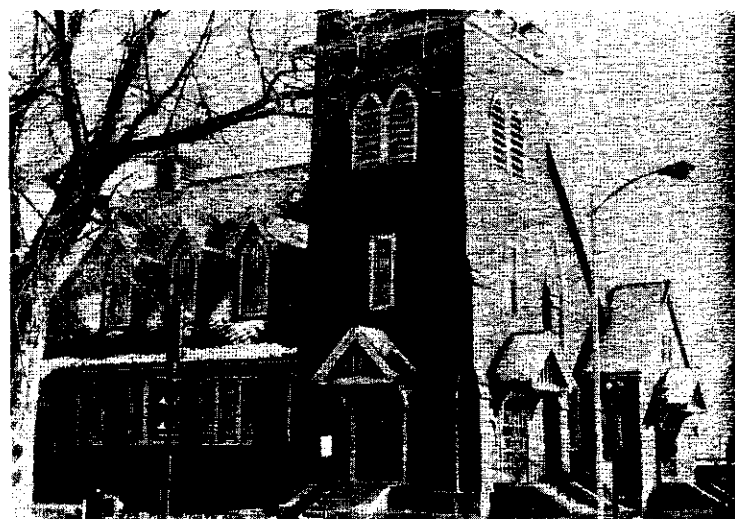
At this point in time, black solidarity and civic action for change for the benefit of blacks was vocally and often forcibly questioned. Such activities were not allowed to continue without ongoing assessment and approval by the dominant community group. Basically, blacks encountered most resistance in moves for equal opportunity in employment and housing. As the numbers of blacks increased, bringing about competition for jobs, economic resources, and community facilities, black activities were increasingly questioned and limited. Generally, blacks were not considered for managerial positions. In many cases, too, blacks were not the first recipients of jobs in unskilled areas as they were in direct competition with white area residents and incoming European immigrants.

Furthermore, throughout Springfield's early history, blacks had been relegated to residence in selected areas of the city. In time, this pattern became the expected norm. Initially blacks lived in groups in the Willow Street and Cross Street areas, Hancock Street and Eastern Avenue. As the black population increased there was a tendency to move toward the North End and to fan out within the Hill area. Movement beyond these heavily populated black areas was maintained to a minimal degree by a small number of black families throughout most of Springfield's history.

Therefore, the black experience in Springfield is being examined in light of achievement, but not divorced from the prejudice and both open and subtle discrimination which over time stymied black achievement and limited open involvement in the total community.

The growth of religious affiliations and the parallel development of other social organizations, both fraternal and non-fraternal, were vital to black self-awareness, achievement and advancement. Caught up in a larger community which generally reflected black-group acknowledgement and acceptance through accommodation, blacks turned inward for most social needs. For many, these needs could be satisfied temporarily through in-group activities. However, economic and political aspirations could be achieved only minimally during this early period since jobs and the "purse strings" were held by the white community power structure.

The base of black organization, communication, growth and development — socially, economically and politically — was the church. The earliest religious organizational moves were made in the 1840's with the establishing in 1844 of the tiny Zion Methodist Church on Sanford Street and the beginnings of the Bethel A.M.E. Church on Loring Street in 1849. By the mid 1860's, the Zion church had evolved into the Free Congregational Church (1864); and, the Sanford Street Congregational Church (1867). As the black population increased there was a need for more church space. This need brought about the establishment of the Quincy Street Mission Sunday School in the Armory Hill area. St. John's Society evolved from this mission. The eventual coming together of this



St. John's Congregational Church as it appears today.



The Third Baptist Church as it appeared in the late 19th century.

Society and the Sanford Street Congregational Church resulted in St. John's Congregational Church. The cornerstone of the new church was dedicated on September 11, 1892. The church began to move under the leadership of the Reverends Fletcher R. McLean, John W. Tolliver and Frank W. Sims.

Bethel Church in Springfield had its beginning as a mission church in 1849 and was incorporated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1877. The church was originally located in the South End on Loring Street and was known for some time as the Loring Street Church.

Unfriendly neighbors, resenting the building of the church, built a questionably high fence along the property line which necessitated legal action. As a result of the litigation the "Black Fence Act" which favored the black church was instituted in 1888. Bethel grew and continued to serve the whole community. On January 4, 1938, Bethel suffered a severe fire, in which the entire building was destroyed. The committee searched for a suitable replacement and after some negotiating, the property on Pendleton Avenue (formerly The Springfield Day Nursery) was purchased. The Reverend Eustace L. Blake was the pastor at the time. February 25, 1938 was the official date of purchase. A few changes in the building were made and on April 10, 1938 the newly acquired church

was officially dedicated. This marked the beginning of Bethel's second base for Christian outreach to the black people of Springfield. Through the work of the many capable church boards, senior and youth choirs, groups like the Harriet Tubman Missionary Society, Richard Allen Youth Council, and the Sunday School much is being achieved. The present leader of Bethel's congregation is the Rev. Dr. O. Urcille Ifill, Sr.

Beginning humbly and holding prayer meetings among interested black families in Springfield in 1869, the Rev. Spencer Harris started a mission at the corner of Main and Bridge Streets with eight members. Soon after the Rev. Harris organized the mission into a church which was recognized as the Pilgrim Baptist Church. Due to a financial difficulty a large number of the members left the Pilgrim Baptist Church forming the Berean Baptist Church. The two earlier groups merged to form the Third Baptist Church. Surviving more than one hundred years, the Third Baptist Church has come under the leadership of sixteen pastors. The present minister is the Rev. Paul Fullilove, who assumed the pulpit in September 1950 and still is carrying on his marvelous works.

The Mount Calvary Baptist Church was organized in West Springfield on May 16, 1919 by the Reverend Silas L. Dupree and seven members. In that year it was recognized by and became a member of the Westfield Baptist Association. In April 1920, with a congregation of 150 members, the church moved to Auburn Street in Springfield. This location soon became too small for the rapidly increasing membership of 400 and in 1924 the church moved to Grays Avenue.

The second Saturday in May 1943 the Reverend Dupree was called from "Labor to Reward". The entire community mourned this great loss. The Rev. Hezekiah M. Hutchings, founder and retired pastor of Alden Street Baptist Church, which was an outgrowth of Third Baptist Church, served as one interim pastor. The present pastor, the Rev. Gordon C. Oneal Jr. of Framingham, Massachusetts arrived in June 1974.

The church participates in many civic and religious organizations of the city and state. An outstanding achievement was the founding of a Credit Union by the Church Brotherhood. This Union continues to the present day.

The denomination of the 7th Day Adventist Church was founded in 1843. Although Springfield's black population early affiliated with the established church a decision was made to begin their own church. They began meeting in homes and various suitable buildings until acquiring the property on the corner of Bay and Princeton Streets in 1925. Their first minister was the Rev. Wellington A. Clark.



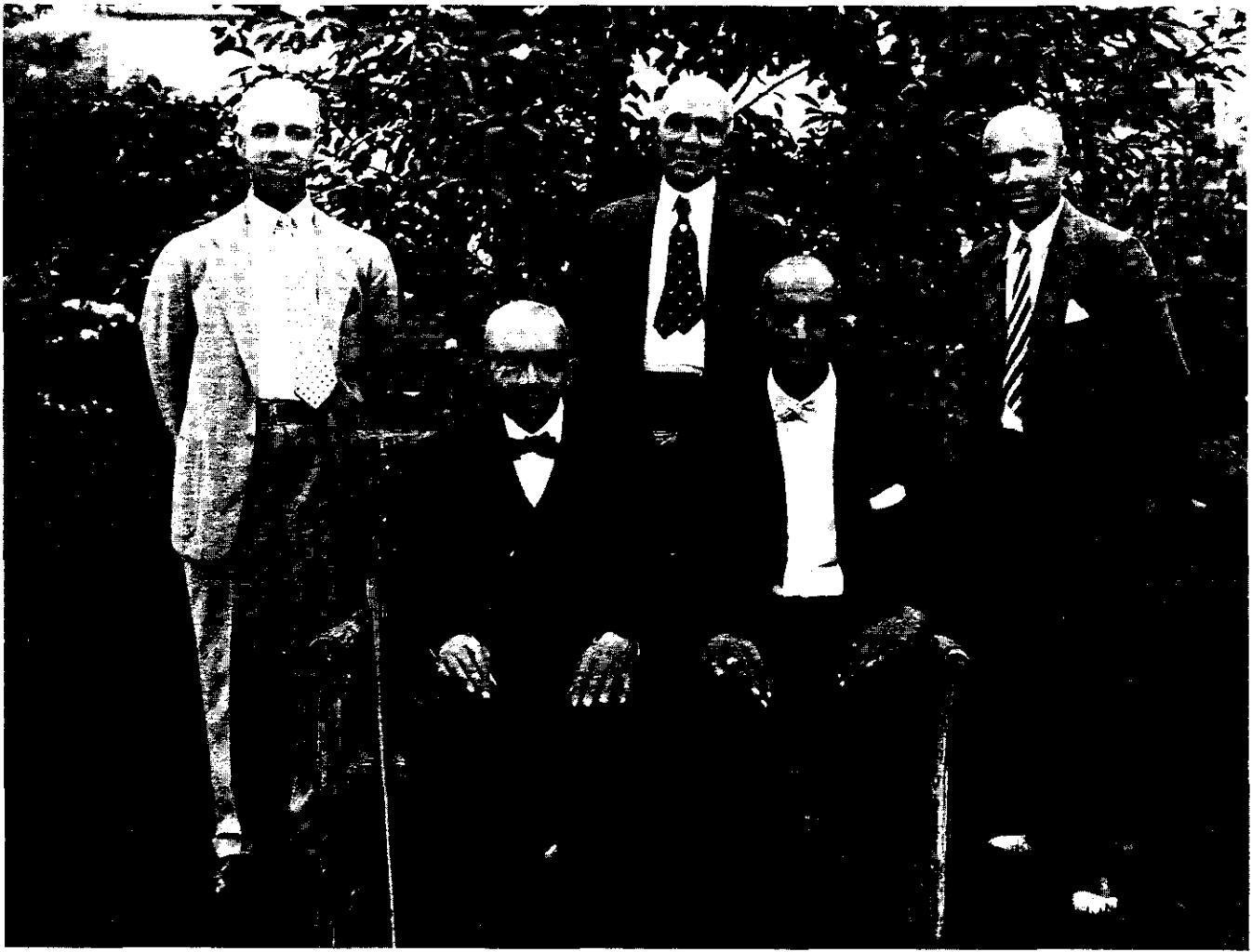
The executive committee of St. Simon the Cyrenian Mission. Standing, left to right; Dr. Howard P. Kennedy, Mr. Clarence Calloway, Mr. Hatten Hudson, Mr. James Davis, Mr. Clarence Williams, Mr. Cecil A. Hoffman, Mr. Howard E. Miller. Seated, left to right; Miss Virginia Wiggins, Mrs. Virginia Williams, Mrs. Grace Hackett, Mrs. Lillian Williams.

In the 1940's a group of blacks moved to found the mission of St. Simon the Cyrenian. Initially, services were held in the chapel of the Episcopal Cathedral on Chestnut Street with various clergymen in charge. Following the planning stages an executive committee was elected to carry on the work of St. Simon's.

Once granted formal mission status in the post World War II period, contributions were solicited in order to move toward the building of the new church. St. Simon's made strides under the most able leadership of the Rev. Donald O. Wilson. He was followed by the Rev. George Lee. This church, however, did not survive due primarily to an inability to increase membership, and, in conjunction, to meet growing expenses.

Benevolent societies and fraternal orders were also major centers of social life and interest. The oldest

documented benevolent organization was the Union Mutual Beneficial Association, previously mentioned, which had been founded in 1866. This is probably the same organization which in the 1880's was called the Benevolent Society. Membership in the latter group was based on family units and the organization met in the homes of various members. The Society was formed by a small group of black families for their social and economic protection for no bank or insurance company would loan small amounts of money to black families. Each family was required to pay 25c per family member into the Society treasury each month, so that, in an emergency such as illness or death, the family could borrow the needed funds at low interest rates without any 'muss, fuss or bother' . . . just the signature of the one family member authorized to sign for that particular family. The total amount which



Former District Grand Masters of the Odd Fellows. Standing, left to right; William C. Jackson, Harvey J. Harper, George C. Gordon. Seated, left to right; Alpheus N. Brown and James H. Higgins.

could be withdrawn for the care of a sick family was \$3.00. In many instances this sum of money was adequate since a doctor's call might be only \$1.00. Among the families involved in this organization in the 1880's were the James Harper's, the Burrill Walter's, the Joseph Gray's, the Timothy Lyon's, the Ralph Jacob's, and the William Johnson's. All of these families still have progeny in the city of Springfield.

The organization considered to be the oldest fraternal order is the Sumner Lodge #5 of Free and Accepted Masons founded in 1907, affiliate of Prince Hall Masons, the charter of which was brought from England in 1787 for Prince Hall. By 1914 there were three affiliate lodges of Masons which held meetings at 455 Main Street and at 6 Sanford Street. These lodges were the Thomas Thomas Chapter, the Van Horne Commandery and the Knights Templars. The

Eastern Star was founded as the women's auxiliary to the Masons and Daughters of Isis was established as the Shriner affiliate.

In 1873 the Golden Chain Lodge of Odd Fellows of the Peter Ogden Charter was established, with the Household of Ruth, Golgatha #68 as the auxiliary. The District Lodge #26 of Grand United Order of Odd Fellows of Massachusetts, Maine, and Montreal, Canada was established in 1881. The year 1916 heralded the arrival of the Syracuse Lodge of the Knights of Pythias, and the auxiliary group, the Courts of Calanthe. In 1923 the Harmony Lodge of Elks and the female auxiliary, the Forget-Me-Not Temple of the Independent Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks of the World were founded. Also formed during this time period were the Good Samaritans and the Gallilean Fisherman.

Organizational moves for community welfare and educational betterment throughout the early decades of the 20th century were indicative of black initiative, diversification and concern for self and ethnic group actualization. Planning, development and social service activities were accomplished through churches, non-fraternal clubs, welfare groups and political union.

Most of the major churches had women's clubs which were organized along social, benevolent and literary lines. In 1885 the Third Baptist Church had initiated the Star Circle group and the A.M.E. Methodists began the Welcome Club. In the early 1900's St. John's Congregational Church drew women and girls together to join the Book Lovers and the Junior Book Lovers.

A most active women's group during this early part of the century was the Frances E.W. Harper Club. This organization was an outgrowth of the King's Daughters, an even earlier St. John's group. One of the major concerns of the Frances E.W. Harper Club was the betterment, socially and educationally, of black children.

A number of the groups were geared toward specialized activities. There was, for example, the Carver Automobile Club of about twelve members. Another specialized organization was the Springfield Racquet Club.

Three other organizations geared toward special in-

terests groups were: the Harrison B. Wright Post, American Legion formed by George Frazier in 1925; the Negro Business and Professional Women's Club initiated by Mrs. Florence H. Laws in the 1940's; and the earlier established Girl Scout Troop #22.

The Girl Scout Troop #22 was organized at the Third Baptist Church as early as 1918 by Miss Edna Randolph, who served as Captain with Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson as First Lieutenant. Other officers later connected with the troop were Miss Ethel Robinson, Mrs. Sadie Goldman and Miss Florence Jones. The troop grew so rapidly it became necessary to hold meetings at the Mt. Calvary Church in the North End, at Loring St. A.M.E. Church, as well as the Third Baptist Church. On many occasions and after a number of years all weekly meetings were held at the Olivet Community House (now the Dunbar Community Center).

Some of the earlier members were: Mildred Johnson, flag bearer; Marion, Ruth and Lillian Jackson, Alice Madison, Sarah Waller, City Drum Corps; Theodosia Davis, Irma Porter, Arietta Reynolds, Nancy and Bernice Taylor, Josephine and Irene Bragg, Julia Addison, Cardelia and Arline Brown and Catherine Johnson.

The Girl Scouts were active in community projects and donated much time and energy to social service. They marched in holiday parades, assisted in the Nursery Centers at the Exposition Grounds, served in



A meeting of the Negro Business and Professional Women's Club at the Hotel Kimball in 1948.

various capacities at church functions, gave food baskets to the needy at Thanksgiving and Christmas, visited and ran errands for the troop Grandmothers, Mrs. Mary Talbert, an American Indian, and Mrs. Roberts, who was blind. They also accompanied Miss Egbert Lee, one of their blind friends, on her rounds selling handmade pot holders, aprons and novelties to support herself.

At the Court of Honor, held annually at the Municipal Auditorium, Troop #22 won the highest award in the early 1920's for their rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing", led by Mr. Troy P. Gorum and accompanied by Miss Luna Ritter. Also, for this occasion the entire troop of forty-five girls were in complete scout uniform. The Captain, Miss Edna Randolph, was awarded the Golden Eaglet which was the highest honor in scouting, with special recommendations for outstanding and tireless labours under difficult conditions. Two of the highlights of each year were the day long hike out to Pine Point on Plumtree Road and the overnight hike out into the woods of East Longmeadow.

A most innovative development in 1923 was the founding of a fresh air camp for underprivileged children called All-Pine on Route 1, Palmer Road, Monson. The camp was for both girls and boys and offered new experiences for the urban youngsters. The first administrators of All-Pine were Robert M. Feldman, President; James H. Nichols, Vice-President; and, William C. Jackson, Secretary-Treasurer.

St. John's Institutional Activities was an agency organized as a social service department of St. John's Congregational Church in 1911. Reorganized in 1931 as the Dunbar Community League under the direction of Dr. DeBerry, the agency became a vital spoke in all areas of organizational activities. A study made by DeBerry in 1905 relative to black needs gave impetus to the agency and led it on to immediate importance within the Springfield community. Subsequent sociological studies in 1922 and 1939 by Dr. DeBerry were both evaluative and supportive to the black community. The principal significance of these studies was to provide information which could be applied to relate the work of the church more closely to the industrial and social needs of black people. The result was the establishment of various institutions with much emphasis on the needs of women and girls.

A parish house for working women was built at an approximate cost of \$13,000. The women were offered all the advantages of a home, irrespective of religious belief. At a small cost they could secure lodging and meals and were assisted in finding employment and protection. Furthermore, in order to meet the needs of those in domestic service — this being the major employment channel for black women at this period

— a night class of domestic science was opened and was taught by Miss Ruth Warner, a graduate of the Cheney Institute in Pennsylvania. In addition, an employment bureau was established which catered heavily to the needs of incoming black people. Also, a housing department answered the accommodation needs of some twenty-five families at one time.

Social aspirations were met through age groupings — that is, the Women's Social Union for women, and, the Girls Club — the Young Men's Club for those men eighteen years and older; and, the Boy's Club. The activities of these groups were augmented by a music department, headed by Troy B. Gorum; a farm; and, the summer recreational Camp Atwater at East Brookfield. There was also a Camp Atwater Club which offered assistance to young people who attended the camp. The club members made clothing and gave financial help to many of the campers.

Dr. DeBerry's basic educational philosophy was underlined by individual and group improvement and advancement through the industrial arts. His ideas and actions were influenced strongly by Booker T. Washington. In fact, in the past, many Springfield citizens termed DeBerry "Springfield's Booker T. Washington". Then too, as with Mr. Washington, Dr. DeBerry, certainly was not unaware of controversy within the black community in regards to his policies.

The Rev. Silas Dupree, pastor at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in the North End of the city, was instrumental in organizing the Mt. Calvary Community Association in 1926. Under Dupree's leadership community welfare work was carried out and a home for men was founded. Similarly, St. Marks Church at 47 Seventh Street conducted a Community House offering rooms for rent and social activities for men.

The Springfield Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was established in Springfield in 1915. In the fall of that year the Reverend Garnett R. Waller, pastor of the Third Baptist Church, called several black leaders in the community to a meeting at his home at 80 King Street. Everyone present recognized the need to fight civil injustice through organization and enthusiastically decided to form a local branch of the national NAACP.

Reverend Waller was a member of the national board of directors of the NAACP and was also a former member of its predecessor, the Niagara Movement. Therefore, it was not surprising that he would continue his leadership to fight civil injustice of black people.

In the fall of 1917 James Weldon Johnson, who wrote the words to "Lift Every Voice and Sing", designated the Springfield Branch as a permanent organization. The official charter was presented to the

1918 Twentieth Anniversary 1938

Springfield, Massachusetts Branch

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Platform

1. A vote for every colored man and woman on the same terms as for white men and women.
2. An equal chance to acquire the kind of education that will enable the colored citizen everywhere wisely to use this vote.
3. A fair trial in the courts for all crimes of which he is accused, by judges in whose election he has participated, without discrimination because of race.
4. A right to sit upon the jury which passes judgment upon him.
5. Defense against lynching and burning at the hands of mobs.
6. Equal service on railroad and other public carriers. This to mean sleeping car service, dining car service, Pullman service at the same cost and upon the same terms as other passengers.
7. Equal right to the use of public parks, schools, libraries and other community services for which he is taxed.
8. An equal chance for a livelihood in public and private employment
9. Equal rights to live in any neighborhood without restriction because of color or race.

To this program are we committed, and to these ends we will continue to strive.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Officers of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NATIONAL OFFICERS

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Dr. Louis T. Wright, Chairman of the Board

Vice-Presidents

Nannie H. Burroughs

Rev. John Haynes Holmes

Hon. Arthur Capper

James Weldon Johnson

Clarence Darrow

Rev. A. Clayton Powell

Bishop John A. Gregg

Arthur B. Spingarn

Oswald Garrison Villard

Walter White, Secretary

Charles H. Houston, Special Counsel

Roy Wilkins, Asst. Secretary
Editor, The Crisis

Thurgood Marshall,
Asst. Special Counsel

William Pickens, Director of Branches

Juanita E. Jackson

Daisy E. Lamkin, Field Secretary

Special Asst. to the Secretary

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Rev. S. L. Dupree

Julia L. Warner

Grace L. Wright

Alford H. Tavernier, Secretary

Frederick Henderson, Asst. Secretary

Charles E. Scott, Treasurer

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Carl R. Babcock

Dr. Bruce T. Bowens

Dr. William N. DeBerry

Atty. Harry M. Ehrlich

Jeanne D. Gordon

Prof. S. Ralph Harlow

James H. Higgins

Charles H. Jones

Charles A. Whaling

PRESIDENTS - PAST AND PRESENT - OF THE SPRINGFIELD BRANCH

- *1. Rev. John L. Witten (1915-1916)
2. Dr. Bruce T. Bowens (1917-1919)
3. Dr. William B. Jones (1920)
- *4. Mrs. Ella M. Stewart (1921-1922)
5. Alford H. Tavernier (1923-1924)
6. William A. DuBose (1925)
7. Oliver M. Buggs, Jr. (1926-1927)
8. Dr. C. Otis Byrd (1928)
9. Mrs. Jeanne D. Gordon (1929-30)
10. George C. Gordon (1931 -)

* Deceased

Springfield Branch in 1918, thus the local branch has been working almost 60 years to right the wrongs of racial injustice.

The first officers were President, Dr. Bruce T. Bowens; Vice-President, Reverend William N. DeBerry; Secretary, Dr. William B. Jones, and Treasurer, James H. Higgins. In 1930 Springfield was host to the NAACP national convention and received outstanding plaudits for the manner in which facilities were provided to make the convention a successful one.

Alexander B. Mapp, a graduate of Boston University came to Springfield in 1946 to serve as executive director of the Dunbar Community League. He had previously been executive director of the Urban League of Columbus, Ohio. Mr. Mapp actively participated in every segment of life in the community, working and planning to improve the status of the black man in Springfield in education, housing and employment. His booklet *Blueprint for Springfield* caused much discussion in the business sector.

The work of the NAACP, in conjunction with that of the Dunbar Community League (later Dunbar Community Center) and the Urban League, a part of the Dunbar League until it officially became the Urban League of Springfield in 1950, gave major impetus to social changes for the betterment of blacks in Springfield.

The Fruits of Labor

Professionalism was an early and important additive to the Springfield black community. The earliest body of black professionals consisted mainly of Central — today's Classical — High School graduates and incoming persons from southern states. Hostility, proscription, the inability to adequately practice ones' profession, and lower economic rewards, were probably basic reasons for the migration of a number of these highly talented individuals. Drive, industry, desire, motivation and real work had to be the order of every day.

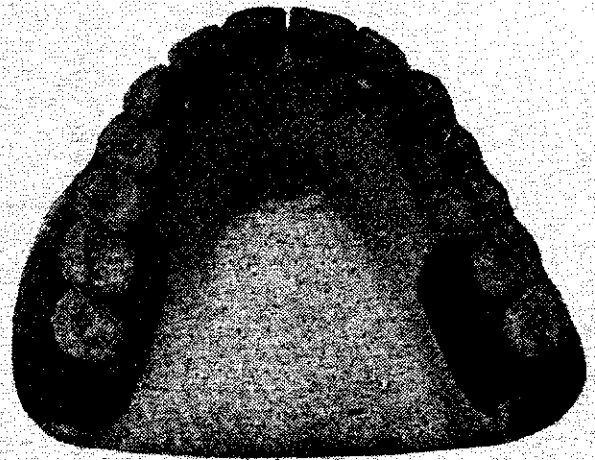
Anthony L. Brown, the first black Springfield physician and surgeon was born in the city in 1863 of free parents, Emerson and Charlotte E. (Davis) Brown. He was brought up here and attended the local public schools. Information is not clear as to what he did to earn money after public school education, however he worked for a period of years before entering Howard University. He attended both the college and medical school of Howard University. After graduation he practiced in Boston for three years, then returned to Springfield. He enjoyed an active practice, serving the public from his office at 796 State Street.

Besides his practice he was also active in civic and political affairs of the city. Dr. Brown was a member of the Springfield Board of Health, being appointed by Mayor William P. Hayes during his second term in 1901. He was reappointed by Mayor Stone in 1903. Dr. Brown was a trustee of the old men's home on Walnut Street, a member of the Hampden Medical Society, St. John's Congregational Church, Sumner Lodge of Masons, and the Golden Chain Lodge of Odd Fellows.

Dr. Brown, unmarried, died at the age of 42 following a short illness. It was reported that he became ill while attending a meeting of the Hampden Medical Society and was in the hospital only a few days before he died of pleural pneumonia.

Another black physician, Dr. Miles R. Gordon, practiced in Springfield at 314 Hancock Street. He served the health needs of the people here for 25 years. Dr. Gordon was born in Richmond, Virginia and graduated from Yale University Medical School in 1894. He was a member of the Masonic Order, Golden Chain Lodge of Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Hampden County Medical Association and other

MECHANICAL DENTISTRY Evening Classes



**Men and Women, Good Opportunity
Competent Instructors
DR. WILLIAM B. JONES
Director of the Course
475 Main St. Springfield, Mass.**

An early advertisement for Dr. William B. Jones Sr.

medical societies. Dr. Gordon attended St. Peters Episcopal Church.

Dr. Bruce T. Bowens, another pioneer medical practitioner in Springfield was born in Wilmington, N.C. and graduated from Tufts Medical School in 1898. He practiced medicine in Chicago, Illinois and Norfolk, Virginia before coming to Springfield in 1910. He maintained his practice here for 37 years.

Dr. Bowens enjoyed a busy professional practice yet he found time to be active in medical associations and other civic organizations. He was extremely sensitive to the civil rights needs of his people and showed his commitment by serving as president of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He showed further dedication by serving as its secretary for many years. Dr. Bowens retired from active practice because of failing health in 1937 and died at the age of 78 in 1944.

Dr. Howard P. Kennedy has served Springfield with distinction as an outstanding internist. Dr. Kennedy was born in Worcester, Massachusetts and attended the local schools there before preparing for the medical profession at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Undergraduate requirements com-



Adele Addison.

pleted, he taught school for two years, one in Arkansas, and one in North Carolina. He then attended Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee from which he was graduated with highest honors. Dr. Kennedy moved to Springfield in September 1931, locating his offices in the old Worthington Building on Main Street. He soon became well known in the community both professionally and socially. Professionally he has been honored by the Springfield Hospital and the Municipal Hospital of which he was Executive Director for a period of time. At this writing he is retired and still living in Springfield. Today, Dr. Kennedy is held in the highest esteem by the Springfield community and the medical profession.

Also attracted to the Springfield scene was Dr. Josefa Zarrat from Puerto Rico; and Doctor's Leonard G. Phillips, William B. Jones Sr., O.L.K. Frazier, and C. Otis Byrd who are listed as Springfield's early black dentists.

Dr. William B. Jones, Sr. was born in Ridgeway,

North Carolina. His undergraduate work was completed at the University of Pennsylvania and graduate work at Harvard Dental School. Dr. Jones opened his practice in 1908 in Springfield in the Wejo Building. He is credited with the invention of a saliva pump, which when perfected was patented. Dr. Jones has been actively involved in the Third Baptist Church and was an early member of the Springfield Racquet Club.

Dr. O.L.K. Frazier, another graduate of Harvard Dental School, has served the dental needs of people in Springfield since the 1920's. He received the Gold Certificate from Harvard noting his 50 years of service. Dr. Frazier is a past president of the Valley District Dental Association and a life member of the American Dental Association. He has served as president of the Springfield Urban League and for many years on the Life Membership Committee and Board of Directors of the NAACP. Dr. Frazier is now retired.

A third major area of professional involvement was that of law. Firsts in this career are: Attorneys J. Clifford Clarkson, Alford H. Tavernier, and William H. Martin. Other early 20th century specialized professionals were RN, Mrs. Corinna Phillips, chemist, Edward A. Treadwell, and, engineer, Zebede Talbot.

The field of music, too, has been greatly enriched by black talent from Springfield. Pioneer teachers of piano and organ have been Bessie Rollins Gayle, Frances Mason Ritter, Ruth Johnson Reed, Bessie Rollin, Alice Phrame Kelly and Minnie Brogue; of violin, Stella Ritter Thomas and Hortense Rhrame Higginbotham. Also, very well known for his fine base voice is Ed Clark. Mr. Clark, born and raised in Vermont, attended Hampton Institute, Virginia, and there joined the Hampton Singers. He settled in Springfield in 1925 and quickly became involved in many musical activities.

Two Classical High School graduates won acclaim for their fine voices. Luther Saxon, Class of 1935, sang with the DePauw Infantry Chorus and performed in Broadway productions. Miss Adele Addison, Class of 1942, received a scholarship of \$100.00 to study music. This event launched her on a career in music that took her around the world.

The Springfield black community has made continual moves to provide for and improve the education available to black youngsters and adults. Mrs. Florence H. Laws' Black History classes of the 1930's and Alfreda Lancaster's Nursery School were but two moves to meet black early education needs.

In the late 1890's Helen S. Garrett was the first black teacher appointed to the public schools in Springfield. Records show that she was first an assistant, then a substitute before becoming a first grade

teacher at Strickland School. It has been said that Helen Garrett was a very effective teacher. A very sketchy account reports that Miss Garrett died at the early age of 37 in 1921. Records also show that Mary Garrett Simpson, sister of Helen, was probably involved in educational work in the school system from 1888-1893 as an "assistant" to the Principal of Strickland School. She left the city and went South.

Abbie Ritter Roberts was one of the well known Ritter family, almost all of whom were talented in the field of music. Available records show no standard appointments, however, Miss Ritter's musical talents were used in the kindergartens of Homer Street School, Jefferson Avenue School and East Union Street School. Miss Ritter also taught for many years in Mason, Tennessee.

Olive A. Rainey was born in 1876 in Georgetown, South Carolina, the daughter of Democratic Congressman (1870-1879) Joseph H. Rainey and his wife Susan (Cooper) Rainey. Many people remember her relating that she could hardly forgive her father for taking the family to Georgetown so that she could be born in the state which he served. To Olive Rainey it was "away from home." She never enjoyed this fact.

However, the family returned to Windsor, Conn. and she attended elementary school there. Olive Rainey then enrolled in the Young Ladies Institute in Philadelphia, and after graduating spent one year at Wellesley College. Miss Rainey then went to Tapley Normal School for one year and was graduated in 1899. Upon applying to the Springfield School System she was immediately appointed.

Miss Rainey was an outstanding teacher—patient, understanding and thorough. She taught at Jefferson Avenue School, Strickland School, and Kensington Avenue School. Her teaching career lasted more than 35 years. She retired in 1937. Although Miss Rainey's mobility was limited after retirement, she continued to do membership work for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

The Springfield educational system soon welcomed a number of highly talented black teachers, most of whom have maintained a close relationship with the system. Dr. Mary McLean was first appointed as a teacher of special classes at the Hooker School. Presently she is Director of Special Education in the Springfield School Department. Rebecca Johnson joined the school department as a secondary teacher and later became an elementary principal. On retirement, she was principal of the Mary M. Lynch School. Dorothy Shipley was appointed to the Brookings School and Mae Belle Kelley, to the Hooker School. Both of these women have moved from Springfield. Miss Adele Picken's first appointment was as a

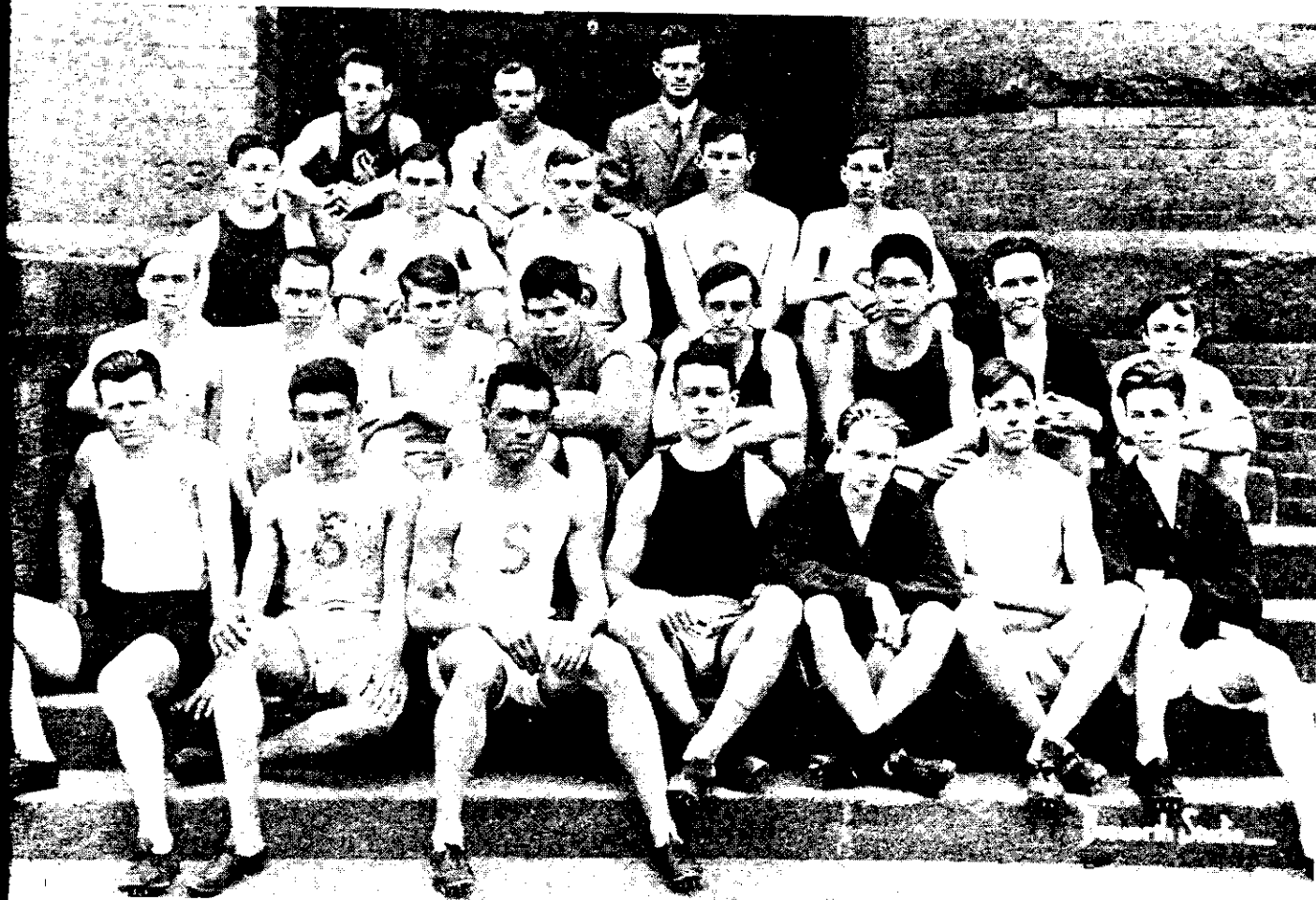


Abbie Ritter Roberts.

kindergarten teacher at the East Union Street School. She is presently assigned to the Margaret C. Ells School as a teacher of first grade. Dr. Walter English became a teacher of special classes in the late 1940's. He is now an Associate Professor of Guidance and Psychological Services at Springfield College.

In addition to their service to the local school system, blacks in Springfield have contributed greatly to the city's athletic record. It would be impossible to enumerate all the outstanding athletes who have established schoolboy records and have gone on to win various competitions in college. It would also be difficult to name all the athletic organizations, but the following are some of the more memorable.

In 1907-10 Howard Drew, Bertram Smith and Hobart Johnson were members of the Springfield Football Team which drew its players from all the high schools. Hobart Johnson, a four letter man from Technical High, held the indoor record for the 100 yard dash and the quarter mile. Bertram Smith, of



Howard Drew is pictured in the front row, third from the left.



Some members of the Springfield Racquet Club in 1929.

Central High School, played backfield. Howard Drew became renowned as a runner in his teens and during and after his high school years. It has been said that he often raced the horses going to a fire, since few men in the area would compete with him. As a member of the U.S. Team of the 1912 Olympics held in Stockholm, Sweden, Drew qualified for the finals in the 100 meter run. Unfortunately a pulled leg tendon kept him out of the race. For a time, he held the world's record for the 100 yard dash, the 90 yard dash and the 75 yard dash.

Beginning around 1915 there were two black churches entered in the Sunday School Athletic League, St. John's Church and Third Baptist Church. Members played basketball, soccer, football, and competed in track meets. The St. John's team was champion in 1916. The Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's basketball games played at Springfield College were the highlights of the season. The men on the soccer football team of the Third Baptist Church

were such players that they shut out almost all opponents. Other teams playing at the time were the Hill Wanamakers, the North End Blue Sox, the Black Sox, South End Rosebuds and the Colored All Stars.

The Springfield Racquet Club, now the Springfield Tennis Club, was also organized about 1915. Some of the early members were E. Bernard Haskins, Cyril Jacobs, William B. Jones, Leslie James, William C. Jackson, Lillian Garrison and Esther Spratley. Practice games were played at Forest Park and Pratt Field. Later two tennis courts were built at the corner of Monroe and Hancock Streets for club use and for tournament games. The Springfield Tennis Club joined the New England Tennis Association which held its first Annual Tennis Tournament in Springfield in 1925. Kathryn Jones once won the National Tennis Association women's singles title.

On Saturday, June 9, 1928, the Western Massachusetts Marble Championship was held at the Eastern States Exposition Grounds. As a result of this tourney, Richard Holt was crowned "Marble King", the highest honor of Boydom. Richard was the best shooter yet according to all previous records, for he defeated five different players during a total of twelve games. Richard Holt finished with a perfect percentage of 1000. He was able to shoot 137 marbles from a total of 156 out of the ring.

While many people may be familiar with the athletic achievements of local blacks, few people are aware of the diverse number of businesses started by enterprising blacks in the post civil war time period. Long before city pick-ups were instituted, J. Swazey carried on a garbage and trash collection operation. Shortly afterward, Mr. and Mrs. William Garnes conducted a barrel business on Quincy Street. The Garnes' son Carlton helped with the business until his tragic early death. Also, as mentioned earlier, W.W. Johnson had a steam carpet cleaning business at 227 Quincy Street in the 1880's. Later a variety store was opened at the same address and operated by the Johnson family for many years. William H. Walters, a builder, contracted with the city of Springfield to construct the manholes on Main Street and to do extensive work on the Municipal Group. Charles Whaling was a Master Journeyman, bricklayer and plasterer.

In the North End of the city the Wright Brothers established a barber shop and employed many other barbers at various times during their ownership. Later, Jesse Malone conducted business at the same location. There were other barber shops operated by David and Norman Johnson, William Joiner and Ted Shropshire. The earlier hairdressers exercised their trade at the home of the customer. This was a time to catch up on the news and have tea and cookies. Some of the first shops were owned and operated by Bertha

Hutchins, Rose Ayers, Grace Murray, Letitia Allen and Florence Laws.

Around 1890, Maceo Vaughn started a renting and hauling business with horses, wagons and sleighs. Sleighs were rented for hayrides with the destination being Mother Cornelia Wilkes' Restaurant "way out" in Pine Point; or, out to the Hawkins' farm on Plumtree Road; or, to Chaffin's home on Davenport Street. For many years the Vaughn family operated this business from King Street and possibly used the last horse-drawn wagon in the city for collecting rags, papers, bottles and old metal.

From the early 1900's up to the present there have been some excellent caterers who served the wealthiest families with their superb and ingenious delicacies. Thornton Johnson served dinners and weddings and for a good while ran his own eating place on Boston Road. Alexander Hughes was another who was famous for his homemade ice-cream and chicken salad — the popular wedding repast. Frances Walters and Helen C. Butler prepared food in their own homes and transported it to their customers. Willana Burr and Helen Evans served luncheons and dinners in their own homes, Breezy Hill Cottage in East Longmeadow and Helen's Tea House on Barre Street, respectively.

For years, starting in the early 1920's, Robert Frazier and George C. Gordon operated a gas station and parking place on Market Street. Later the business was moved to Bliss Street. About the same time Herbert Adams opened a Battery Company on Columbus Avenue.

There have been many black self-employed tailors, pressers, dressmakers, cleaners and dyers. An exclusive place was Scott and Blake Cleaners and Dyers located on Chestnut Street. Most dressmakers operated from their homes. A few of these women were: Carrie Armfield, Helen Evans, Mary Howard, and Carrie Dugga. Mrs. Dugga was also the first "jitney" driver.

A popular door to door salesman was a Mr. Edwards who sold shoes, rubbers and artics (golashes) from a pushcart. He would leave his cart at the curb, bring several pairs of shoes and related merchandise around to the back door and knock ever so gently. With each purchase of shoes went a free buttonhook, shoehorn, or, an extra pair of laces. During the 1920's Edward Treadwell, another door to door salesman, carried fruits and vegetables in season. He sold from his truck which was especially equipped for fine produce.

Among the few plumbers in earlier years were Mr. Jacobs and E. Bernard Miles. Alvah Jamieson was one of the early electricians. Though these craftsmen were few they were very proficient at their trades.

CITY COUNCIL DIVIDED ON BUS ISSUE

Upper Board Unanimous for Trolley Monopoly; Common Council Opposed, 8-7

CROWD AT HEARING Attorneys Plead Busmen's Cause; Committee Report Read

After a long discussion in an open informal joint session, the Aldermen voted Monday night to accept a report of the transportation committee giving the trolley company a monopoly, while the Common Council by a vote of 8 to 7 voted to reject the report. This does not change the status of the jitneys, that were refused the right to operate as public motor vehicles after May 1.

Attorney Richard J. Talbot, counsel for the Springfield Motor Bus Owners' Association, stated that the independent jitney operator will continue to operate as a free service until the question is settled, once and for all.

Attorney Talbot spoke in favor of extending licenses, as did Attorney Stephen Boldin, who read an affidavit of Deputy Sheriff Simon J. Griffin, stating forth that 19,522 registered voters cards were checked and certified by him before being submitted to the city clerk. H. F. Redden, in the absence of President John G. Bates, spoke for the Central Labor Union, stating that labor is strongly convinced that the trolley company should be given a monopoly.

Common Council Vote

The Common Council vote on the question of accepting the transportation committee's report was: in favor, Stebbins, Holland, Coombs, McMorro, Brigham, Robinson and Haidrick; opposed, Bruce, Courtney, Kane, Forastiere, Gafney, Sweeney, Hogan, Bartlett; not voting, Sinclair, Bellows and Ruxton.

Fully 300 persons were present when Attorney Talbot made his plea for a continuation of service until a referendum can be taken, in which he said the greatest petition in the history of the city, signed by 25,000 persons, asked protection against a street railway monopoly. He said the city needs jitneys and trolleys, and stated that the men would abide by a referendum. He stated that there is no criticism of the personnel of the transportation board, but called attention to the fact that only three wards are represented on it.

No action has been taken by the Mayor or transportation committee of the City Council to stop the operation of independent busses, which have been operated on the outside

PROMINENT LAWYER ANNOUNCES FOR MAYOR

Will Run on "Square Deal For All Classes" Platform

A. Paul Connor, the well known lawyer of Springfield has announced his candidacy for mayor of Springfield on the Republican ticket. Mr. Connor is a man of exceptional qualifications being an electrical and mechanical engineer as well as a lawyer and being a strong advocate of equal rights and fair treatment for everyone without regard to class, creed or color. On being interviewed by our staff reporter he made the following statement:

"In announcing my candidacy for mayor of Springfield, it is hardly



HON. A. PAUL CONNOR

necessary to dwell on the fact that I am utterly outside of the control, intrigue and influences of the insidious secret rings, cliques and cabals who are now elbowing one another for anticipated spoils. Behold the disgraceful situation at the present time. The intelligent voters will welcome a chance to vote for a man who will give them a square deal no matter what their color, class or creed is, and I promise that they will get it when I am mayor. I despise discrimination that is unfair to anyone, and I will continue the battle for the general welfare. The positions in the city will be open to everyone who are fit for them, and not simply to a few favored few who are in the rings and cliques that have controlled the city for years. I will run on the Republican ticket in the primaries."

WOMEN OF AFRICAN METHODIST CHURCH LOUD IN DEMANDS

Louisville, Ky., May 8—A militant demand by Negro women for equal representation in its affairs today was before the General Conference of the African Methodist

NORTH AND SOUTH AT LAST UNITED

Methodist Conference Spends Busy Week Passing Resolutions and Laws.—For Betterment of Church and State.—Race Editor and Ministers Stir Vast Audience With Eloquence.

A resolution denouncing Dr. Butler of Columbia University for his stand on the 18th Amendment was passed early in the week by the Methodist General Conference in session here. Copies of the resolution were sent to members of Congress in Washington and a copy to Dr. Butler. The week has been a very busy one for the delegates, especially those doing committee work and each day has brought a new program crowded with features of unusual interest.

Race Man Makes Keynote Speech

What was said by many to have been the most eloquent speech heard in the Auditorium this week was delivered by Rev. Dr. Lorenzo H. King, Editor of the Southwest Christian Advocate of New Orleans, La.

An impassioned plea that the M. E. Church study and ample provisions for the spiritual welfare for members of our race moving away

Continued on page 6

ATTENTION READERS

The New World could not run long without the help that comes from our advertisers. We could not interest advertisers if we did not have something to offer them by way of circulation. We are highly pleased with the rapid growth of both of these departments and we sincerely hope this medium has been of mutual benefit to our readers and subscribers.

We invite our readers to read carefully the advertisements in each issue of this paper. You are sure to find something you want and you are more than likely to find the prices reasonable.

It was with one of our advertisers is offering an bargain in flour to presenting the this paper. out the cor In this w rece

There were also two black newspapers circulated at different times — *The New World*, edited by A.T. Smitherman in 1924; and, the *Springfield Chronicle*, edited by Francis McAlpine.

Just before 1920, Sidney Johnson established an Undertaking Parlor on Union Street but later moved to Hartford, Connecticut. A Mr. Barnes opened an Undertaking Parlor at 11 Hancock Street. However, Mr. Barnes also moved to Hartford several years before James Henderson established his Funeral Home at 52 Hancock Street. There are two black Funeral Directors at present, the other being James Harrell at 357 St. James Avenue.

Within this society, individual and ethnic group strength and survival are directly related to economic know-how, development, and stability. Black economic foundations have been underlined by dependency. In the early decades of the 20th century Springfield blacks attempted to formulate an economic base through ownership of property and the initiation of small businesses. These moves were aided by continued black migration into the city bringing about increased black participation in black establishments. By 1922 there were about 51 places of business owned and operated by blacks. The most prevalent enterprises were — in order of occurrence — barber shops, express and trucking concerns, real estate dealerships, pool rooms, second hand furniture stores, tailor shops, and restaurants. These businesses were operated with varying degrees of success. In the next ten to twelve years there was a slight shift in priority. Higher on the list of business concerns were hair dressers. Paralleling this shift was a drop in the number of barber shops. Of interest, also, is the fact that the number of real estate dealers declined.

The first four decades of the 20th century showed an increase in the number of black persons from 1021 in 1900 to 3212 in 1940. In 1940, blacks made up 2.2% of the total population of Springfield and social and economic accomplishments could be documented. The Rev. Dr. William N. DeBerry commented in 1939:

That measured by normal, moral standards the colored people of Springfield are, on the whole, a worthy and progressive group that deserve commendation for what they have accomplished within the limited opportunities and means at their disposal.

In general, there *were* limited opportunities within the total community. The "best" employment opportunities were not available to blacks. One Springfield resident states that —

High school graduates were forced into housework, maintenance, messenger service, or

employment as elevator operators, chauffeurs, or nursemaids. Others left the city for greener fields unless they were fortunate enough to attend college. There were some clerks or stock people but their work was usually carried on in an isolated area, separate from other workers and out of public sight.

Furthermore —

Insurance companies, public utilities, department stores and other privately owned businesses did not make a practice of hiring blacks from the 1900's up through the 1940's. There were practically none in civil service, however, there were a few blacks in federal service.

And, in social relations —

Blacks were ignored by clerks in department stores, refused service in most eating establishments, shown seats in back rows or behind posts, and discouraged from buying orchestra seats in movie theaters.

Is it no wonder than many "young, gifted and black" people drifted from Springfield in the direction of expanded opportunity?

At many moments in the past blacks spoke to the total Springfield community of the presence, the achievements and the needs of blacks. One early channel of black projection was *The New World*. Items in the Saturday, May 10, 1924 issue not only discussed black affairs, some items very definitely expressed the pervasive prejudicial attitudes towards blacks.

FOR RENT — Six tenements, 4 rooms each at Central Street for Colored families. Near school. Inquire of Mr. Saunders, 73 Congress Street. Phone Walnut 7136-M.

Even more hostile was the following news item —

KLAN CROSS BURNS OUTSIDE OF PALMER

State Police Officer is Investigating
Mt. Dublin Demonstration

Palmer, May 9 — A Ku Klux Klan cross of fire was burned about 10 o'clock Tuesday night on top of Mt. Dublin, a mile north of Palmer, which attracted attention for a distance of many miles. Many persons with autos went to the mountain but a search of the neighborhood failed to reveal anyone who admitted a knowledge of how the cross was placed there or by whom.

The State Police Patrol barracks in Agawam were notified of the burning of the cross and a motorcycle officer made an investigation, but with no results.



Attorney J. Clifford Clarkson.



James H. Higgins displaying the William Pynchon medal he was awarded by the Advertising Club in 1949. Pictured, left to right; Frank Higgins, brother of James Higgins; Mrs. Frank Higgins; "Jim" Higgins, and Jeanne Bass and Ruth Mann, nieces of Mr. Higgins.

However, there were other items that were very warm and human, such as —

Donald Peters, 22 months old son of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Peters of 44 Morris Street, was awarded the first prize of \$10 in gold last night as the most popular baby in the contest conducted in Olivet Community House by the Springfield branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The second prize of \$5 was given to Margaret Jones, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Jones of Greenwood Street, and the third prize of \$2.50 was awarded to Edward Poole, son of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Poole of Bowles Street.

At the Informal Conference of Colored Social Workers of New England and Vicinity held at Camp Atwater, June 25 and 26, 1931, these major issues were projected: The Indifference of Our Youth to Available Opportunities; the Industrial Status of the Negro in the North; Group Segregation in the North; and Negro Social Agencies and the Negro Church. Most assuredly adequate discussion of these issues and power to effect change relative to apathy and bitterness brought about by lack of opportunity and discriminatory policies had to come through political action, both overt and covert.

Until the recent past black political participation within the Springfield community has been minimal. And, the application of black political strength to effect change for the betterment of blacks specifically has been nominal. However, the actions for change and moves for civil rights carried out by such social agencies as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, and the Dunbar Community Center are most commendable.

What of black political awareness and position during the first decades of the 20th century? In the early 1900's a group of men and women organized the Negro Political Union. Much time was devoted to the study of political and civic affairs. There was also the Negro Civic League. In November 1903 Harvey J. Harper, influential among black Odd Fellows and Masons was elected a member of the Republican City Committee from Ward 8. Mr. Walter W. Samples was also elected as a member of this committee. In time, Samples became well known as the official guide of the Municipal Group. Of interest, too, is the fact that Margaret Johnson has been cited as being the first city women to register to vote when women gained this right on a nation-wide basis in 1920.

In 1935 Attorney J. Clifford Clarkson was elected as a member of the Springfield City Council to represent Ward 4. His re-election to a third term on November 1, 1939, with a substantial plurality, was a tribute to his record. In 1943, Attorney Clarkson resigned as the

representative of Ward 4 to accept appointment as an examiner in the local Office of Price Administration. Designated in Attorney Clarkson's place was James Henry Higgins. At the November election in 1944, Mr. Higgins was re-elected. As a political leader, James Higgins was highly respected. In 1948 he was elected President of the Common Council. And, on May 10, 1949, at the Advertising Club dinner at the Hotel Kimball, Mr. Higgins was presented with the William Pynchon Medal. Also an artist of some repute, Jim Higgins has displayed several of his paintings in the city.

Political awareness was a reality. Political power was yet to be gained. Political strength yet to be exercised in order to bring about change for the betterment of the black community.

In Conclusion

The '30's and the '40's — a watershed for blacks?

An article written by the Rev. Roland T. Heacock in October 1933 expresses black awareness and black concerns at that moment in time. His words also reflect the black socio-economic position at the mid-point of the 20th century.

"Springfield, like other New England towns of its kind, and other cities north of the Mason and Dixon line, is witnessing a gradual change of attitude toward the Colored Community in its midst. There is, on the one hand . . . a certain eagerness on the part of would be office holders to carry out favors just before election time; and on the other hand an increasing apathy toward these elementary human rights denied us openly. For example, here in this enlightened community of Springfield, there is a determined sentiment against the Negro's possession of any job save that of some form of manual labor. This determination is never voiced, never in print, would be vehemently denied, but nevertheless exists. We cannot draw the city's pay envelopes for any job save that of janitor or caretaker We have yet to crash the gates of the police department, the fire department, the City Hall. Public opinion here is coldly apathetic toward the right of the black man to possess the fullest extent of his earning power." "This principle of economic segregation is an accepted principle of this and other Northern communities."

"What Springfield needs is alertness on the part of our men and women to head off such dangerous movements and tendencies before they become so entrenched as to make resistance to them futile. Our organizations and especially the NAACP have done good work in this direction, but apparently not enough to stem the tide. We must renew our agitation, drop a lot of our smirking defense to those who oppress and would suppress us and demand our rights. Though we are only three thousand strong we owe it to ourselves and to our children to make the volume of our protest sound like ten thousand."

The challenge was clearly stated. However, the words presented were not those of one person, for they

expressed the ideas, feelings and protests of the black community. As blacks struggled over the mid-century point, a new era began. In the '50's many blacks were subtle in response. They patiently awaited compliance to new legislation enacted to favor blacks. Quietness reigned. The '60's brought overt action. Springfield was to receive its share of this action. For, again, there was stirring in the South. But . . . in this new era, words "migrated" northward

The fullness of the black experience in Springfield fed into the civil rights activities of the 1950's and the 1960's. Human resources were available to counteract discriminatory practices which worked to curtail black participation and advancement in Springfield's growth and development. Black group challenge was quickly funnelled into the schools and into City Hall. And, concerted group efforts were made to undermine and redefine business methods on hiring and on the sharing of economic resources.

The civil rights actions of the period as seen on the national scene often were mirrored in the events occurring in the city of Springfield. However, the civil rights "boom" of the 1960's was not a spontaneous occurrence. For overt action and positive outcome was directly proportional to pre-1960 concern for change expressed by Springfield black people.

However, what of the black position in Springfield in the 1970's? Can one project the future of blacks in Springfield in the '70's by examining black involvement in the early historical period capped by the crucial human interaction of the '60's? Or, is the future of blacks in this city directly dependent on black interaction and involvement in decision-making in contemporary municipal affairs?

Is there a black group move afloat to guarantee continual change for the economic, political, and social betterment of black people in the city of Springfield?

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