



Local Black History Online Resource List

Please note this list is not comprehensive. It includes information that is available online related to local Black history, local examples of segregation and racism, and ways local people fought against racism. There are many more resources at the McLean County Museum of History, in our exhibits, library, and archives that we welcome you to explore.

Use CTRL+F to find specific words within this document.

If you have questions or concerns please reach out to education@mchistory.org.

Sections:

[Bloomington-Normal Black History Project](#)

[Videos](#)

[McHistory Podcast & Other Audio](#)

[Archival Collection Finding Aids](#)

[Online Exhibits](#)

[Books and Articles Available Online](#)

[Books Available in our Stevenson-Ives Library](#)

[Pantagraph Negative Collection Photographs](#)

[Public Life in McLean County Photographs](#)

[MCMH History Makers](#)

[Biographies of Black People Featured on Evergreen Cemetery Walk](#)

[Downstate Sounds Radio Show](#)

[Social Media](#)

[Sources at other Libraries](#)

Bloomington-Normal Black History Project

THE BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL BLACK HISTORY PROJECT

An affiliate organization of the McLean County Historical Society

<https://mchistory.org/research/black-history-project>

<https://www.bnbhp.com/>

- [Project Origins](#)
- [Oral History Transcriptions](#)
- [Finding aid for collection](#) -- Note: This collection is 12 boxes and contains a wealth of documents and information related to local black history.
- [2018 BNBHP Reboot](#)
 - [Resistance & Progress: Then & Now 1960 to the Present, video of living statue performances \(March 2018\)](#) (also linked in “Videos” section with more info)
 - [Dedication of plaque recognizing segregated Miller Park Beaches \(September 2018\)](#)
- Annual Juneteenth Celebrations
 - 2019 Juneteenth performances (Facebook videos)
 - ["From Shock to Jubilee" by Willie Holton Halbert](#)
 - [Mt. Pisgah Praise Dancers](#)
 - [Gregory Hicks "The Awakening"](#)
 - [2020 Juneteenth virtual program “Still We Rise”](#) (Facebook video)
 - [Same video is also on YouTube](#)

- 2021 virtual Juneteenth program videos can be found on this document and at <https://www.bnbhp.com/>
 - Emancipation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8qnh9E4bSU>
 - Panel discussion:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bq-VfnbVyWk>
 - Voter suppression:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Emoksb2u6jQ>
 - Jim Crow: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozGoO3jK_og
 - Africa the Motherland:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rTdwyh4fNI>

Videos

Black Leadership Symposium (2022)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAOs_a1OZj0

Museum staff explored the legacy of local Black leadership in McLean County, the efforts of the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project to capture and preserve those stories, and how those histories inform educational programming to inspire a future generation of leaders and history makers. Event was held at Kingsley Jr. High School.

Lunch & Learn: The NAACP was relevant then, now and forever more! (2022)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctfuGWWlwhg>

Local leaders of the Adult Branch and the Youth Council President discuss the rich history and lasting legacy associated with the NAACP.

Jeanne and Charles Morris -- BN NAACP Youth Council Video (2022)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITeOWy5ZZcY>

The Bloomington-Normal NAACP Youth Council created this documentary film highlighting the legacies and accomplishments of former ISU professors and Museum History Makers Jeanne and Charles Morris.

City of Bloomington Honorary Street Sign Celebration (2022)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ILVFyScShU>

Honorary Street Sign Celebration in honor of local civil rights and social justice leaders Mr. Henry Gay Sr. and Merlin Kennedy.

Conversando Entre Nosotros: What's in a Label? Hispanic, Chicano/ Chicana, Latina/o, Latinx, Latine (2022)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWFompp8ocw>

This is not exclusively about Black history but does include discussion of intersections of race, gender, and Latinx identity. This panel discussion explores how labels can impact community and identity. The idea is that one label is not enough to understand the diversity of issues we face as a community or understand one's life experiences.

Artists, Advocates, Acrobats & More! Women who Made McLean County History (2021)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xr6dtcd4hw>

Join Candace Summers, the Museum's Director of Community Education, in this presentation as she highlights 20 McLean County women, from all walks of life, who shaped our history. From the first woman Illinois State Senator, Florence Fifer Bohrer; to the “Queen of the Flying Trapeze,” Antoinette Concello; and Civil Rights activist Sister Mary Antona Ebo, this illustrated program explores their lives and recognize their lasting contributions to our community and our world.

Soul, Greens, and Savory Things: Local African American Food Traditions (2021)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cbi2vercTQ>

Join Willie Holton Halbert, author of *Cooking with Love* and second vice president of the BN NAACP, and Jeff Woodard, Director of Marketing and Community Relations at the Museum, as they share local African American food traditions and recipes.

Ça va, Cassava? The Roots of Congolese Cooking (2021)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RK3u7YFn-bw>

Join Chris Callahan, Professor of French at Illinois Wesleyan University, and Jacques Bisimwa Bufole as they explore the Congolese American experience in McLean County.

Segregation: Our Community's Secret. A presentation by Mark Wyman (AUDIO ONLY, 2015)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9npgrv_fnSg NOTE: This video is mostly audio. Visual aids used during the lecture are shown when relevant, but otherwise the video is a black screen.

According to Wyman, a local African American leader once commented that “People don’t know how bad it was here—even black kids don’t know how bad it was.” He referred to local customs that barred African Americans from many aspects of life in Bloomington-Normal, which are now largely forgotten by all but those who were victims of these unwritten laws of racial exclusion. Wyman decided to investigate this for himself and began an extensive examination of local newspapers to help bring this part of the African American story in McLean County to light. His program examines those findings.

Black History Project: Living Statue Performances (2018)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cab8V-rhq7M>

The Bloomington-Normal Black History Project committee hosted a program titled Resistance & Progress: Then & Now 1960 to the Present.

- This video shows performances from the event, which portrayed the lives of 4 notable local individuals --
 - Caribel Washington by Kaylin Richards (:08-2:44)
 - Robert Gaston by Bradley Jackson (7:45-10:46)
 - Merlin Kennedy by Michael Gardner (11:49-15:02)
 - Lucinda Miller Posey by Willie Horton Halbert (15:06-21:30)
- There is a performance by BCAI School of Arts students from 2:49-7:43.
- Note: Not shown in this video is a panel discussion with Professor Frank Suggs, Charles & Jeanne Morris, Cameron Baker, and Myrissa Wiggins that also took place that day.

Willie Tripp Interview in Nebraska

<https://www.nebraskastudies.org/en/1925-1949/the-war-nebraska-stories/minority-experiences-african-americans/>

Rick Wallace interviews Willie Tripp about his experiences at the Hastings Naval Ammunition Depot during World War II.

Evergreen Cemetery Walk Performance: Edward and Lincoln Bynum performed by Timothy Jefferson and Emmanuel K. Jackson (2017)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNNHpiKwApI>

Serving alongside one another on the battlefields of France during World War I, Edward (1895-1954) and Lincoln (1900-1977) Bynum fought heroically in America's (the Allies') defense. So fiercely did they fight that the all African American 370th U.S. Infantry quickly earned the nickname "The Black Devils" from German troops unfortunate enough to encounter them in battle. Though the men were treated much better by French soldiers than their American counterparts, when the Bynums returned home in February 1919, they were greeted by their father and thousands of grateful Americans who lined the streets of Chicago to show their respect for this brave band of brothers.

Evergreen Cemetery Walk performance: Napoleon and Louise Calimese performed by Demitri Corbin and Jennifer Rusk (2019)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyFic2uDITY>

Following in his father and older brother's footsteps, Napoleon (1890-1972) first worked as a barber on Beaufort Street in Normal. In 1920, not long after he returned home from serving during World War I, he met

and married Louise Davis (1895-1985). Seven years later, the couple was appointed superintendent and matron of the McLean County Home for Colored Children (later renamed the Booker T. Washington Home)—having been “thoroughly recommended by businesses and professionals of Normal who [had] known them for years.” For the next three decades, the couple oversaw the only licensed home for children of color in Illinois outside Chicago.

Social Justice Walking Tour (facebook live, 2018)

<https://www.facebook.com/63313936361/videos/10155087264791362/>

History Out of the Closet — a discussion of experiences of members of the LGBTQ+ community in McLean County (facebook live, 2019)

<https://www.facebook.com/McLeanCountyMuseumofHistory/videos/364995927494280/>

Featuring community members Dave Bentlin, Jan Lancaster, Bruce Lang, Len Meyer, and Olemuel Ashford.

Hidden History: The Barton Family in Normal (2019)

<https://www.centralillinoisproud.com/news/local-news/hidden-history-the-barton-family-in-normal/>

The Roots of Route 66: The Green Book and History of Black Travel in America (Not specifically local, Facebook Live, 2019)

<https://www.facebook.com/McLeanCountyMuseumofHistory/videos/1679623698837209/>

Candacy Taylor, award-winning author, photographer and cultural documentarian, speaks about her multidisciplinary project based on the Green Book. Taylor was the keynote speaker during the fifth annual Route 66 Miles of Possibility conference.

Courageous Motorists: African American Pioneers on Route 66 (Not specifically local, Facebook Live, 2019)

<https://www.facebook.com/63313936361/videos/332129887665540/>

Frank Norris’s presentation will show what it was like for African Americans to drive west on Route 66, and how that experience changed over the years as racial attitudes began to change.

McHistory Podcast

in partnership with WGLT

- [Ella Stokes](#) – The way Black people were treated in Bloomington-Normal in the 1920's was as bad as it had ever been. The conditions produced jarring juxtapositions in people's lives, such as that of an intelligent, churchgoing Black woman who worked for the family of State Farm royalty and took on odd jobs to make ends meet.
- [George Hoagland, Oil-of-Gladness](#) – Coming from nothing, an illiterate Black man from Bloomington-Normal found a niche in the national market for cleaning products.
- [Segregation in Bloomington -Normal, Miller Park Beaches, Belle Blue Claxton-](#) A well-educated stenographer and NAACP member fights the segregation of Miller Park's beaches.
- [Absalom Hawkins](#) -- The profile of a man who drove vice presidents and governors, wealthy landowners, visiting artists, and the prominent of Bloomington-Normal all about town more than a century ago.
- [Louise Calimese And The McLean County Home For Colored Children](#) -- Good care for the orphaned and abandoned Black children in Bloomington Normal has not always been easy to find. Louise Calimese decided to do something about it.
- [Dr. Eugene Covington](#) -- Dr. Eugene Covington was the first African American physician in McLean County in the early 20th century. This episode of McHistory shows the struggle of African Americans residents when Jim Crow laws hit McLean County.
- [Julius Witherspoon](#) -- Spanish American War Soldier from Bloomington who writes home from eastern Cuba.
- [Civil Rights Act](#) -- In this episode, we hear about Norquist's experience registering Black people to vote in Hattiesburg, Miss.
- [Lou Anna Brown Sanders Clark, Bloomington-Normal Under Jim Crow Law](#) -- In this episode, we hear about a Bloomington resident who ran a boarding house for Black Illinois State University students.
- [Richard Blue was the first Black person to run for Bloomington council](#)– In this episode, we hear about Richard Blue, a Black veteran of the Union Army, activist, member of a literary society, barber, and the first Black person to run for City Council in Bloomington.

Other Audio:

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Bloomington

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke twice in Bloomington during the 1960s. During his second visit, he addressed a packed house at Illinois Wesleyan University's Fred Young Fieldhouse on Feb. 10, 1966.

Read the whole speech here and listen to historic audio from WJBC:

- Speech Audio:
https://soundcloud.com/il_wesleyan/dr-martin-luther-king-jr-at-illinois-wesleyan-university-1966
- Speech Transcript can be found by searching for “Martin Luther King Jr.” on the Illinois Wesleyan website.

Archival Collection Finding Aids

Finding aids are inventories of all the items in an archival collection. Our collections are held in climate controlled rooms at the McLean County Museum of History, and are typically available for public view. If you are making a special trip to use these materials please call first to be sure someone will be available to assist you. Phone: 309-827-0428, ask for the Library.

Listed below are the collections that we have finding aids for online, but please note we have many other relevant collections in our archives.

- [Barton House Archaeology and Family History](#)
 - Milton Barton worked for Jesse Fell (founder and developer of Normal) and reportedly planted many of the trees at ISU. Barton was part Cherokee, and his wife Lucinda was an African-American / Irish woman originally from Madison County. In 1994 Ed Jelks, former Illinois State University professor, led a team of seven volunteers in an archaeological survey and excavation of Wilbur Barton's backyard. Documents relating to this excavation are in this collection.
- [Bloomington-Normal Black History Project](#)
- [Booker T. Washington Home](#)
 - The Booker T. Washington Home was founded in 1918 by Mr. and Mrs. Alex Barker. They housed six children in a small house in the 500 block of West Jackson Street in Bloomington. In 1920, women from various Bloomington-Normal churches decided to help with the daunting task of feeding, housing, and clothing the young children at the home.
- [Duff Family](#)
 - This collection deals almost exclusively with the family of Peter C. and Fannie Duff (1865-?), who lived at 107 W. Poplar in Normal. Peter Duff, a Black carpenter, was encouraged by Jesse Fell to move from Kentucky and settle in Normal. The house on Poplar Street was built by Duff in approximately 1883. There were 6 children in the Duff family. The majority of this collection relates to Peter and two of his children, Alverta and Julia.
- [Kennedy, Merlin](#)
 - This collection includes the personal papers of Mr. Kennedy and his wife Beulah (1923-2002), such as documents from Merlin's time serving on the Bloomington Human Relations Commission and as President of the local chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Also included are documents relating to his work history, participation in amateur

athletics (mostly softball and golf), and his association with numerous nonprofit organizations.

- [Major Collection of Letters from Liberia](#)
 - The Major Collection of Letters from Liberia consists of twelve letters written by previously enslaved people living in Liberia to their former captor, Benjamin Major (31 Oct. 1796 – 29 May 1852).
- [Martin Luther King Jr Awards Program — Human Relation Commissions](#)
 - The Martin Luther King Jr Awards program is an annual event sponsored by the Bloomington Human Relations Commission and the Normal Human Relations Commission. It began in 1977. Guest speakers have included national Civil Rights leaders. Awards are presented to local residents and students.
- [Pratt, Awadagin](#)
 - Awadagin Pratt was born in Pittsburgh in 1966. He began studying piano at the age of six. When he was nine, his family moved to Normal where both his parents, Theodore and Mildred Pratt, became professors at Illinois State University. When he was a 26 year old pianist in 1992, he won the prestigious Naumberg Competition in New York. Pratt has performed all over the world. His debut CD, “A Long Way from Normal” issued in 1994, was but the first in an extensive discography.
- [Suggs, Frank](#)
 - A professor of music at Illinois State University starting in 1969, Frank Suggs promoted African American music both on campus and in the broader community. He often sought to teach African American history through music performances. The collection includes magazine articles, concert programs, concert posters, newspaper articles, etc.
- [Underground Railroad](#)
 - Six folders concerning the Underground Railroad in McLean County.
- [Wadell, Jack](#)
 - John Austin Waddell’s 50-year career spanned the stages of America and Europe, but it started in Bloomington and at Illinois Wesleyan. Jack Waddell graduated from Bloomington High School in 1959, where his talent for singing was recognized by his teacher, Mary Selk.
- [Wayman AME Church Archaeology](#)
 - In the summer of 1992, an archeological excavation was conducted at the Wayman A.M.E. Church at 806 N. Center Street in Bloomington. The congregation, one of the oldest black congregations in Illinois, requested the investigation in anticipation of moving to a new site. They had occupied their Center Street site starting in 1847.
- [Whittaker Family Collection](#)

- This collection contains documents related to the Whittaker family. Included are photocopies of death certificates, oral history, certificates, diplomas, correspondence, ephemera, and research notes. Collection dates from 1850-1998.

Online Exhibits

Visit our website [here](#) to view our online exhibits. Relevant topics will be listed with a time range and which gallery you can find them in.

Bloomington High School (1970s, racism conflict)- Community in Conflict

KKK in McLean County (1920s)- Community in Conflict

Merlin Kennedy (1960s, Black Santa)- Community in Conflict

Open Housing Ordinance (1960s, real estate discrimination)- Community in Conflict

Segregated Bloomington Public Schools (1870s)- Community in Conflict

Segregated housing at Illinois State (1930s)- Community in Conflict

Segregated swimming at Miller Park (1920s)- Community in Conflict

Underground Railroad (1840s)- Community in Conflict

William McCoslin (1850s, barber)- Community in Conflict

Women's Suffrage (5 Black women voted in 1891 election)- Community in Conflict

Duff Family (1880s-1940s)- Making a Home AND Working for a Living

Julius Witherspoon (1890s, Spanish-American War)- Making a Home

William & Henry Wells (1830s, among the earliest Black residents)- Making a Home

Carl Samuels (1920s, C&A railroad shop worker)- Working for Living

Eugene Covington (1910s, doctor)- Working for a Living

George Hoagland (1910s, entrepreneur)- Working for a Living

Ruth Waddell (1950s, GE employee)- Working for a Living

Books and Articles Available Online

Pages from the Past: Stories from the Sunday Pantagraph by Museum Staff

Links to Pantagraph website unless otherwise stated. May require a subscription to read.

Reach out to education@mchistory to request access to specific articles.

- [George Hoagland spread the Gospel through Oil of Gladness](#) (link to Archive.org) (2007)
- [Booker T. Washington Home offered safe haven for black children](#) (link to Archive.org) (2009)
- [Underground Railroad myths obscure history of movement](#) (link to Archive.org) (2009)
- [Bloomington Colored Giants competed in era of segregated baseball](#) (2009)
- [Witherspoon commanded all-black troops in ‘Splended Little War’](#) (link to Archive.org) (2010)
- [Black soldiers served as ‘sable arm’ of Union Army](#) (2011)
- [Popular culture once embraced racist blackface minstrel shows](#) (2012)
- [Chase v. Stephenson step toward ending school segregation](#) (2013)
- [Frederick Douglass frequently spoke in Bloomington](#) (2013)
- [Notorious silent movie drew local protests](#) (2016)
- [Early African-American doctor faced segregated Twin Cities](#) (2016)
- [Local abolitionists faced rage, mob violence](#) (2017)
- [Emancipation Day once black community’s July 4](#) (2017)
- [Buffaloes battled for respect on hardwood court](#) (2017)
- [Emancipation Day one Black community’s July 4](#) (2017)
- [Sanders Clark witness to century of injustices and triumphs](#) (2018)
- [Black farm family prominent in Bellflower Township](#) (2018)
- [Sojourner Truth spoke in Bloomington](#) (2019)
- [Bloomington schools integrated decade after Civil War](#) (2019)
- [Bloomington inescapably linked to Springfield Race Riot](#) (2019)
- [Sister Mary Antona Ebo a ‘witness’ for civil rights, justice](#) (2020)
- [In '30s, Miller Park Zoo animals on hunger strike after zookeeper loses job](#) (2020)
- [Quartet serenades partygoers at annual President’s Birthday Ball polio fundraiser](#) (2020)
- [Juneteenth has a long history in Bloomington-Normal](#) (2021)

- [Duff family history reflects struggles, achievements of Black experience in McLean County](#) (2021)
- [Sisters from Normal endured Tulsa Race Massacre, wrote account](#) (2021)
- [Bloomington's Melody Gospel Chorus part of rich Black musical tradition](#) (2021)
- [Four women paved way to Bloomington City Council](#) (2021)
- [Eva Jones broke racial boundaries, glass ceiling in Bloomington politics](#) (2021)
- [Smith a vet, pilot, NAACP leader and 'hidden' figure in Bloomington history](#) (2022)
- [Post Amerikan pushed envelope in staid Bloomington-Normal](#) (2022)
- [Black women's clubs worked for better lives in US, Bloomington-Normal](#) (2022)
- [AME church historically vital resource for Bloomington's Black community](#) (2023)
- [Fell's dream of integrated Bloomington-Normal faded as Jim Crow rose](#) (2023)
- [Segregation once flourished in Bloomington-Normal](#) (2024)
- [1960s activists rallied to save an elderly widow's home from urban renewal](#) (2024)
- [Clairvoyant Sophia Huggins once sought by all walks of life in Bloomington](#) (2024)
- [Two Black Civil War veterans in Central Illinois fought to be citizens, voters](#) (2024)

Presence, Pride, and Passion (2009)

<https://archive.org/details/PPPBook>

History of African Americans In McLean County by John W. Muirhead (1998)

<https://archive.org/details/historyofafricanamericansinmcleancounty>

The William Carey Barton Family: A Study in Historical Archaeology by Edward B. Jelks and John W. Muirhead (1996)

<https://archive.org/details/barton-family-archaeology>

Pictorial Souvenir 1912

<https://archive.org/details/pictorialsouvenir1912>

McLean County Blacks in the Civil War by Scott J. Wagers (1993)

<https://archive.org/details/mclean-county-blacks-civil-war>

History of the Illinois Association of Club Women and Girls, inc. 1901-1975 (1975)

<https://archive.org/details/rubyedwards>

Wayman AME Church anniversary books

- [150 Anniversary pamphlet](#) (36 pages)

- [150 Years of History booklet](#) (23 pages)
- [A 175 Year Jubilant Journey in Bloomington book](#) (54 pages)

Illustrated History of McLean County

- [Segregated schools](#)
- [Julius Witherspoon](#)
- [The Black Middle Class, Wayman AME, Oil of Gladness](#)

Obituary: Sister Mary Antona Ebo, one of the 'sisters of Selma' (2017)

- <https://www.wglt.org/post/obituary-sister-mary-antona-ebo-one-sisters-selma#stream/0>

The Klan Comes to Lexington by Terri Clemens

- <https://www.lib.niu.edu/2007/ih010721.html>

The Post Amerikan, Bloomington-Normal's longtime (1972-2004) alternative newspaper

- https://thekeep.eiu.edu/post_amerikan_project/
- View the Post Amerikan on our website (searchable)
<https://mchistory.org/research/post-amerikan>

Links to pre-searched keywords (Note: The searches aren't perfect, so it is worth browsing content in addition to searching multiple keywords)

- [“Police Brutality”](#)
- [“Police Racism”](#)
- [“Black”](#)
- [“African Amerikan”](#) (“American” is spelled “Amerikan” throughout the paper)
- [“Ku Klux Klan”](#)

Books available in our Stevenson-Ives Library

Our library is non-circulating, meaning books on the shelves can be read while in the library but cannot be taken home. Links take you to the catalog entry. Books that are available online are listed in the section above, not here.

Bloomington-Normal Black History Project

[We The People Tell Our Story](#). comp. and ed. Mildred Pratt. Bloomington, IL: Bloomington-Normal Black History Project, 1987.

Cabek, Melanie, Mark D. Groover and Scott J. Wagers

[Health Care and the Wayman A.M.E. Church: historical archeology](#). Tucson, AZ: Society for Historical Archeology, 1995.

Ekberg, Carl, Anne Malone, and William Walters

[The Legacy: a survey of the historical architecture of Normal Normal, IL](#): Town of Normal, 1990

Ives, Elizabeth Stevenson, and Hildegard Dolson.

[My Brother Adlai](#). New York: Morrow, 1956. Note: She mentions employees including some represented in the oral histories.

Pratt, Mildred. [A Tribute to Love](#). Bloomington, IL: Heartland Publishing, 2002.

[A Report: survey of the Twin-City Recreation Center, Bloomington-Normal, Ill.](#)

[Bloomington,IL]: Central Illinois Committee on Community Development, 1957. McLean County Genealogical Society.

[African-American Residents of Bloomington-Normal](#), IL, 1885-1917. Normal, IL: McLean County Genealogical Society, 2002.

[Families and Cabins: archeological and historical investigations at Wessyngton Plantation](#),

[Robertson County, Tennessee](#). Normal, IL: Midwestern Archeological Research Center, Illinois State University, 1994.

Richardson, Harriet Fyffe.

[Quaker Pioneers](#). Milwaukee, WI: Press of Gillett & Co., 1940. Note: Includes information on the Duff family.

Turner, Glennette Tilley.

[The Underground Railroad in Illinois](#). Glen Ellyn, IL: Newman Educational Publishing, 2001.

Williams, Rick.

[African-American Churches in Bloomington-Normal: the development of Black Baptist, Methodists and Disciples in the 19th and early 20th centuries](#). [History Department Honors thesis] [Normal, IL.: Illinois State University, History Department], 1991.

Pantagraph Negative Collection

This collection of images from Bloomington Newspaper “The Pantagraph” records the history of Central Illinois through the work of Pantagraph photographer-reporters. The collection of negatives was donated to the McLean County Museum of History by the Pantagraph.

Because of the large number of photographs, it is broken up into four collections: [1930-1939](#), [1940-1945](#), [1946-1949](#), and [1950-1954](#), [1955-1959](#).

Links to pre-searched keywords within each collection:

- [African American \(1930-1939\)](#)
- [African American \(1940-1945\)](#)
- [African American \(1946-1949\)](#)
- [African American \(1950-1954\)](#)
- [African American \(1955-1959\)](#)

Examples of racism:

- [Blackface \(1930-1939\)](#)
- [Blackface \(1940-1945\)](#)
- [Blackface \(1946-1949\)](#)
- [Blackface \(1950-1954\)](#)
- [Blackface \(1955-1959\)](#)

Public Life in McLean County Photo Collection

Pre-searched keyword link: [African American](#)

Bloomington-Normal Black History Project Photo Collection

MCMH History Makers

Individuals recognized by the McLean County Museum of History at our annual History Makers Gala for their contributions to our community. This list highlights those involved in racial justice.

- [Caribel Washington \(2012\)](#)
- [Ruth Waddell \(2013\)](#)
- [Margot Mendoza \(2014\)](#)
- [Merlin Kennedy \(2015\)](#)
- [Jack Porter \(2016\)](#)
- [Charles and Jeanne Morris \(2017\)](#)
- [Henry Gay \(2019\)](#)
- [Charles and Willie Halbert \(2023\)](#)

Biographies of Black people featured on the Evergreen Cemetery Walk

Every year the Evergreen Cemetery Walk brings the voices of McLean County's history to life. Costumed actors portray individuals representing all walks of life from the county's past on the beautiful grounds of Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.

Name & Year featured

- [Julius Witherspoon \(1996, 2004\)](#)
- [Julia Duff \(1997, 2004\)](#)
- [George Washington Thomas \(1998\)](#)
- [Private Gus Williams \(1999\)](#)
- [Lucinda Barton \(2000\)](#)
- [Dr. Eugene Covington \(2001\)](#)
- [Julia Bee Hawkins \(2002\)](#)
- [Belle Blue Claxton \(2003, 2014\)](#)
- [Alverta Duff \(2005\)](#)
- [Eva Jones \(2006 and 2024\)](#)
- [Carter Harris \(2007\)](#)
- [Absalom Hawkins \(2008\)](#)
- [Simon Malone \(2009\)](#)
- [Willis Stearles \(2010\)](#)

- [Eliza Davis Esque \(2011\)](#)
- [Isaac Sanders \(2012\)](#)
- [Sophia Huggins \(2012 and 2024\)](#)
- [Henry Brown \(2013\)](#)
- [Ruby Edwards \(2013\)](#)
- [Matilda Calcote \(2015\)](#)
- [Ethel Murray \(2016\)](#)
- [Edward Bynum \(2017\)](#)
- [Lincoln Bynum \(2017\)](#)
- [Lue Anna Sanders Clark \(2018\)](#)
- [Louise and Napoleon Calimese \(2019\)](#)
- [Grace Huddleston Stewart \(2020\)](#)
- [William McCoslin \(2020\)](#)
- [Alverta Duff and Julia Duff \(2021\)](#)
- [Ella Lee Stokes \(2022\)](#)
- [Richard Blue \(2023\)](#)
- [Annie Ethel Jones \(2023\)](#)

Downstate Sounds

Downstate Sounds is a radio show, blog and YouTube channel by Chris Young that explores the musical past of Illinois outside of Chicagoland from the 1930s through the 1980s. Linked below are shows that focused on Black artists

- [Show # 7: Downstate Grooves, Soul & Funk](#)
- [Show #18, Soul & Funk pt. 2](#)
- [Show #26, The life and music of Delmar Brown](#)
- [Show # 40: Pre-War Blues, Ragtime & Jazz \(1924-1940\)](#)
- [Show # 41, Jesus Is On The Mainline: African-American Gospel \(1962-1983\)](#)

Social Media

If you are on **Instagram**, we tag Black history related posts with the hashtag #mcBlackHistory.

Feel free to contribute to local Black history by using that hashtag!

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/mcblackhistory/>

Some of our daily historic photo posts are on **HistoryPin**. When applicable, we like to use the Google Street View overlay where you can use a sliding bar to fade between a historic photograph and present day street views.

- [We Shall Overcome, October 1965](#)
- [Illinois Federation of Colored Women's Clubs Annual Convention, Bloomington 1918. Pictured outside Wayman AME Church at 804 N Center St.](#)
- [Black Baseball in Bloomington August 1944. Pictured at Illinois Wesleyan University](#)
- [Memorial Day 1960 African-American Legionnaires](#)

If you are on **Facebook**, you can search our past posts for “Black” or “African American” to find related contents. Below we have linked a sampling of such posts. Many more historic photographs can be found in our archival collections. Email library@mchistory.org to inquire about our historic photographic collections!

- [Mt Pisgah Baptist Church June 9, 1940](#)
- [African American youth community picnic](#)
- [African American polio fundraising ball](#)
- [Minority Voters Coalition of Bloomington-Normal](#)
- [African-American Legionnaires Memorial Day Parade 1960](#)
- [3 C Club 1973](#)
- [Bloomington-Normal Branch of the NAACP, 1944](#)
- [Southern Melodies quartet July 1940](#)
- [Simon Malone marker dedication September 18, 1982](#)
- [Twin City Recreation Center dinner January 27, 1944](#)
- [BPD at BHS May 14, 1970](#)
 - [Another from the same](#)
- [Sympathy Civil Rights picketing Downtown Bloomington, Oct. 22, 1960](#)
 - [Tighter crop](#)

Other Sources

Books available at other libraries

This is only a very short list of the resources at these institutions. For more information on these, reach out to the institutions themselves.

Illinois State University, Milner Library:

Harrison, Edgar Agustus. The Financial Status and Occupational Opportunities for Negroes in Bloomington-Normal [MS Thesis]. Normal, IL: Illinois State Normal University, 1950. Studies in Education (Normal, IL); no.128.

Phelps, Landra G.. From Negro to Black to African-American: name changes and their effect on Black residents in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois [MS Thesis]. Normal, IL: Illinois State University, 1999.

Normal Public Library:

Pirtle, Carol. Escape Betwixt Two Suns: a true tale of the underground railroad in Illinois. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000.

Bloomington Public Library:

Wells, Wyatt. The background of the Negro in McLean County [Archival material], 1940

Williams, Rick D. Black Disciples in McLean County, Illinois: a history of the Second Christian Church, Normal and the Third Christian Church, Bloomington. Normal, IL: Illinois State University, 1990.

[Bloomington Public Library Local History Research Tools](#)

- Includes links to African American Heritage by ProQuest, Black Freedom Struggles in the U.S., Black Live in America, and more.