

# ***Walking Through Black History*** ***Digital Humanities Project***

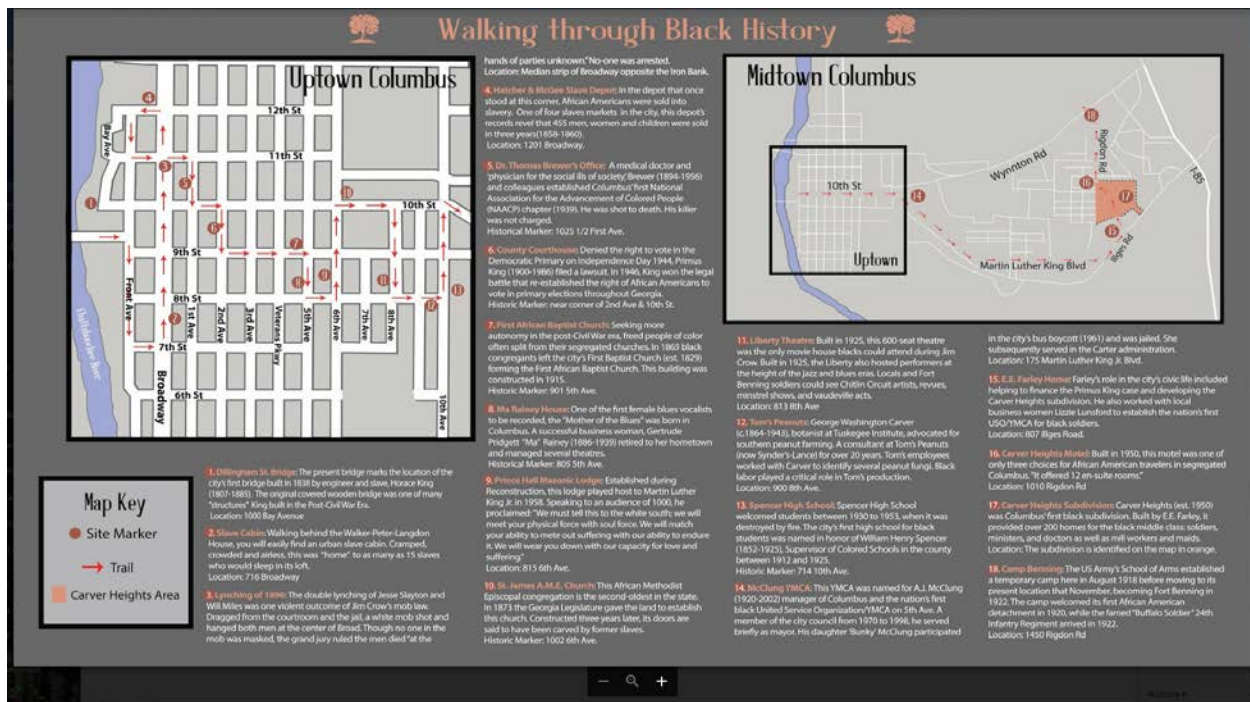
Spring 2017

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## Introduction

This project arose from a request to create a MLK Jr Black Heritage Tour for the community organization Turn Around Columbus. As we developed a map of sites we also developed entries for each site in an encyclopedia format.

The focus of the project was to illustrate African American history including four periods: Antebellum, Reconstruction, Jim Crow and Civil Rights. We focused on choosing sites that could illustrate that history most effectively, noting that the Reconstruction era is often the most challenging of the four periods in that it is short-lived with little material culture left.

Below is the introduction to the map and then the map with sites identified. After our community partner had reviewed the map they requested that we substitute the lynching we had chosen for a double lynching located on Broadway. We have included the entry for the original lynching as students were not able to develop a new extended narrative by the end of the semester.

## **MLK Jr Heritage Tour**

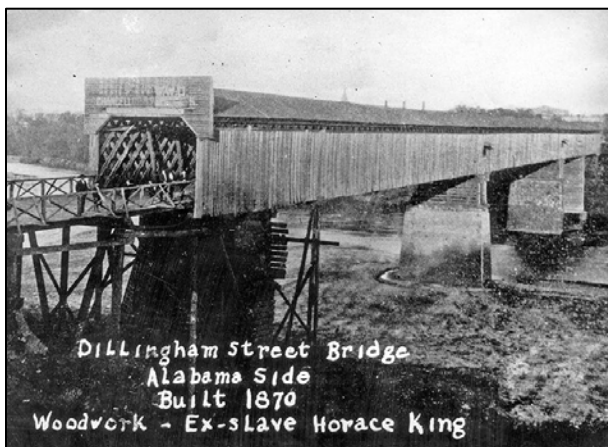
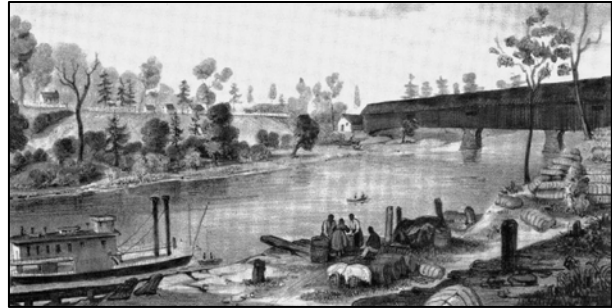
African Americans have planned, built, educated, entertained and shaped Columbus since its establishment in 1827. Urban slavery thrived in this Antebellum river town located in the region's cotton belt. Many slaves were apprenticed to local butchers, carpenters, masons, and tailors. Two of Columbus' slaves include Horace King and "Blind Tom" Wiggins. King became one of the foremost architects in the region and bought his own freedom. "Blind Tom" was a musical prodigy and likely autistic savant. Described as America's last legal slave, Wiggins generated a large fortune for his owner performing on tour. He remained a 'ward' of his former owners until his death. The 1860 census reveals that slaves made up 37 percent of the city's population. City tax records indicate that the community's 3,265 slaves were valued at just over \$4 million.

Columbus was one of the Confederacy's most important centers of industry, and Columbus' slave population played a central role in its economic life. In the Reconstruction period (1865-1871), the Columbus Freedmen's Bureau mediated wages between owner and former slaves. African American women and children sought new opportunities through education, the creation of social organizations, and in politics. However, by the 1890s, blacks in Georgia and in Columbus, had been completely disenfranchised. Racial segregation in public facilities established by a series of "Jim Crow" laws, enshrined the region's ideology of white supremacy.

While Georgia's rural African American population declined, between the 1890s and 1940s, thousands of African Americans migrated to Columbus. They created mixed residential and commercial neighborhoods such as Liberty. The 1940s saw the successful challenge to black disenfranchisement and by 1950, blacks and whites voted together. In the post World War Two era, the first African American suburb of Carver Heights. Both men and women were involved in the establishment of influential black institutions, and led the fight for civil rights in the city.

## 1. Dillingham Street Bridge

A long, wooden covered bridge, established the first connection between Georgia and Alabama in 1838. Built by Horace King (1807-1885), he was a man born into slavery in South Carolina, King was a true innovator, using new interlocking prefabricated construction methods to create the structure. This bridge was one of 125 that designed and built by King in the southeast.



It is rumored that the Dillingham Street Bridge was erected in the spot that James Oglethorpe, the founder and first British Governor of Georgia, who met with the Creek Indians to sign a treaty of cooperation.

Visitors to Columbus would have walked through its hot, bustling dark wooden covered bridge from across the United States and Europe. Columbus was a

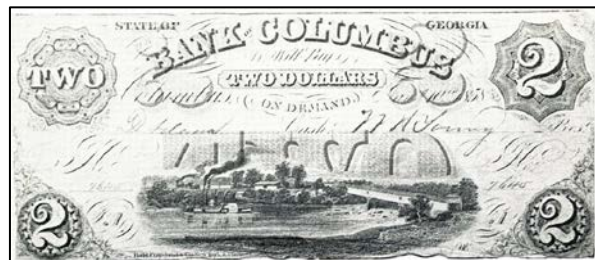
stopping point on the American 'Grand Tour.' This bridge was an integral part of cotton and slave trades.

King's bridge graced the \$2 Bank of Columbus. After the Battle of Columbus, the bridge was left in ruins, but was rebuilt by none other than King himself, whence the *Daily Sun* of Columbus wrote,

"The well known character and reputation of Horace King, the builder, is a sufficient guarantee that the work will be executed in the best and most efficient manner."  
(November 1866)

King was an innovative structural engineer, designing the now famous floating spiral staircase at the old Columbus Courthouse. He went on to be elected twice as a Republican representative in the Alabama House of Representatives during

Reconstruction, from 1870 to 1874. King was a man of great influence in Columbus and



LaGrange where he lived until his death in 1885.

Location: over Chattahoochee River from Dillingham Street, Columbus, GA to Dillingham Street, Phenix City, AL

*Submission composed by Austin Chesteen, April 9, 2017*

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Bunn, Mike. Well Worth Stopping to See: Antebellum Columbus, Georgia, Through the Eyes of Travellers. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2016.

Gibbons, Faye. *Horace King: Bridges to Freedom*. Crane Hill Publishers, 2002.

Lupold, John S., and Thomas L. French, Jr. *Bridging Deep South Rivers: The Life and Legend of Horace King*. 1st ed. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press in cooperation with the Historic Chattahoochee Commission and the Troop County Historical Society, 2004.

Whitehead, Margaret Laney, and Barbara Bogart. *City of Progress: A History of Columbus, Georgia*. Columbus, GA: Cosco Press, 1979.



## **2. Slave Cabin**

Hot, dark and cramped, this slave cabin, located behind the Walter-Peters-Langdon house, was home for between 10 and 15 slaves. Sleeping in the loft, slaves would leave this building to work in every part of Columbus' economy. Indeed, slaves made up around 30% of the city's population by 1860.



In the day urban enslaved people worked as domestic and industrial laborers. Enslaved people were apprenticed to butchers, carpenters, saddle makers and masons. Enslaved people in Columbus built the brick roads we walk upon, and the bridges, homes and factories we still see today, Slaves would transport goods between rural and urban areas. They worked in shipyards constructing river boards, they loaded and unloaded goods between the docks and river steamers travelling up the Chattahoochee River. Indeed, most types of work that people could do, slaves were pressed into that work too. Owners “hired out” these skilled slaves by renting them to others for a fee or daily rate. Sometimes slaves hired themselves out and though most of that income would be given to the owner, laborers often kept a portion, and could live on their own and in a few cases, they could purchase their freedom. Indeed, Horace King, a structural engineer born into slavery purchased his freedom having designed and constructed numerous bridges across the Chattahoochee River.

As long as there was slavery there were slaves that worked in the urban sphere.

This slave cabin was moved from the property of Johanna Lange on the west side of Second Avenue and 13th Street before it was raised to the ground.

Location: 716 Broadway Avenue

### ***References and Further Reading***

Heicht, Callie 2017, Historic Columbus Foundation. E-mail correspondence with author..

Harris, Rogers 1992, *Our Town: An Introduction to the History of Columbus, Georgia*, Columbus, GA.

Picture courtesy of Historic Columbus Foundation.



**3. Lynching (note the map indicates a double lynching on Broadway) the materials below were developed to recognize a different lynching.**

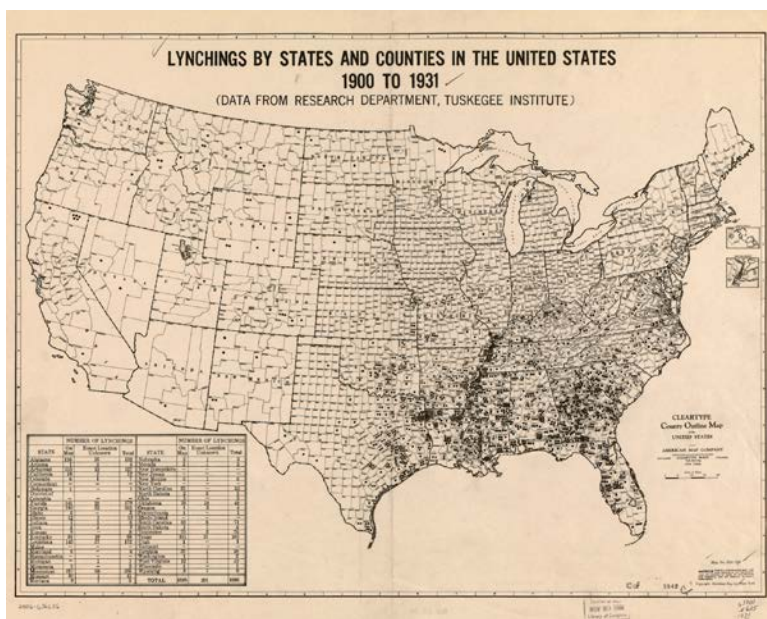
***Street Car Lynching***

The extent to which racial violence was practiced in America is difficult to establish prior to 1882. At that time the *Chicago Tribune* began monitoring lynchings. For the next 80 years (until 1968) they recorded 4,743 persons as been lynched in the United States.

The term lynching does not just include death by hanging. It came to include beating, burning, drowning, shooting, and torture. Though many racial killings went unreported in remote locales, those that were documented reveal that more than 70 percent of the victims – 3,446 – were African-Americans. During these same years, 531 persons were reported lynched in Georgia, which ranks second only to Mississippi with 581 victims of lynchings.

There is both a history and a geography to southern lynching. Between 1882 and 1930, when the vast majority of lynchings in the Deep South occurred, the greatest concentration was centered on the lower Piedmont region, known as the Black Belt. Dominated by cotton plantations, this broad band running from Georgia through Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana so over 80 percent of the victims of lynchings who were black.

Columbus is located in the middle of this Black Belt. Research has shown that southwest Georgia and southeast Alabama running along the Chattahoochee River were amongst the worst areas for mob violence directed against African Americans. Indeed, this region ranks second only to the Mississippi Delta.



One of the few documented lynchings during slavery occurred in Columbus. A slave named Jarrett was accused of attempted rape of a rural white woman in August 1851. Brought to the city, the town's leading citizens were convinced that

Jarret was innocent. However, a rural mob arrived, took him by force and hung him.

This lynching established a pattern that continued through the city's history. Specifically, a black man was arrested, tried and convicted, but lynched anyway. Lynching mobs often came into the city, revealing a tension between rural and urban whites. It also revealed that though residents may have rejected mob violence they did little to stop it. Finally, most lynchings in the South occurred during hot weather.

1869: Jesse Layton and Will Miles, double lynching on Broadway at Twelfth Street.

1900: Simon Addams whose weighted body was thrown into the river.

1910: Alfred Phelts (white jailor) was shot to death defending the jail from a mob searching to lynch Henry Taylor, a black man charged with assaulting a white woman. Hailed as a martyr in newspapers across the nation, the city issued a resolution condemning mob violence.

1912: T. Z. McElhany. Acquitted that day in the accidental shooting of a 12-year-old white child, Teasy McElhany (African American, aged 14), was kidnapped from the court by twenty-five men. Hijacking a streetcar at the corner of 10th Street and Second Avenue, they took T.Z. to the end of the line at the base of Wynn's Hill. They riddled his body with bullets. Two men were tried, neither convicted.

Submitted by Amanda Rees, April 21, 2017.

### *References and Further Reading*

Stewart E. Tolnay and E.M. Beck. *Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings*. University of Illinois Press, 1992.

Wynn, Billy. Lynching on Wynn's Hill. *Southern Exposure*, Fall and Winter 1987, pp. 17-24. (originally published in the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer)

Wynn, Billy. Racial Violence in the Chattahoochee Valley. Speech delivered at the Columbus Public Library on May 3, 2007 as part of the "Red Clay, White Water, and Blues" local history series.

#### **4. Hatcher & McGehee Slave Depot**

Slave trading in Columbus, Georgia was centered around four primary companies: Harrison & Pitts, S. Ogletree, A. K. Ayer, and Hatcher & McGehee,

The Company of A. K. Ayer was located on the block of Broadway located between 10th and 11th Streets with the auction house at the Loeb and Kern's corner (approximately at 9th Street and First Avenue).

Hatcher & McGehee was owned by Samuel J Hatcher, a native of Virginia, and Allen Clements McGehee, a native of Jones County, Georgia. This company was said to have been the last to import slaves to the city. The Hatcher & McGehee Slave Depot was located on the northwest corner of Broadway & 12th Street, Slave depots functioned as active trading sites and as detention facilities where the enslaved were held captive until they were auctioned. The slave ledger now archived at Columbus State University indicates that over 450 slaves were sold by the company between April 1858 and April 1860 with an average price of \$1200 (adjusted for inflation this would be over \$33,000 in 2017).

Between 1790 and 1850 slave labor increased in Georgia as cotton prices increased, cotton demand grew as mill manufacturing developed. Upland cotton grown in the region's Black Belt demanded a greater slave workforce than sea island cotton grown on Georgia's coastline, and rice cultivation was established. At the time of the Civil War, nearly 90,000 enslaved African Americans made up almost half the entire population of the lower Chattahoochee River Valley of Georgia and Alabama, and though many worked in agriculture, urban slavery also played an important part in the region's economy.

Federal laws prohibiting the African slave trade and slaveholders were reluctant to give slaves their freedom. Slave working conditions deteriorated and both enslaved men and women sought to resist by absconding. The city's local newspaper the *Columbus Enquirer* regularly published notices of "runaway" slaves. Indeed, escaped slave notices and advertisements offer a powerful window on the lives, relationships and conditions of enslaved men and women in the community.

Description of runaway slaves typically included age, color, weight, height and occasionally other identifying features. The owners name was also included. This slave notice from the *Columbus Enquirer* listed Morris, twenty-six years old, mulatto, 150 or 160 pounds, with straight hair, and a front tooth missing. The notice included that Morris was good cook and house servant, and the property of H. L. Whitehurst. (14 January 1858)

Slaves often ran from violence or sudden changes in the slaveholder family such as the death of the owner. Others left in search of loved ones. This situation was poignantly captured in William B. Robinson's notice of a newly purchased slave.

"Hartwell is twenty-eight years old. . . .He is somewhere in the vicinity of Columbus, as he has wife at Col. Seaborn, and does not want to leave her to go with me to Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He has lived in Columbus for the last fifteen years." (15th March 1853)

Location: Northwest corner of Broadway & 12th Street

#### ***4. First African Baptist Church***

Ephesus Baptist Church, now First Baptist, was of a mixed congregation before 1840, with slaves and masters having been worshipping together for the first 21 years of its existence. The Ephesus Baptist congregation outgrew their old building, and constructed a new sanctuary in 1840, the old wooden building was utilized by the slave and freedmen congregation. There is debate on the definite date of the founding of First African Baptist Church, considering that it was illegal for colored freepersons or slaves to manage their own separate religious institutions until the conclusion of the Civil War.



The rationale behind creating a separate institution is unclear, however the Southern Baptist Convention, with First Baptist being a member church, in the 1850's became increasingly white, and would cement action by member churches to execute the segregation of congregations.

The original building was destroyed by fire in 1870, and another was built in 1881 in the same location, and for eleven years the congregation received permission to worship in the Muscogee County Courthouse. The building that sits today at 901 5th Avenue is not the original location of the church, but the building we see today was constructed in 1915, and has remained virtually unchanged, despite damage from a fire in 1977. Many of the city's most outstanding persons of color, stretching from the Antebellum period all the way through the Civil Rights era have attended services at First African Baptist, including local integration leaders including Dr. Thomas Brewer, and the famous 'Mother of the Blues', Ma Rainey, was baptized there.



Churches in Columbus during the Reconstruction era were an integral part of moving Columbus forward, particularly in local politics and creating outreach programs to be enjoyed by all.

Location: 901 5th Avenue

*Submission composed by Austin Chesteen, April 9, 2017*

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"First African Baptist Church Celebrates 156 Years of Service." *Columbus Times*, August 13, 1996, A2 sec.

Gierer, Larry. *"First African celebrates 175 years."* *Ledger Enquirer: Religion*, July 31, 2015. Accessed March 7, 2017. <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/living/religion/article30075246.html>.

*The One Hundred Forty-First Anniversary Program of First African Baptist Church.* Columbus, GA: First African Baptist Church, 1981.

### **5. St. James AME Church**

Prior to 1875, the building that houses the St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church was known as the Girard Colored Mission and it dates to 1863. In 1875, following an act of Georgia Legislature, the building was given to the African Methodist Church. It is the second oldest A.M.E Church in Georgia. The first Cathedral construction was completed in 1876 and the ornately carved front doors, built by slaves, are the oldest parts of the church and are a reminder of the history of strength and perseverance behind the congregation. The church has undergone many renovations that tell a narrative of the church. In 1886,



Reverend Larry Thomas oversaw the construction of the bell tower, which still stands today as a symbol of the Church's concrete mission to serve its congregation and community. Reverend Harold I. Bearden, who served from 1940 to 1948, installed the pipe organ that is still heard during church services today. This pipe organ is also the oldest in the state. In 1988, St. James purchased property for a new parsonage, and by 1996, the conversion of the old parsonage into an administrative building was completed under the leadership of Reverend Scottie Swinney. The building now houses offices, a conference room, music room, clothing and food bank, and archives room, which collectively aid in the fulfillment of the church ministry. In 2004, St. James erected an Elevator Tower to accommodate all members of the congregation. The building includes classrooms, accessible bathrooms, a stewardess room, and an elevator that services the Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary. To commemorate this achievement, a time capsule was deposited behind the Elevator Tower cornerstone to be opened in 2054. On September 29, 1980, the church was listed on the National Historic Register.

Location: 1002 6th Avenue

#### ***References and Further Reading***

Bishop, Sanford, In Recognition of St. James AME Church's 150th Anniversary. November 15, 2013. <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2013/11/15/extensions-of-remarks-section/article/E1679-1>

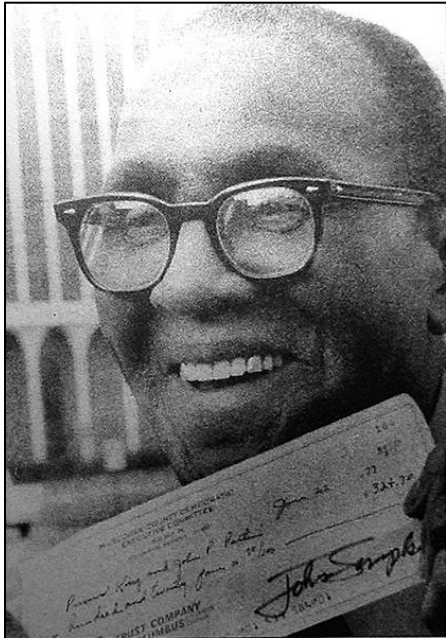
Grant, Judith, *Columbus Georgia*, IL: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.



Columbus Black Heritage Georgia Visitors Guide: *A Retrospective Look at the Development of Columbus, Georgia's Black Community*,  
<http://creativefolk.com/travel/pdf/columbus.ga.pdf>

## **6. County Courthouse**

Primus King (1900 – 1986) was a man with no formal education who ran a successful business for 30 years and was the central key figure in the fight for voting rights for African Americans in the state of Georgia. Primus King was born on February 5, 1900 in Hatchechubbee in Russell County, Alabama, to Ed and Lucy King. The King family moved to Columbus when Primus was a young boy. Young Primus never went to school, instead began working as a child to help his family. There weren't many job options for African Americans in the segregated south. Primus worked many jobs, as a water boy bringing water to the workers that were building a cotton mill, to being a butler and chauffeur for wealthy white people in Columbus. During these years working for someone else and seeing the ill treatment of African Americans by his and other bosses, King decided to be his own boss. So with the money he had been saving, he bought the Barber Shop on 17th Street for 8.00. Without an education and not knowing how to cut hair, he ran a successful business for the next 30 years until he sold the barber shop and retired 1963 he sold the barber shop and retired.



The experiences he endured growing up during the years of segregation and oppression towards the African American community in Columbus would later cause King to volunteer to help Dr. Thomas Brewer and the others in demanding the right to vote for African Americans. King remembered one such experience he later recounted in an interview in 1979, that stood out when he decided to volunteer. King had went over to the restaurant called Jimbo's to get some food but was kicked out for being black, and was told that if he wanted food he had to go around to the side window. When civil rights leader Dr. Thomas Brewer and the Columbus Chapter of the NAACP needed someone attempt to vote in the Democratic Party's primary at the Muscogee County Courthouse on July 4, 1944, a significant date due to the anniversary of the United States fight for independence, King said "I

will".

Being denied his right to vote on July 4, 1944, King with the help of Dr. Thomas Brewer and the Columbus Chapter of the NAACP fought using the "law" to win the right for all African Americans. They decided to sue the Democratic Party for \$5,000. In September 1945 the arguments in King v. Chapman began in a federal district court in Macon. Kings lawyers argued that their client's right to vote under the Fourteenth, Fifteenth,

and Seventeenth amendment had been violated. King and his lawyers had won the case but the case ended up being appealed. On March 6, 1946, in the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, Louisiana, Judge Samuel H. Sibley asked him “Primus, do you want the right and privilege to vote? Do you want \$5,000? PK said he stood there with tears running down his cheeks and said “Your Honor, I want the right and privilege to vote for my people”. This two year court battle was not just important for the African American community in Columbus, but for the entire state. African Americans were now finally had the right to vote in the state of Georgia.

For years to follow Primus King would tell young African Americans 18 and up to register and vote. “Cause without a ballot you become a slave to the man with it. “That is the weapon you got, it was given to you”.

Location: 100 10th Street



*Submission composed by Charles Elliott, April 10, 2017*

### *References and Further Reading*

Lloyd, Craig, *Primus E. King 1900-1986* (2016), <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/primus-e-king-1900-1986>

Grant, Judith. *Columbus, Georgia*. Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2000

December 2000. "Reverend Primus King." *Reflection*. Preservation Division Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Davis, Paula A., *Interview of Primus King* (JULY 16, 1979) General Oral History Collections, Columbus State University Archives Columbus, Georgia

*Breaking the White Primary: The Primus King Case*.  
<https://library.columbusstate.edu/displays/Primus.phphistory>) (Accessed March 2, 2017.)

### **9. Prince Hall Masonic Lodge**

In the late eighteenth century, noted abolitionist Prince Hall (1735–1738–1807) led a group of free black men to petition and become members of a Masonic lodge attached to an Irish regiment stationed in Boston, Massachusetts. They were initiated into Masonry by members of the lodge but they sought to create their own lodge. Thus Prince Hall Freemasonry was born. By 1784, the group had developed and founded their very own lodge. The first Prince Hall Masonic Lodge established in Columbus was Bradwell Lodge no. 4 on June 24th, 1871.

Since 1871 seven additional lodges, as well as three Chapters of the Order of Eastern Star,

have been established in Columbus. Many pillars of the community have belonged to Prince Hall Masonic bodies in the Columbus area. In 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to over 1000 people at this lodge on 6th Avenue, proclaiming: “We must tell this to the white south; we will meet your physical force with soul force. We will match your



ability to mete out suffering with our ability to endure it. We will wear you down with our capacity for love and suffering.” (Image 1 “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Columbus, Georgia on July 1, 1958 at the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge”) The Prince Hall Masons are the oldest and largest group of Masons of African origin in the world. Today there are forty Grand Lodges of Prince Hall Freemasonry in the United States, Canada, the Bahamas, and Liberia. These Grand



Lodges preside over more than 5,000 lodges. All of them claim descent from the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts which is traced back to the African Lodge No. 459.

Location: 815 6th Avenue

*Submission composed by Zachary Edrington, April 11, 2017*

*References and Further Reading*

Columbus State University Archives, Prince Hall Freemasonry Collection (MC 356).

Swanson, Abigail, *Prince Hall Masons*. <http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/prince-hall-masons-1784>

## **8. Gertrude "Ma" Rainey Home**

Gertrude "Ma" Rainey's (1886-1939) home is a two-story wooden frame upper and lower porches in 1920. Black middle class neighborhood close to the black commerce district. This is the only known house that is still standing to have been bought and occupied by "Ma" Rainey. "Ma" Rainey bought this house for her mother, Ella Pridgett, and financed its expansion so that her mother could have family come over and visit. Her house serves



as a testimony to not only Ma Rainey but to everything she valued in life: community, family, and music. Known as the "Mother of Blues," She was known for her remarkable vocal performances. From a family of singers Rainey began touring in vaudeville and minstrel shows. Rainey performed in numerous venues all across the East, South and Midwest. She played a crucial role in connecting the less polished, male-dominated country blues and the female-centered urban blues popular in the 1920s. She joined paramount in 1923 and began recording her own records. A few of her early discs such as Bo-weavil Blues (1923) and Moonshine Blues (1923) soon expanded her reputation beyond the South. Her songs and vocal style reveal a deep connection to many of the problems endured by African Americans such as the pain of jealousy, poverty, sexual abuse, and loneliness of sharecroppers and southern blacks. These were topics that many people did not openly talk about at the time. She retired from her singing career in 1935 due to a change in musical tastes and the Great Depression. Rainey became more active in the Columbus community after her retirement and joined the Friendship Baptist Church.

Location: 805 5th Avenue

*Submission composed by Devonte Hall on April 18th 2017*

### *References and Further Reading*

Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon, 1998).

Daphne D. Harrison, *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988).



National Register of Historic Places, 1992. Gertrude "MA":Rainey Pridgett House,  
Columbus Georgia, National Register #1024-0018  
<https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/50651250-c13e-4281-900d-5fd6d2ffc609>  
accessed 4.16.2018

## **9. Liberty Theatre**

The Liberty Theater first opened in Columbus in late April, 1925. The theatre was the only one in Columbus that African Americans could attend during the Jim Crow era. Roy E. Martin, a prominent white businessman, owned the theater chain. The theatre was one of the few cultural



centers for the black community in Columbus besides the churches. The theatre is a brick building located at 813 8th Avenue and contained a full stage where plays could be performed by local groups, a balcony and a stage loft. The Liberty Theatre had a total of 600 seats including those in the balcony, which means that, for a while, this theatre had having the largest seating capacity of any motion-picture theater in Columbus. During the silent movie era, local bands provided entertainment. The Liberty Theatre also hosted vaudeville and minstrel shows. Many remarkable blues and jazz performers played at the Liberty Theatre, but none were more famous than Columbus native, Gertrude Pridgett "Ma" Rainey, who achieved national recognition as the Mother of the Blues and a prominent figure in the African American community. The end of segregation combined with the decline of road shows, the Liberty Theatre to gradually fade in popularity and eventually closed in 1974. Martin donated the Liberty Theatre to a group of William H. Spencer High School alumni called the Owlettes. The Liberty Theatre reopened in 1997.

Location: 813 8th Avenue

*Submission composed by Devonte Hall on April 18th 2017*

### *References and Further Reading*

Cyriaque, Jeanne. Reflections: African American Theatres in Georgia. Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network. Vol 1, No 3. 2011

<https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset?assetID=f19db6a1-4d82-4788-82bc-7050bb5b1fe3>

### ***11. Dr. Thomas Brewer's Office***

Dr. Thomas H. Brewer (1894 - 1956), was a medical doctor for the African American community of Columbus, a civil rights leader, and a “physician for the social ills of society”. (Brewer’s Legacy, 1989). Brewer was born in Saco, Alabama and graduated from Selma University and from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. He moved to Columbus, Georgia in 1920 where he set up his medical practice in downtown Columbus on 1st Avenue. During the 1920’s and up till his death in 1956,



Brewer was one of Columbus’s most influential civil rights leaders and chief spokesman in the community for African Americans fight for equality and against segregation. His leadership won battle after battle with the city such as desegregating the Columbus Police Department by getting the first four black police officers in the department.

One of the most important battles he and other civil rights leader fought for and won was voting rights for African Americans in Columbus in the King v. Chapman case known also as the Primus King Case. They challenged the Democratic Party for refusing to allow Primus King the right to vote in Columbus, Georgia on July 4, 1944. The case was fought in the courts for two years. Winning this case was a huge win for the African American community, not just for Columbus, but for the entire state of Georgia. This win in court won the right for all African Americans in the state to vote.

Brewer also was one of the leaders in establishing Columbus’s first NAACP Chapter in 1938. Other accomplishments in his fight for equality for African Americans in Columbus; convinced the County Commission to build a swimming pool for blacks, The Manly Taylor Recreation Center; the establishment of the Fourth Street Library (Mildred T. Library); Brewer along with eight others persuaded the County Commission to obtain a park for blacks, Carver Park opened in 1952; petitioned to open up the Lions Club on Victory Drive to blacks. This opened the club to black golfers

After his death he is still remembered in the community for what he accomplished for the African American community. For his leadership in civil rights and contributions to the African American community in gaining equality such as the right to vote in the State of Georgia along with many other contributions. In 1989 the Mayor of Columbus,

Georgia along with the Governor issued a Proclamation making November 19, 1989, as “Dr. Thomas H. Brewer Sr. Day.” This coincided with the three day memorial in remembrance of his achievements towards first citizenship rights for African Americans in the state of Georgia, and the unveiling of the Historical Marker outside his office on 1st Avenue on November 18, 1989. Brewer was also recognized as one of the “100 People to Remember” in a special edition of the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer in 2000.



*Submission composed by Charles Elliott, April 10, 2017*

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## ***12. Tom Huston Peanut Company***

Though not born and never living in Columbus, George Washington Carver, the Director of Agricultural Research at Tuskegee Institution), had a direct impact on the life on Columbus.

Carver had close friends in the black community in Columbus, including J.D. Davis, a teacher at Claflin and J.J. Lewis, editor of the *Columbus Advocate* and president of the Columbus Negro Business League. Carver worked to encourage students to apply for higher education at Tuskegee. One of Carver's remarkable impacts on the city was economic. This came about when he, contracting with Tom Huston and the fledgling Tom Huston Peanut Company (now Tom's Foods, Inc.) to develop marketable peanut products.

Beginning in 1924 as Hudson was developing his famous for cellophane-packaged roasted peanuts. Carver often visited Huston's office and home, becoming great friends. Indeed, Huston offered him a job in 1929, Carver declined saying:

"I, with others, am clannish enough to want my people to receive credit for my work. I do not want my work to be swallowed up and lost to the race which I belong. Even though I personally may not receive a dollar of it for myself, that will come to somebody by and by."

Carver had given a similar response to Thomas Edison a decade earlier. Though many African Americans found Carver and his boss Booker T. Washington too accommodationist, Carver recognized his role and reputation in the black community.

1939 saw Carver's last appearance in Columbus when Lewis and a group of white business leaders asked him to speak at Spencer High School to cool tense race relations and labor unrest at the *Tom Huston Peanut Company*. Blacks males were threatening to strike in support of female workers there. Reflecting later on his trip he said:

"I have never heard a finer lot of addresses... it shows what can be done when representative people of both races get together. There is absolutely no need for misunderstandings and race riots and all sorts of disagreeable things. Columbus has set the pace for other sections."

George Washington Carver died in 1943, and his impact on the city was recognized in the naming of Carver High School and Carver Heights, this latter a residential neighborhood in east Columbus.

*Submission composed by Amanda Rees April 24th 2017.*

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## ***7. Spencer High School***

Born on September 21, 1857, in Columbus, Georgia, William Henry Spencer was a prominent advocate for equal education in Columbus at the end of nineteenth century until his death in 1925. He attended Columbus' Claflin School, where as a student he taught a class. He started as a teacher in Harris County, then taught in Girard, now Phenix City, before he became a teacher in Columbus in 1875. He became superintendent of the county's "colored schools" in 1885. Spencer was educated in a time in Columbus when African American children did not have extensive access to public schools. To accommodate, African American churches opened their doors to help educate the African American young. The first Spencer High School was built on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 8<sup>th</sup> Street in 1930.

Spencer High was the city's first and for a time only black high school during racial segregation.

From the 1960s through the 1990s Columbus schools were embroiled in a battle to compel black and white children to share the same classrooms. The litigation ended in 1997. The school has since moved three times, the last in 1978 when it opened at 4340 Victory Drive.

Location: 714 10th Avenue.

*Submission composed by Amanda Rees, April 30, 2017*

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#### ***14. A.J. McClung YMCA***

Arthur Joseph "A J" McClung (1912-2002) used the YMCA as a tool to engage, educate, and enrich African American youth, laying a strong foundation for their future endeavors.

McClung, Columbus native and son of a former slave, believed in the importance of all people to reach their full potential. He graduated from Tuskegee Institute and later studied at both the Columbus University (New York) and George Williams College (Williams Bay, Wisconsin). When the United Services Organization (USO) expanded their efforts to USO sites for African American service members the former high school teach and coach trained to become a program director at Columbia University.

After an initial assignment managing an African American USO in Panama City, Florida, he moved to Columbus, Georgia to manage a newly constructed African American USO on Fifth Avenue. McClung worked to make it a home away from home for African American service members providing talent shows, musical programs, movies, and other entertainment. He also took work home with him as his Fourth Avenue home was often filled with young soldiers enjoying a home cook meal.

After a short detour to a USO at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas, he returned in 1954 to accept a position as the Executive Director at the Ninth Street YMCA. McClung and realtor E. E. Farley, were charter members the Lambda Iota Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. which had been established May 14, 1945, in Columbus. Both were politically active during the civil rights era, playing a pivotal role in quelling racial unrest in the early 1970s. McClung, the first African American to serve on the Public Safety Board, was instrumental in the 1970 consolidation of the city and county governments.

After Mayor J.R. Allen was killed in a tragic plane crash, McClung was the first African-American to serve as mayor in a major Southern city in 1973 (for 52 ½ days).. All together he served the residents of Columbus for almost 30 years.

Columbus erected a new YMCA on Brookhaven Boulevard (later named Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard) in 1965. That facility was later renamed to recognize his life of service to the YMCA and the community. Because he was instrumental in bringing the annual Morehouse-Tuskegee football game to Columbus, Memorial Stadium was renamed the A J McClung Memorial Stadium.



*Submission composed by Joyce Wade, April 1, 2017.*

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### ***15. E.E. Farley***

Edwin Edward Farley (c. 1902 – 1956) was a successful Columbus realtor and developer with the assistance of his wife, Ella. That subdivision of more than 200 lots allowed African American veterans and active duty service members the opportunity to use their earned military benefits to purchase and or build homes in a



segregated Columbus. Businesses, as well as residents, began moving from the traditional downtown area to the suburbs after World War I. Farley was no exception, moving from his home in the former heart of the African American community at 934 Fifth Avenue since 1930 to the new home he built on the edge of his development at 807 Illges Road in 1954. Farley died of a heart attack in late 1956 and his wife continued their business until selling it in 1971.

He was very active within the local community and his memberships within the local African American fraternal and societies gave him access to other influential civil rights leaders such as Dr. Thomas H Brewer, Primus King, and A. J. McClung. His support for the local African American YMCA began in the mid-1920s and he was instrumental in the funding of critical 1925 improvements to the 5th Avenue YMCA. His personal appeal to the wealthy African American Columbus business woman, Elizabeth “Lizzie” Lunsford yielded \$15,000 of the \$20,000 needed to fund the 1941 African American USO. Farley and J. A. Davis served as executives of that organization. Farley, Brewer, and other prominent local African Americans were committee members orchestrating the annual football classic held at the A. J. McClung Memorial Stadium between Tuskegee and Morehouse since 1936. Insert picture of 934 5th Avenue house here with citation here as figure 2] Text for image 2: Figure 2 934 5th Avenue, the late Victorian Eastlake house on the life, was the Farley residence between 1930 and 1954.

*Submission composed by Joyce Wade, April 3, 2017 Insert Citations here:*

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## ***16. Carver Heights Motel***

African American motel constructed in 1950 to cater to travelers in segregated Columbus, Georgia.

The Carver Heights Motel was constructed in 1950 in a segregated Columbus, Georgia. That year, real estate developer E. E. Farley began developing an African American subdivision of 207 lots in

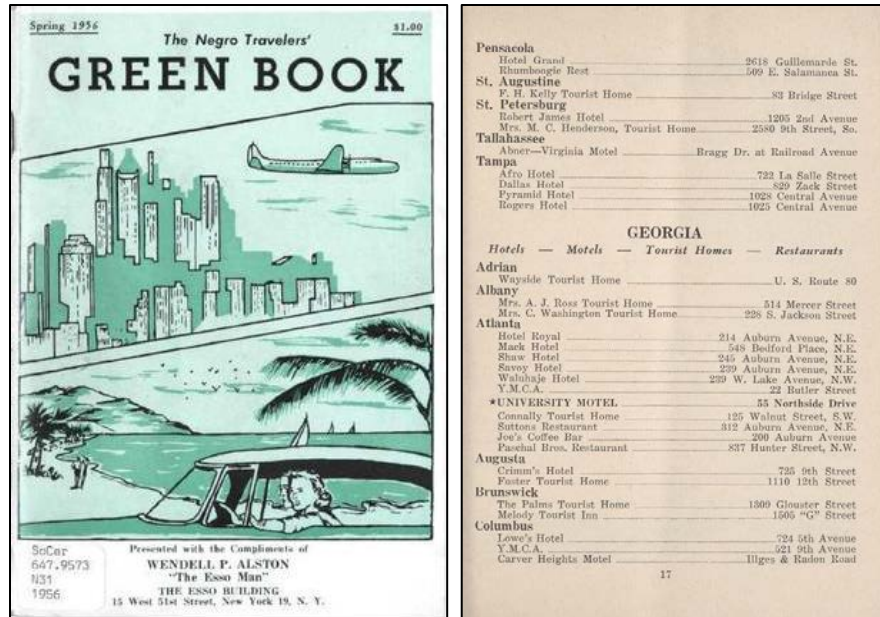


Columbus. Five of those contiguous lots became a small triangular commercial district on the western boundary of the subdivision at the intersection of Rigdon Road and Illges Road. It was soon the home of the small Carver Heights Motel offering African Americans' 12 small ensuite rooms when traveling in the segregated South. Guests included not only vacationers but many African American entertainers in Columbus to perform at such venues as the Liberty Theater, auditoriums in the Sconiers or Odum buildings, or the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge.

The Carver Heights Motel was the third location in Columbus to provide lodging for African Americans. The other two were the Lowe's Hotel at 724 5th Avenue and the African American YMCA a short distance away at 521 9th Street, both in the downtown commercial African American section of Columbus. The owners of the Carver Heights Motel may not have nationally advertised their existence to African American travelers until they published an advertisement in the 1956 Negro Motorist Green Book. That initial listing gave the address as "Illges and Radon (vice Rigdon) Road"

Jim Crow laws across the south coupled with an emerging and more mobile African American middle class lead Victor Hugo Green to begin publishing the Negro Travelers' Green Book in 1936. That guide, with information organized by state and city, allowed travelers to locate relatively friendly access to lodging, food, and other necessary services. The initial volumes were focused on the New York area but soon covered much of the nation. Soon after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, publication ceased in 1967, perhaps as travel became less challenging for African Americans during the transition to a more integrated nation. By 1975 the motel's 12 small ensuite rooms were already being considered for repurposing with plans for one half to become a restaurant and the other half to become a beauty/barber shop. Only the plans for a barber shop on one end and a beauty shop on the other were fulfilled.





**“Figure 1: 1956 Negro Travelers’ Green Book”**

*Submission composed by Joyce Wade, April 3, 2017*

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### ***16. Carver Heights Subdivision***

First African American subdivision in Columbus, providing homes for teachers, minister, military, mill workers, and maids beginning in 1950.

Edwin Edward Farley's Carver Heights subdivision became reality when the plans were filed for record on April 13, 1950. Those plans revealed the extent of his dream, 207 plots of land for African Americans in a segregated Columbus. African Americans were unable to purchase homes in many areas and if purchases were made, new home owners may have crosses burned on their lawns or be bombed to force them out as occurred on January 8, 1958 to four families in the 2600 block of Fourth Avenue, Columbus, according to an FBI report of January 7, 1959. Many of the 100,000 African Americans trained at Fort Benning returned when the war ended. They now qualified for home loans guaranteed by the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. Later changes in veteran benefits extended the loans to 30 years and increasing the VA guaranty to 60% of the loan amount, making the loans more appealing to veterans as well as active duty military. Veterans were marrying, beginning families, and seeking housing in the post war period. They would have the opportunity to build a safe community for their families in this development. Soon those 200+ houses would be home to the families of teachers, veterans who became part of the post-war labor force, active duty military members stationed at Fort Benning, ministers, and employees in the local businesses and factories. Within the first several years, roughly 20% of homeowners were identified in the local City Directories as members of the United States Army. Farley and his wife Ella built a new home for themselves at 807 Illges Road in 1954 as they too left the



decaying downtown area for the suburbs.

Five contiguous lots became a small commercial area which soon contained the Carver Heights Motel.

Those 12 small rooms offered African American travelers lodging in the segregated South. Guests also included African American entertainers performing at such venues as the Liberty Theater, auditoriums in the Sconiers or Odum buildings, or the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge.

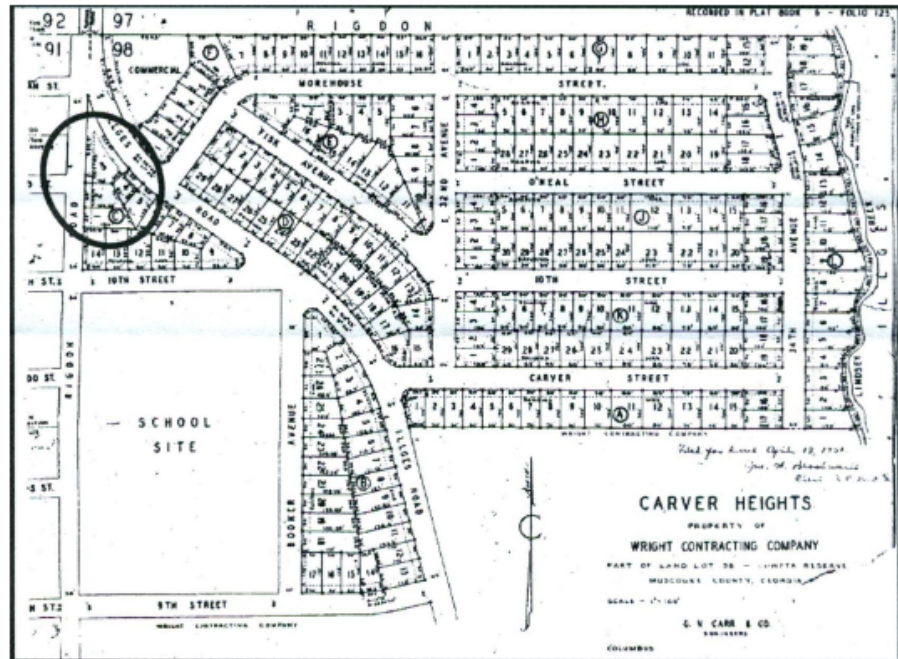


Figure 2: 1950 plat of Carver Heights Subdivision filed April 13, 1950 by Wright Construction Company. Commercial area indicated by oval shape in upper right of plat.

Farley honored African American individuals and institution of higher education. The subdivision was named after George Washington Carver as was a street.

Other streets honored Booker T. Washington, Fisk University, and Morehouse College. Morehouse College was Farley's alma mater.

*Submission composed by Joyce Wade, April 3, 2017*

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## ***18. Camp Benning***

The Fort Benning military base was established in 1918. In August of 1920, the first African American troops were assigned to Fort Benning, they were known as the Infantry School Detachment (Colored). The African American soldiers served as “watchmen” or stable assistants for the horses of white soldiers on the military base. Other jobs that they were allowed to do included serving as janitors, truck and wagon drivers, and maintenance men. Although they were only allowed to do jobs that did not include military duties, the men took pride in being recognized military soldiers.

One of the greatest impacts of African American soldiers on the Fort Benning Camp was their service to the construction of the military base. These men built roadways and assisted in the construction of major facilities on the base, including the Post Gymnasium and Exchange, Gowdy field and the Doughboy Stadium. During this time, the base was segregated and African American soldiers were not allowed to integrate with white soldiers during various activities on the base. Many facilities on the base were off limits to black soldiers. They were even not allowed to the Post Exchange, the same place that international prisoners were allowed to enter. The Main Theatre on base was another one of these facilities. Black soldiers had to go to a separate theatre to watch films. When films with sound were released, Blacks had to continue to watch movies in silent as their theatre did not provide this updated feature. While at the base, they too had to coexist with the restrictions of segregation. The effects of racial treatment at Fort Benning has affected Columbus and surrounding counties due to its heavy influence. Today, the base has been modernized and fully integrated.



American Soldiers at Camp Benning, Columbus, Georgia. Photograph courtesy of Billy Winn, former Editor of Columbus's *Ledger-Enquirer* newspaper 2016.

*Submission composed by Jazmine Anderson, April 12, 2017*

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