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“A LITTLE BIT OF HEAVEN”: THE INCEPTION, CLIMAX AND TRANSFORMATION OF
THE EAST WASHINGTON COMMUNITY IN EAST POINT, GEORGIA

by

LISA SHANNON-FLAGG

Under the Direction of Dr. Clifford Kuhn

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the evolution, growth and sudden decline of the East Washington community, located in East Point, Georgia. This African-American community was strategically created in 1912, when the city council passed its first residential segregation ordinance. This research uses oral histories and other documents to analyze the survival techniques that enabled East Washington to endure the turmoil of Jim Crow racial segregation from its 1912 inception to its 1962 transformation due to urban renewal. First, it identifies the people who chose to migrate to this area, where they came from and what enticed them to settle in East Point. Second, it discusses the network of institutions that they built and depended upon, including businesses, schools and churches, in order to maintain their largely autonomous community. Finally, it illuminates East Washington's demise through urban renewal.

INDEX WORDS: East Washington community, East Point, Urban Redevelopment Law, James Jackson, Ann Martin, Oscar Hurd

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Lisa Shannon-Flagg

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2008

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Lisa Shannon-Flagg
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Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
August 2008

DEDICATION

To the people of the East Washington community,
the founders, the developers, the sustainers,
those who decided to leave and those who were determined to stay -
Thank you for accepting me in your place.

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Introduction

The East Washington community is located in East Point, Georgia. Its roots are grounded in a 1912 strategically motivated political action that forced African-Americans to live adjacent to fertilizer, oil and steel plants, the most undesirable section of the city. As a result of

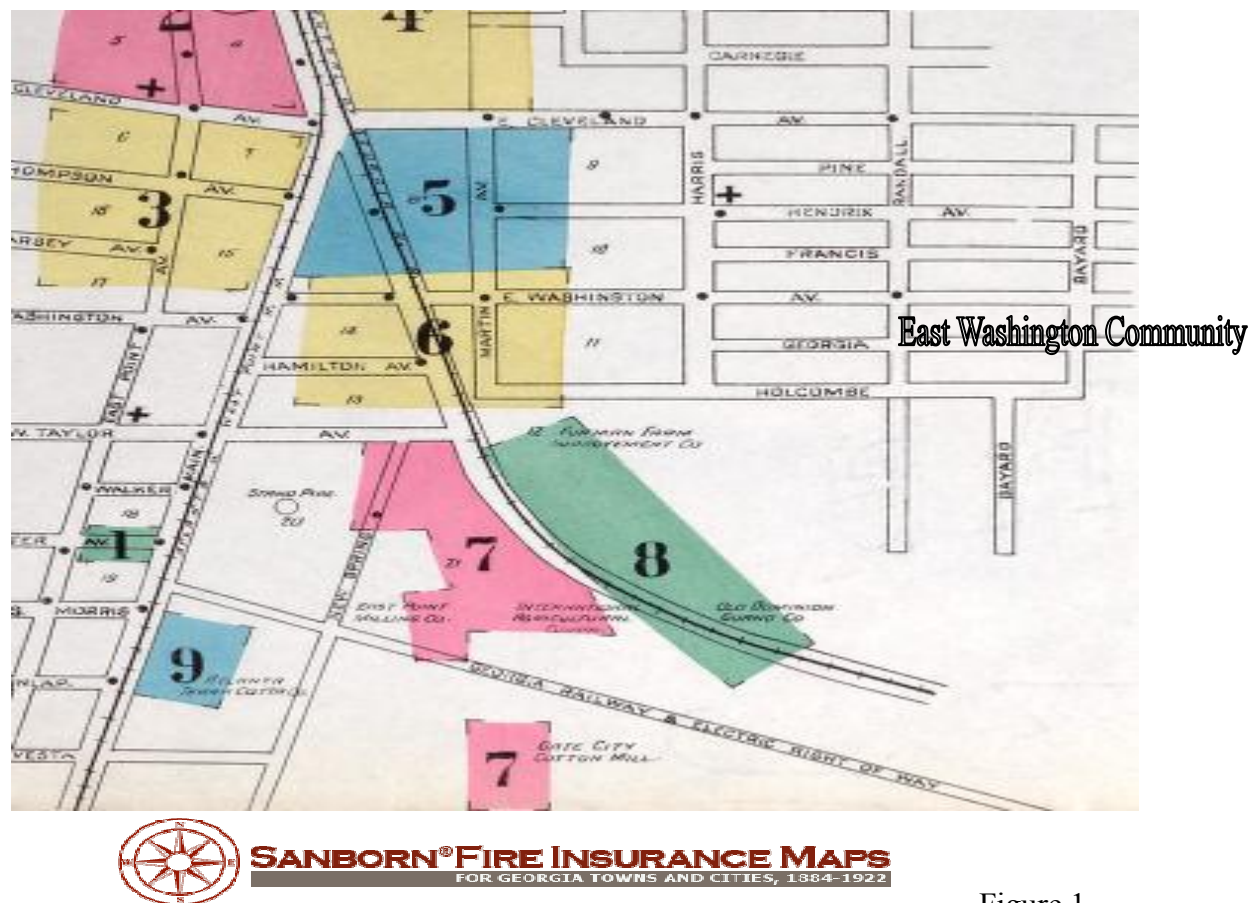


Figure 1

Map is from *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884-1922*
<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/CityCounty/EastPoint1911/IndexMap.html>

this political maneuver, the people who settled there lived within well defined physical boundaries. This work focuses on the resilience of the African-Americans who created their largely autonomous community within these boundaries. It highlights East Washington's creation, climax and sudden transformation, due to urban renewal.

In order to gain a proper understanding of residents' everyday survival strategies and because little literature exists on the community, oral histories are crucial

to this research. Although two Georgia State University graduate students wrote their theses on East Point, neither work focuses solely on the East Washington community.¹ The only published work on the community is Herman Mason's *Black America Series: East Point, Georgia*, printed in 2001. Mason's work includes 215 illustrations. Through photographs, Mason portrays some of the public and private places that encompassed East Washington and details the accomplishments of well-known individuals who lived there.²

This work begins the process of identifying the everyday ordinary people who also contributed to the success of the community, people whose daily labor never led to upward mobility, only a means of sustainment. It is a combined effort of community residents and researchers and breaks new ground by using over twenty native East Pointians to tell their own history. Its aim is to offer a detailed analysis of how an economically disenfranchised group of African-Americans built, organized and sustained an autonomous community in the midst of Jim Crow segregation. Its objective is to highlight the events that prompted citizens to move into the area, while also illuminating the survival techniques that they employed that enabled them to remain in East Point.

The East Washington community was primarily settled by African-Americans from rural Georgia and the descendants of enslaved people who worked on the former Connally plantation. Many residents came from LaGrange, Griffin and Newnan, and Upson County. Most were farmers who were escaping the infestation of the boll weevil, sharecropping and tenant farming,

¹ Rebecca Dodd's "East Point, Georgia: A History, 1821-1930." Master's thesis, Georgia State University, 1971, focuses on East Point's white community. It rarely mentions African-Americans and only highlights the first African-American school built in the East Washington community. Ann Larcom's Centennial primarily focuses on East Point's white community. Larcom's "We Have Come this Far by Faith: A View of Six Historic Churches in East Point, Georgia" details the African-American churches in the city.

² Herman "Skip" Mason, *Black America Series: East Point, Georgia* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2001).

as well as plummeting crop prices.³ Although they lived next to noisy, smelly and oftentimes unhealthy industrial mills, African-Americans chose to migrate to the community for one primary reason; the plants offered them employment during an era when agriculture production was diminishing. As explained by one life long resident, “People came to East Point because it was a mill town. You could get a job in East Point when you couldn’t get a job anywhere else,”⁴

A few residents relocated to East Washington by themselves. Most relocated in family units. As the labor demand increased, more residents came. Men worked in the mills, while women worked in their homes and labored as domestics. Once settled, people sent for their family members, former neighbors and friends, oftentimes all living in one house until the newcomers found a place of their own. The homes where residents lived were shotgun shanties built by the companies that had recruited, sent for and hired the men. The shanties were constructed on unpaved streets and strategically placed next to the companies.

The mills offered the residents employment and shelter. The remaining items that constitute life, such as education, religion, security, leisure, health care, food and clothing, were left to the residents themselves. This thesis documents what East Washington residents did to survive. It documents how residents managed to cope with Jim Crow practices of segregation, intimidation and economic deficiency, from the perspectives of the people who lived it. It illustrates the growth of this community from its conception in 1912 until its 1962 complete overhaul during urban renewal. It illuminates the power of collective uplift when people, who were purposely disenfranchised, united to create a self-sustaining community for themselves and future generations.

³ Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye and E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 1.

⁴ James Jackson, interview by author, 25 July 2007, digital recording.

Chapter two chronicles the development of the East Washington community, from its inception in 1912 as East Point's designated African-American community to 1929. It highlights how and why city officials chose this particularly area to be the African-American community, where the community is situated in East Point, as well as what residents did once they migrated to the area. The chapter documents the population of the community, primarily consisting of African-American factory workers and their families. It details their individual journeys to the community, housing conditions, and their struggle to merely survive. Chapter two concludes with a description of the emergent community churches, Bayard Street Elementary, the community school for African-Americans, and the community businesses.

Chapter three begins in 1929 with the onset of the Great Depression. While the depression affected the East Washington community only slightly, residents remember the 1930s as a time of increased racial violence. This chapter discusses the emergence of East Point's chapter of the Ku Klux Klan and documents its activities in the East Washington community. It also highlights the survival strategies of community residents. In this chapter residents discuss how segregation was taught to them by community insiders and outsiders, their encounters with segregation and their awareness of racial boundaries as they grew older.

The chapter traces the maturation of the East Washington community. It highlights Kingdom Hall, the community's business center, where owners like Ann Martin opened her second beauty shop, and details additional home based establishments, including candy store owners, laundresses and illegal producers of homebrew. In addition to businesses, the chapter also examines social and religious organizations, including the Progressive Lodge and six community churches.

Finally, chapter three details the importance of education to community residents, from the development of the area's first school until the 1952 completion of South Fulton High School. Throughout this section, residents voice their devotion to devoted educators like principal Frank Sheridan McClarin, who diligently fought the Fulton County Board of Education for books, desks, and respect for his staff, students and community.

Chapter four begins with the effects that World War II had on East Washington, including how the war caused a reconsideration of segregation among veterans and others. It also details early civil rights activities, including working with Atlanta's NAACP and initiating voter registration drives.

Beyond civil rights, the era saw numerous community leisure activities within East Washington, including watching the East Point Bears battle a visiting semi-pro team, watching youth Pony League teams, attending South Fulton High School's sporting events, partying at a favorite night spot, or taking a gamble with a lucky number in the Georgia Bug. It also treats a wide array of community sports and leisure activities during the post-war era.

This chapter profiles residents who were fundamental to the success of the East Washington community, such as O.J. Hurd, who founded a bus company, a transportation service that he established to get the Bears and students to sporting events, and to take residents to vote in a time when segregated public transportation would not come into the African-American East Washington community.

Finally, the chapter addresses the process of urban renewal which began in 1957, when the city of East Point received a Georgia Urban Redevelopment Law state grant. This grant affected the East Washington community more than any internal or external occurrence since the city passed its 1912 residential segregation ordinance. While the 1912 ordinance created the

community, the 1957 Urban Renewal reconstruction plan almost demolished it. The community that once claimed over thirty businesses, including cab companies, funeral homes, restaurants, beauty salons, night clubs, show repairs, a wood yard, grocery stores, a youth Pony League and a semi-pro baseball team was bulldozed over. Nevertheless, the history of the East Washington community's commitment to survival, their unwavering strength in the midst of segregated racial hatred, and their determination to give future generations a greater "pursuit of happiness," are examples of the significant role that it played in what city officials called "Atlanta's Leading Suburban City" from 1912 until 1962.

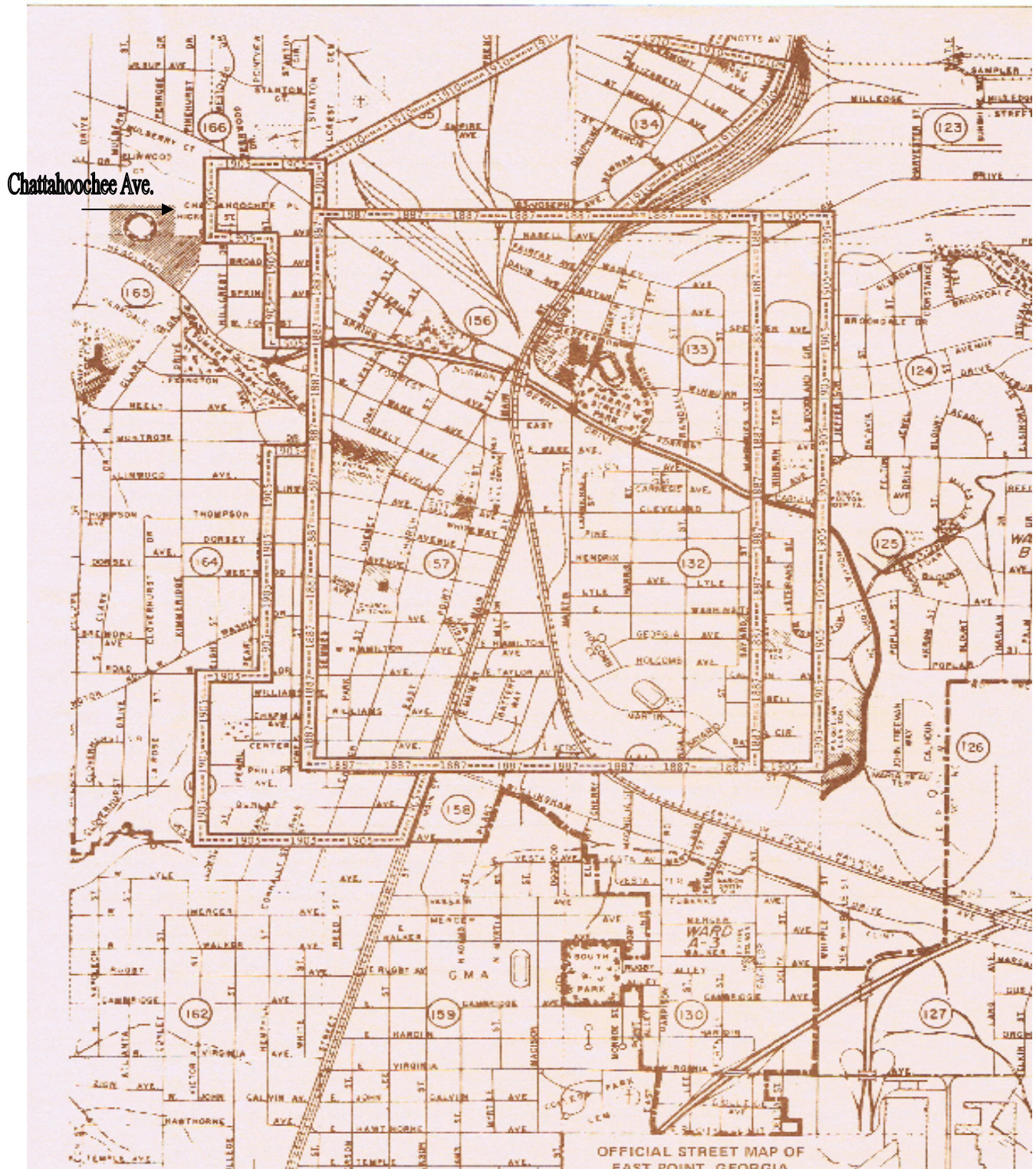


Figure 2- Official Street Map of East Point, Georgia with Early City Limits
(courtesy of the East Point Historical Society)

East Washington Community

Green's Alley

Junglefoot

“UP FROM HERE”: BIRTH OF A COMMUNITY, 1912 - 1920S

In 1912, the city council of East Point, Georgia passed its first residential segregation ordinance. At issue was the freedom of African-Americans to choose where in the city they wanted to reside. White citizens, who did not want to live adjacent to blacks, felt that it was their right to select their neighbors. They began the process of legally restricting African-Americans' purchase or rental power in certain city districts. On July 15, 1912, several “good standing” white citizens protested to the town council that it needed to “take some action in regards to Negro houses on Chattahoochee Avenue (now Connally Drive).”¹ They strongly suggested to the council that Blacks needed to live in a designated area of the city, certainly not next to whites. When the meeting finally adjourned, the council had unanimously agreed.²

East Point was not the only city that implemented residential segregated ordinances in the early 1900s. By restricting residential areas for African-Americans, Jim Crow practices helped create African-American communities across the nation, especially in the South. Tera Hunter claimed that at the turn of the century “a clear pattern of black expulsion” was evident in Atlanta. Blacks were moved from the city's inner core and concentrated on the east, west and south sides of the city.³ Beginning in 1913, Atlanta city officials passed segregated ordinances that “defined residential districts according to race” and in 1928, a state constitutional amendment was passed that legally permitted segregated zoning.⁴

¹ East Point Council Minutes, 15 July 1912, East Point Historical Society Archives, 4-9.

² Ibid.

³ Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 100.

⁴ Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye and E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 37.

At that time of the East Point council decision, African-Americans resided in four areas of the city. Three African-American families lived on Chattahoochee Avenue. These were the ones who were forced to move. Two families lived on the Connally plantation. These were the descendants of the Connally family's slaves, East Point's first recorded African-Americans. The third faction consisted of a small group of factory workers who lived in a region called Green's Alley, while the largest group lived in the area that the city council would later deem East Point's "black section."⁵ To East Point's white residents, the "black section" was one community, located "south of Washington Avenue."⁶ However, to African-Americans, the "black section" was actually two separate communities: Junglefoot and East Washington.⁷

When the city council mandated that black residents reside in East Point's "black section," African-Americans who lived outside of these communities were forced to relocate. There were two exceptions. Blacks who resided, with permission, on the Connally plantation could continue to do so and the small group of factory workers who lived in Green's Alley remained there. African-Americans who did not live in one of these restricted areas had to vacate. Some left the city altogether. Others relocated to East Washington, the new "black section."⁸

The East Washington community was located east of the Central of Georgia Railroad tracks, about a quarter mile before the point where the Central of Georgia and the Atlanta West Point railways merged. The community was bounded by Martin Street to the west, East Washington Avenue to the north, Bayard to the east and Holcomb to the south. "Remember, only

⁵ "Chronology of Black History in East Point, Georgia: from 1830 through 1979" From the Collections of the East Point Historical Society Archives (East Point, Georgia), 7.

⁶ OraJean Gunnin, interview by author, 20 March 2008, digital recording.

⁷ James Jackson, interview by author, 25 July 2007, digital recording.

⁸ Chronology, 8.

whites lived on East Washington Avenue then. It was the buffer street between the white and black communities,”⁹ affirms James Jackson, a life-long resident of the East Washington community, who in 2005 was deemed “Mr. East Point” by the HistoryMakers Education Institute.¹⁰

Oftentimes, racial names were given to African-Americans communities by racist whites. This was likely how the one area in the community got the name Junglefoot. Mr. Steven Bramlett, a fifth generation East Pointian and employee of the East Point Historical Society, claims that the term “Junglefoot” was created by whites to describe the African-American community area. “It certainly had racial undertones and was demeaning to the citizens who resided there.”¹¹

Some African-Americans mimicked this abuse by using the identical derogatory term to refer to their own neighborhood. Douglas G. Glasgow maintains that an area’s deterioration is not due to who its occupants are, but rather due to the attitudes that mainstream institutions have towards it. He contends that “as Blacks inherited cities, typologies such as “chocolate city,” and “dark ghettos,” identified the permanent enclaves where African-Americans were systematically forced to reside.¹² Names such as “Junglefoot,” “niggertown,” and “niggerville” have continually been utilized to degrade the exploited “underclass” of society, even by African-Americans themselves.

⁹ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

¹⁰ Nicole Adams, *The HistoryMakers*,
<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=1186&category=CivicMakers>

¹¹ Steven Bramlett, interview by author, 26 January 2008, digital recording.

¹² Douglas G. Glasgow, *The Black Underclass: Poverty, Unemployment and Entrapment of Ghetto Youth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, Inc., 1980), 32-33.

Junglefoot was located across the railroad tracks and to the south of the East Washington community. Cherry Street was its western boundary. Willingham was its boundary to the south. Magnolia Street was its boundary to the east and the Central Railroad tracks were its boundary to the north. As time passed the name “Junglefoot” was lost and the entire community was called East Washington. Still, some long term residents refer to this specific area as Junglefoot.

The East Point city council did not randomly choose the geographic area that encompassed Junglefoot and the East Washington communities. Strategically located next to the Furman Farm Improvement Company, the American Agricultural Chemical Company, and later the Hercules Powder Company, the entire area carried a peculiar odor. “Three of the factories were fertilizer plants. So, our community smelled,” explains James Jackson, “Actually, before people called it Junglefoot, some called it Stinktown.”¹³

Junglefoot and the East Washington community were similar to other African-American communities that emerged due to industries’ needs for cheap labor, residents moving to urban centers because of hardships in rural areas, troubled agriculture, and newly racial housing segregation laws. From 1910 to 1920, the African-American urban population in Georgia grew from 224,826 to 273,036. During the same decade, Georgia’s rural population fell from 952,161 to 933,329.¹⁴ As Cliff Kuhn states, “Many of these newcomers hailed from the hardscrabble farms of the rural South, fleeing falling crop prices, sharecropping and tenant farming, washed-out land, and the boll weevil.”¹⁵

¹³ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

¹⁴ *US Census* “US Census Bureau, Population-Georgia. Table 1. Color or Race, Nativity, Parentage, and Sex, for the State and Urban and Rural population: 1920, 1910 and 1900.” www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/4108456no55ch2.pdf

¹⁵ Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye and E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta*, 1.

Tera Hunter affirms that African-Americans moved to the city not merely for economic self-sufficiency, but also for safety. She asserts that because rural African-Americans were often separated by “miles of uninhabited backwoods,” they were defenseless to “elements intent on depriving them of life, liberty and happiness.”¹⁶ Hunter argues that although in the city they endured food shortages, natural disasters, poor housing and clothing, “what they left behind in the countryside, by comparison, was much worse. In the city at least there were reasons to be optimistic that their strength in numbers and their collective strategies for empowerment could be effective.”¹⁷

As black and white rural residents relocated to urban centers, racially segregated communities developed. However, unlike African-Americans, low-income whites were not forced to live in specific areas. City, county, and state laws did not mandate where they could purchase or rent a home, but oftentimes community covenants did. As long as white citizens could afford homes in a particular neighborhood, they were permitted to move there. Lower and upper income whites were separated from each other by social status and financial opportunities only. This was not the case with African-Americans, who were separated from whites by race, but mandated by law to live in African-American communities. Therefore, “Blacks of all income levels lived in closer proximity in bounded areas of living.”¹⁸

This was certainly true in the East Washington community, where both middle and low-income African-Americans lived, sometimes on different ends of the same street. For instance, in 1910, Dr. Hamilton Mayo Holmes, East Point’s first African-American physician, and his new

¹⁶ Hunter, 25.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Glasgow, 33.

wife Pattie Lee Reeves moved into the East Washington community. He was a graduate of Shaw University's Leonard School of Medicine in Raleigh, North Carolina. Mrs. Holmes was a graduate of St. Agnes Nursing School and one of the founders of the National Nurses Association in 1910.¹⁹ (They were the paternal grandparents of Dr. Hamilton E. Holmes, who in 1961, along with fellow student Charlayne Hunter, desegregated the University of Georgia.) The Holmes home, located on the corner of Georgia Avenue and Randall Street, was "undoubtedly the nicest on the block," recalls James Jackson. It was "up the hill," but on the same street as the mills' row houses.²⁰

Oftentimes, it was middle income African-Americans who were influential in bringing social and political "uplift" to their communities. For instance, Dr. Holmes offered low or no cost medical assistance to his neighbors. He helped organize the Abram Grant Lodge #382, Knights of Pythias, which held its first meeting July 5, 1912. Founded in Washington, DC in 1864, the Knights of Pythias was a social organization that included separate divisions for men, women and youth. Members concentrated on individual and collective community programs that would improve the quality of life for all citizens. Although in 1923 the Holmes family moved to Chapel Street in Atlanta, the fact that the East Washington Community gave the "new physician his first start," lives in local memories.²¹ After moving to Atlanta, Dr. Holmes' community activism did not cease. In 1955, he and his sons, Alfred Fountain "Tup," Hamilton Holmes'

¹⁹ Chronology, 3.

²⁰ Jackson, interview 25 July 2007.

²¹ Ibid.; Chronology, 8.

father, and Rev. Oliver Wendell Holmes, “successfully filed suit to desegregate the Atlanta public golf course.”²²

Since whites did not want to live near noisy and smelly city factories, industrial centers or mills, these undesirable, unsanitary sections of town became home to many African-Americans. This trend was both national and international. In *Dropping Anchor Setting Sail*, Jacqueline Brown discussed the growth and development of “Black Liverpool.” Liverpool itself was already an undesirable city in England. “Black Liverpool” was the undesirables’ undesirable. Brown detailed the mid-nineteenth century origin of Liverpool’s Black shipping community. Like the African-Americans of East Washington, Black Liverpoolians were forced to construct social and political place in an area founded upon white hegemony and racial strife. Brown argued that to understand “Black people in Liverpool, one must understand the ideological labors that place is made to perform.”²³

Brown claimed that the “cultural logics of place” shaped both racial identity and community formation. For instance, to an outsider, a person’s address was his “place.” This “place” determined his racial ethnicity, economic status as well as his social position in both his immediate and his surrounding community. Therefore, when a person’s address was known, his “place” in society was inferred.²⁴

For example, to someone who lived outside of the “black section,” a person whose address, “place,” was the East Washington community, may have been construed as poor, unskilled and uneducated. His social status was an uncertainty, but his race was certainly black.

²² Robert A. Pratt, *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 72.

²³ Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 31.

²⁴ Ibid.

However, to a person who lived within the community, this same person may have been considered middle class or even rich. Economic and social status varied, but race remained a constant.

The idea that place shapes community was well illustrated in the East Washington community. The community was located where it was, due to white residents' and business owners' political strategies. White residents did not want to live adjacent to the factories' noise and smell, but they still needed laborers to do their domestic and rigorous work. White business owners needed a cheap and constant labor supply to work the menial jobs in their factories. Therefore, the owners financed and hired African-American day laborers to erect the row houses that the tenants occupied. OraJean Gunnin, founder of the East Point Historical Society and resident of East Point since 1929, explains that, "The row houses just popped up. When the factories started to open between 1910 and 1918, owners hired community residents to put up a house."²⁵

East Point did not keep records of the construction of the row houses, nor did businesses have to apply for building permits. According to Gunnin, "The row houses were built on an as needed basis. I didn't even know that there were so many until I saw the county map."²⁶ (See figure 1)

Both the white residents and the white business owners had a socio-economic as well as a political investment in the East Washington community. White residents employed African-American women as domestics and child-care providers. They employed African-American men as drivers and yard workers. Business owners used African-American men as a steady labor

²⁵ OraJean Gunnin, interview 10 April 2008.

²⁶ Ibid.

supply. Therefore, both white residents and business owners wanted their workers close to their places of employment.

The owners wanted their workers in close proximity to the factories for several reasons. First, and perhaps most important, they wanted to make certain that the laborers got to work. Therefore, workers' homes were strategically placed directly beside the mill. This eliminated any excuse for not arriving to work on time. It also assured that workers could be easily accessed if the company was granted sudden contracts, although more contracts for the owners did not necessarily mean more money for employees. Elizabeth Darden recalls that, "We knew when the alum plant had extra work. I wouldn't see my daddy (Robert Morgan) at all. He would leave for work early in the morning, come home, eat, take a quick nap and then go right back. I don't think that he got any extra money though. We didn't have anything extra."²⁷



Figure 3
African-American employees of Hercules Powder Company, 1938 (Courtesy of James Jackson)

²⁷ Elizabeth Darden, interview by author, 31 December 2007, digital recording.

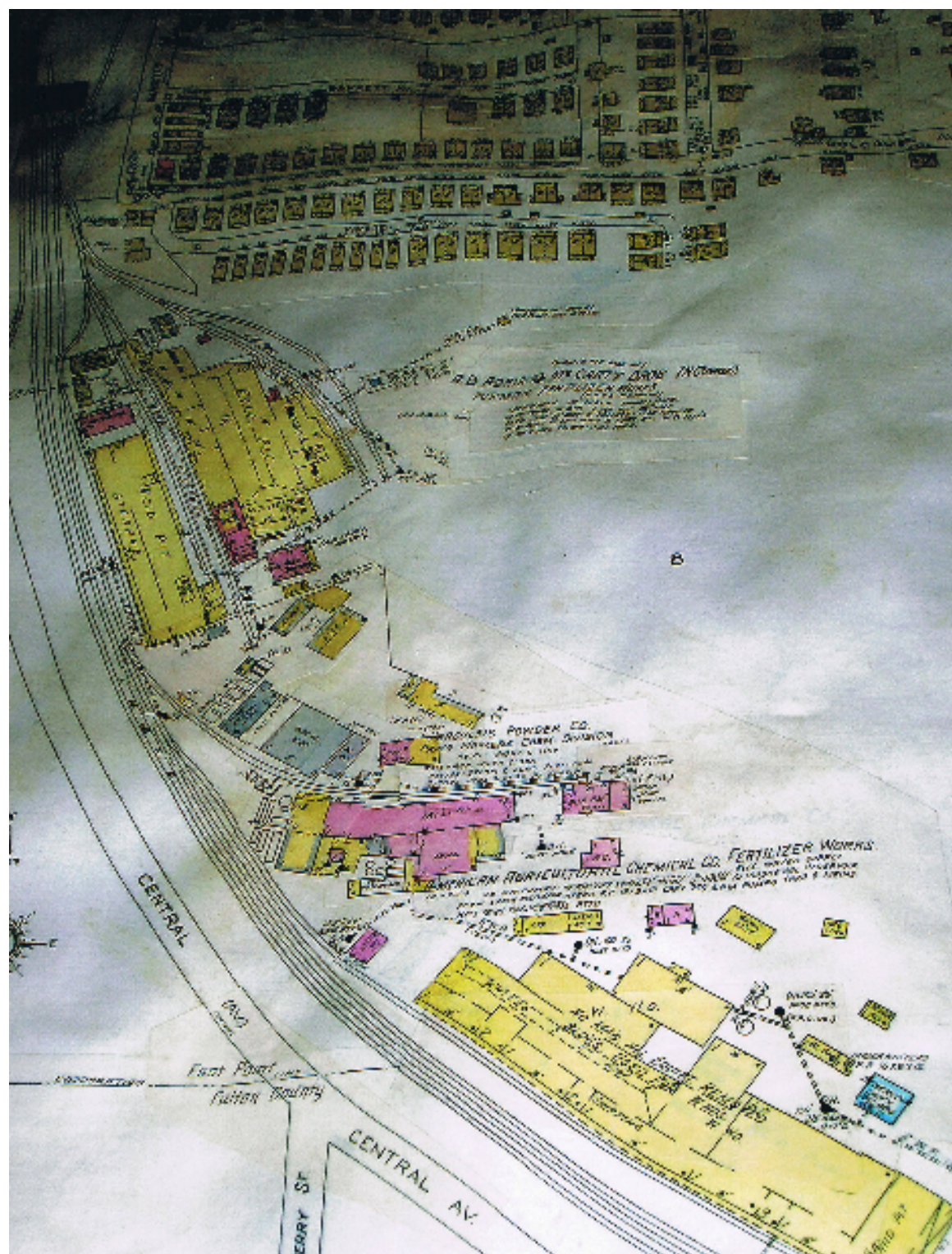


Figure 4
Community housing, 1925 Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 9 (Courtesy of East Point Historical Society)

Second, a worker was enticed to stay since his monthly rent was taken directly out of his first paycheck. James Jackson, whose grandfather was an employee at Hercules Powder Company, remembers that “If you made twelve dollars per week, then you were charged twelve dollars per month in rent. That money was taken out first. That way, you paid rent in advance. Who would leave when he had already paid a month’s worth of rent? That’s how they got you. That’s how they kept you.”²⁸

Third, with workers’ homes placed next to the mills, white owners could keep a careful watch on their laborers. As one native East Pointian stated, “Charlie was always looking.”²⁹ Several citizens acknowledged this white “gaze.” Annie Parham remembered that, “We never had a lot of problems in the community. Of course, on weekends some men would get drunk and start to fight. Funny thing was that the police were always there fast. Most times it seemed that they were there before the fight actually started. They were always watching. We just didn’t know it.”³⁰

Place is both a geographical location and a social construct. A person’s physical place, his place of residence, can also determine his social status. By living in the specific communities, African-Americans faced both the social constructs of the Jim Crow era and many faced the elitist attitudes of other Blacks. For instance, Mrs. Annie Parham stated that where she was reared was called Green’s Alley, not East Washington (Between the 1930s and 1950s the East Washington community expanded to include neighboring areas). Green’s Alley was located on the opposite side of Bayard Circle. Parham recalls that Green’s Alley “was two small streets

²⁸ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

²⁹ Interviewee did not want name mentioned, but agreed that remark could be written.

³⁰ Annie Parham, interview by author, 20 February 2008, digital recording.

that made up one alley. There were a total of twenty-one houses; about nine on each side and two or three at the end of the street. The houses faced each other. That's why the area was called an alley. The street in the front was Oil Mill Road. The street that the houses faced didn't even have a name."³¹

According to Parham, the East Washington residents "really turned down their noses at us. We were really poor. East Washington was different. They didn't consider us like them. They had it a little better than what we did."³² Parham explained that the East Washington residents "had it better" because their community had access to electricity, running water, and street names. She recalls that Green's Alley did not have any lights or water, "My family did not have those amenities until 1952. The year we moved on Randall Street."³³ Randall Street is within the East Washington community.

In 1920, the population of East Point was 5,241. By 1930, it had increased to 9,512.³⁴ Of the residents living in East Point in 1920, 865 were African-Americans. In ten years, this number had almost doubled to 1,569. These African-American citizens primarily came from rural, agricultural areas south of Atlanta. Many migrated from LaGrange, Newnan, or the rural area near Griffin. James Jackson's grandfather, James Meadows, was enticed to move to East Point by a white man, who visited the Griffin area frequently. Jackson recalls that "He (the recruiter) was sent from the mill to get Blacks to move to East Point and work in the plants. You

³¹ Annie Parham interview, 20 February 2008.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *US Census*, www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/4108456no55ch2.pdf

see, people came to East Point because it was a mill town. You could get a job in East Point when you couldn't get a job anywhere else."³⁵

James Meadows moved from Griffin, Georgia in the fall of 1926. He brought his wife, Mattie, two daughters, Ola Mae (James Jackson's mother, who held baby James in her arms), Ruby and his brother, Charlie. Like other African-Americans arriving in East Point during that era, the Jackson family came for economic survival. Mr. Jackson recalls his grandfather stating that his family was dying in Griffin, "People were starving in the South." By this time, East Point contained a national bank, packing companies, fertilizer plants, chain stores, automobile dealerships and service stations. The City of East Point had its own government offices, including fire department, post office, City Hall, and council chambers. Its businesses were expanding and, more importantly, it was in proximity to Atlanta and all of its amenities. "The economy was booming," exclaims Jackson, "jobs were plentiful to those who wanted them. My grandfather wanted and definitely needed a job. That's why he came here."³⁶

The Jackson family did not intend to stay in East Point. James Meadows determined that the South was no place for a "Black man to prosper." Both he and his brother Charlie planned to reside in East Point for a year, "make money" from the mills, and then move north. "They heard that in the North, racism wasn't as bad. People have crazy ideas about race in the South."³⁷ After a year, Mr. Jackson's uncle Charlie and his mother, Ola Mae, moved to Connecticut. "She thought she would have a better life up there." Jackson remained in the East Washington community with his grandparents.³⁸

³⁵ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

James Domineck, a native East Pointian, shared a similar family history. Domineck's parents, Willie and Lizzie Domineck, migrated to East Point from Newnan, Georgia, a town about forty-five miles south of East Point. Both his paternal and maternal grandparents had worked as sharecroppers on cotton plantations near Newnan. Domineck's mother feared that as long as her family remained in Newnan, they were destined to work on cotton plantations. "She wanted no part of that," remembers Domineck. Laughing, he told the story of how his mother decided to leave Newnan. Apparently, his mother was picking cotton and saw a snake. Being extremely scared of snakes, she told her husband that she could not pick cotton any longer. Her husband, who also wanted a different life for his family, made the decision to move to this place about which he had heard other Newnan residents speak. "My daddy said that people were moving to East Point and Atlanta by the droves. There were jobs to get in East Point," states Domineck, "He knew that he could give his family a better life. And that's what he did. That he did."³⁹

Domineck's parents, along with his two of his uncles decided to move to East Point for a year and then work in one of the mills until enough money was saved for the family to move to Canton, Ohio. After a year, his uncle, Robert Lee, kept his word and moved to Canton. However, in 2008, Willie Domineck, age 92, and Lizzie, age 91, still reside in the East Washington community. Their son, James, still lives in East Point, too.⁴⁰

Despite the promises of a better life in industrial centers, such as East Point, some rural residents were determined not to permanently leave their homes. They did not sever their ties to their rural roots. James Domineck's maternal uncle, Willie Frank Thornton, "Uncle Boot," was

³⁹ James Domineck, interview by author, 27 August 2007, digital recording.

⁴⁰ Domineck interview, 27 August, 2007.

one of these. Thornton was a Newnan sharecropper who wanted a better life, but also wanted to remain in Newnan. Therefore, he got a job at East Point's Southern Mills Lumber Company, worked Monday through Friday, and returned to his family in Newnan on the weekends. "They didn't move up here when we did," Domineck explains, "Uncle Boot lived with us during the week, but Fridays after work, he went home to his wife and kids. Quite a few people were doing that back then."⁴¹

The parents of Elizabeth Darden, Robert Morgan and Eula Mae (Hampton) Morgan moved to East Point in the early 1920s. They came from Lovejoy, south of East Point in Clayton County. "I remember my father saying that there wasn't much to do in Lovejoy," explains Darden. "He said he needed to leave, find a job and take care of his family. Daddy said that for us to survive we had to get 'up from here.'"⁴²

After her parents came to East Point, they "sent for" other family. Mrs. Darden remembers that both her maternal and paternal grandmothers, as well as three aunts, moved in with them. (Her grandfathers were deceased.) Within a few weeks, they all lived three houses apart. Mr. Morgan got a job at Hercules Powder Company. He made eighteen dollars per week. "With that, he paid rent, bought coal, wood, ice, groceries and clothes. His check took care of us all," recalls Darden."⁴³

Like Darden, other East Washington residents remembered "sending for" family members left behind. Annie Parham explains that, "Back then, a person never just took care of himself. Everybody was connected to somebody, to some family. If you got

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Elizabeth Darden, interview by author, 31 December 2007, digital recording.

⁴³ Ibid.

out, your family got out. If you got better, then your family got better. It was your duty to take care of others and it was their duty to take care of you.”⁴⁴

Many residents migrated in clusters. For example, Parham adds that after her mother settled in East Point, after migrating from Griffin, her mother “sent for” her sister, Rosie Fieldpot. “Aunt Rosie moved to Junglefoot. Next, Momma sent for Daddy’s mother. Daddy’s momma moved here from Chattanooga. Her people came too. Some of our relatives were already here; the Dardens, Emory, Lillie and their families. In fact, that’s why Momma came.”⁴⁵

As in some other African-American communities during the 1920s, East Washington’s residential homes were rows of shanty houses. There were two sections of shanties. One district was located by the mill plants (Holcombe Avenue) and another section by the oil and steel plants (Green’s Alley). During this era, alley homes like Green’s Alley were a common residential pattern for African-American communities. But, in the case of Green’s Alley, the shanties were not behind a residential employer’s home, they were placed in the rear of the oil and steel mills.

The Holcombe Avenue mill area consisted of fifty-seven shanty houses, with two families per house. (see figure 2) The shanties had two rooms. “There was a room in the front and a room in the back,” remembers Andrew Dyer, “there was not a kitchen. The back room had a stove. There was an outhouse in the back. Each tenant had a key to it. Eventually, they put a commode on the back porch. Some residents, who knew a good handy man, had the commode enclosed for privacy”⁴⁶ Most of the shanties had electricity (not the ones in Green’s Alley), but

⁴⁴ Annie Parham interview, 20 February 2008.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Mr. Andrew Dyer, interview by author, 22 November 2004, transcript.

as Dyer stated, “running water was a luxury,” although each shanty had a turning hydrant on the back porch. According to Erma Dyer Lemons, “Baths were not taken everyday. My momma had three big wash basins for clothes; one was for the wash and the other two were for rinsing. We would take a bath in the last rinsing tub after the clothes were washed.”⁴⁷

Mrs. Lemons and others recollect that the shanties looked green and “all of them smelled funny.” Emory Darden, a lifelong resident of the community, claimed that the shanties were built from the wood of old naval yards; “That is why they were green in appearance. It was also why they carried a peculiar odor.”⁴⁸ Darden remembers that “the shanties were very tiny. Two families lived side by side and everybody was poor.



Figure 5 - Double tenant home
(courtesy of East Point Historical Society)

⁴⁷ Erma Dyer Lemons, interview by author, 23 November 2004, transcript, 2.

⁴⁸ Emory Darden interview by author, 05 July 2004, transcript, 1.

My daddy, Mr. Jesse Darden, worked for Gates Cotton Mill on Cleveland Avenue across from the train station. He was one of the workers who pulled the good cotton away from the bad. Cotton was shipped to the plant that had been burnt somehow. My daddy and others had to pull the cotton that could still be used and throw the bad cotton away. My Momma, Nillie Darden, didn't work outside the home. She didn't like the shanties, but she always said that they were better than where they lived before."⁴⁹

Elizabeth Darden, Emory's wife, also spoke of the physical appearance of the shanties. "They were always falling down. When you laid on your back, you were looking at the sky. When you laid on your stomach, you were looking at the ground. We were always trying to place something in the cracks to keep the wind and the rain out."⁵⁰



Figure 6- Resident home (courtesy of East Point Historical Society)

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Darden, interview by author, 07 May 2004, transcript, 1.

Besides the flimsy construction of the shanties, female residents oftentimes remembered poorly built outhouses and their lack of safety. Elizabeth Darden recalls that, “until they put one on the back porch, my brother had to go with me every time I went to that outhouse. Day, night, cold or rain, it didn’t matter, he was coming with me. Eventually, they built one on the back porch. To us, that was a little bit of heaven.”⁵¹

Wanda Williams recalls that, “Our house on 327 Furman Avenue had a toilet outside, in the back of the people who lived on Holcombe. I hated going out there. It was not safe for women. It wasn’t strange to see a man just hanging around the outhouse. When we moved to 325 Furman, we had a bathroom on the back porch; no bathtub, just a toilet. But, that was safer.”⁵²

Safety was also an issue to Annie Parham, who remembers being elated when her family moved into a house that had electricity, but grim when it did not have the indoor plumbing required for a toilet. “We got electric when we moved on Randall Street. We still didn’t have an indoor toilet, just an outhouse. We had to walk across a stick just to get to it. The man, who owned the house, lived next door. I think he knew every time my sister and I were in the bathroom. He’d come rattle the door to get in. That wasn’t any fun. That wasn’t safe.”⁵³

⁵¹ Elizabeth Darden interview, 31 December 2007.

⁵² Wanda Williams, interview by author, 15 February 2008, digital recording.

⁵³ Annie Parham interview, 20 February 2008.



Figure 7- East Washington Community Housing, 1952
(South Fulton Elem. and High schools in back)



Figure 8- East Washington Community Housing- (factories behind trees)
(both pictures are courtesy of East Point Historical Society)

Tenants, who lived in factory residences, were usually employees of the factory. However, if a man quit his job or was terminated, it was possible for his family to remain in the house as long as the rent was paid on time. Mrs. Darden recalls that after her two grandmothers had lived with her family for a few months, “A place three houses down from us came available.”⁵⁴ Their landlord, a factory employee named Boston, allowed her family members to rent it. Boston wanted the rent money taken directly from her father’s payroll check. When her father refused, Boston allowed them to move in anyway, as “nobody else wanted that place.” The rent was fifty cents per week. Darden explains that since the rent was not taken directly from her father’s salary, the landlord came to the house every week to collect it. “That man came knocking every Saturday morning to collect,” adds Darden, “If you missed your rent, he would put a piece of cardboard on your door that said ‘evicted.’ You had to move that week. I guess they thought that fifty cents was a little, but it was a lot in those days. It was a heap of money. Luckily, we were never evicted.”⁵⁵

Evictions, rent amounts, where a resident lived on the street, as well as occupations generated reasons for social class divisions. Emory Darden remembers that “Junglefoot was thought of as the baddest place in town.”⁵⁶ Darden explains that Junglefoot was considered “bad” because the people who lived there were the poorest in the community. “Some people were violent. They fought, drunk and stole for no apparent reason. But, some people stole, not because of greed, but because they didn’t have jobs and their kids were hungry,” remembers Darden, “that doesn’t make it right, but it is understandable.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Darden interview, 31 December 31 2007.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Emory Darden interview, 07 May 2004, 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Darden explains that because of the poverty of Junglefoot, “it was looked down upon by whites as well as by uppity Blacks.” He emphasizes that African-Americans expected whites to act as though they were superior to Blacks, but Blacks were not supposed to act that way to each other. “These uppity Blacks were residents who thought they were better than us. They lived up the hill away from the plants and we lived right next to the plants. They went to the uppity church and sang uppity songs. Unlike them, we never pretended to be anything other than what we were. Everybody was poor then. Truth be told, most of us are poor now.”⁵⁸

Wanda Williams’ family “on my mama’s side” moved to East Washington from Hapeville. Her grandmother, Lucille Dennis (Gaston) was born in Newnan in Coweta County. To Williams, rich, poor, uppity or ordinary were all just a state of mind.

“We weren’t rich, but we weren’t poor. I don’t consider myself uppity. I just don’t know anything about bad days, or hungry days, or about not having any decent clothes. I always slept on a bed with a mattress and had my own room. We had electricity, furniture, refrigerators and other things.”⁵⁹

Williams believes that the number of children a family had helped determine how well a family lived. “I played with children who had nine or ten children in their family. They had it hard trying to keep all of those kids fed and clothed. It was just me and I had two working parents. That was the difference. We weren’t uppity. We were just a small family. My father worked at the alum plant. Then he worked at Fulton Bag in Atlanta. Of course, he did some bootlegging on the side. That’s where most of his money came from. Plus, my mother had jobs too. She did domestic work on Lenox

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Williams interview, 15 February 2008.

Road and Tuxedo Road and later was an elevator operator at Rich's. That's the only reason we had it better than some folks."⁶⁰

By the end of the 1920s, the East Washington community was firmly established. There were six churches, Union Baptist (1866), Siloam (1888), Grant Chapel A.M.E. (1894), Mallalieu Methodist Episcopal (1900), Evans Grove Baptist (1907), and Neriah Baptist Church which opened its doors in Junglefoot in 1923. There were several social clubs (male and female), ample employment at East Point's several mills, and a new African-American elementary school, which offered classes through the seventh grade. This school, Bayard Street Elementary, was built by Fulton County in 1928 to replace Randall Street Elementary, which completely burned in 1926. (The East Point School System and Fulton County Board of Education merged in 1927.)⁶¹ Atlanta's Booker T. Washington High School opened its doors in 1924 for students desiring a high school education.

The community possessed a funeral home, established by Matthew M. Alston, Jr. in 1927. Several African-American home based businesses emerged. Will Bigby sold "grocery staples," ice cream and hot dogs. John Fallin operated a barber shop.⁶²

In 1928, an estimated 1,468 African-American citizens resided in East Point. A small percentage lived in the Evans Grove area, formerly the Connally Plantation, as well as in Green's Alley. The majority resided in the East Washington community.⁶³ In 1929, the stock market

⁶⁰ Wanda Williams, interview by author, 15 February 2008, digital recording. Williams recalls that the two most prominent bootleggers were JB Bailey and her father. There were a few others, but they did not sale their liquor to residents.

⁶¹ Rebecca Foltz Dodd, "East Point, Georgia: A History, 1821-1930" (Master's thesis, Georgia State University, 1971), 71.

⁶² Chronology, 8.

⁶³ Minutes East Point Town Council, June 10, August 18, 1896, May 28, 1899. Anne Dodd Thesis East Point, Georgia: A History 1821-1930, GSU 1971, 28-29.,

crashed and the Great Depression began. Although council minutes confirm that the City of East Point suffered from their effects, neither the crash nor the depression severely impacted East Washington. Residents continued to strengthen their community through religious, benevolent and social organizations.



Figure 9
Community housing, 1925 Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 9 (Courtesy of East Point Historical Society)

**“BLESSED ASSURANCE, DOING THE RIGHT THING”: THE FORMATIVE YEARS,
1920S -1940S**

“I certainly remember the Depression,” recalls Elizabeth Darden, “That’s when Daddy kept telling Momma that ‘All the work’s in Chattanooga.’ Daddy and his friends would hop the trains and go to there. Back then, we called it hoboing. They’d be gone for three, some times four weeks at a time, looking for work.”¹

If the Great Depression was hard on European-Americans, then it was devastating on African-Americans. Raymond Wolters claims that during the years of the Great Depression, African- Americans “were the most disadvantaged major group in American society.”² He argues that their unemployment rates, whether industrial or rural, were consistently twice as high as whites, African-Americans’ net incomes were considerably less than whites, and that African-Americans “gained little” from President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal benefits, particularly the benefits obtained from the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) or the National Recovery Administration (NRA).³

Although the unemployment rate of East Point’s African-American population is not known, according to most East Washington residents, “there were very, very few jobs for Blacks at that time,” recalls James Jackson, “It’s as if the mills stopped hiring us at all. Men couldn’t get jobs on the railroads or at the mills.”⁴ Although jobs were scarce, residents were not submissive nor dependant on outside assistance. They made do with the resources that they had. Elizabeth Darden maintains that, “There were a few people (African-Americans) who had jobs at that time. But most people were just looking; making it the best they could. I remember Daddy hunting and

¹ Elizabeth Darden, interview by author, 31 December 2007, digital recording.

² Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression: the Problem of Economic Recovery* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1970), ix.

³ Ibid., xi.

⁴ James Jackson, interview by author, 25 July 2007, digital recording.

shooting rabbits. Sometimes, he would have to sell one of the rabbits just to get the grease to fry them in. It was hard, but we made it.”⁵

To some East Washington residents, the Depression was merely another word for their everyday plight. “We were always poor, so the Depression didn’t bother us much,” recalls Emory Darden, “I heard of things like soup lines and people without money. We never had money and I don’t think Blacks were able to get in a soup line. I don’t think the Depression was for us. I think it was for white people.”⁶

Although Darden’s assessment that the “Depression was for white people” was not entirely true, whites were the primary beneficiaries of local relief efforts. For example, in the early 1930s, the City of Atlanta instituted its first public relief system; the Family Welfare Society. This public agency provided health, lodging, and creditor and employment assistance to approximately 8,000 to 9,000 Atlanta families. However, prior to the New Deal, only 1,800 of these families were African-American. In fact, African-American leaders claimed that the Family Welfare Society “neglected the black community.” Leaders charged that African-Americans received little, if any financial assistance, and that they were oftentimes “barred entirely from receiving the flour, greens, and coal distributed daily at the Relief Center.” Apparently, giving African-Americans less food was justified because many white relief workers felt that “blacks could survive on less.”⁷

Perhaps more distressing than either the unemployment rates or the small effect that government relief programs had on African-American communities, was the increase of racial

⁵ Elizabeth Darden interview, 31 December 2007.

⁶ Emory Darden, interview by author, 05 July 2004, transcript 2.

⁷ Karen Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 51.

violence inflicted upon African-American citizens. Nationally, eight lynchings were reported in 1932. By 1933, this number had increased to twenty-eight. Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, asserted that the increase in lynchings was “another way for white supremacists to intimidate Negroes and force them to leave their jobs.”⁸

Prior to the Great Depression, few racial incidents were reported in East Point. The most notorious episode was the September 23, 1906, lynching of Zeb Long. Long’s murder was undoubtedly sparked by the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot, which began the preceding day in downtown Atlanta.

Sam Roberts was a young boy when his mother told him the story of Zeb Long’s lynching. “She said that white people in Atlanta started killing Blacks for no reason. Whites in East Point must have felt left out, because they started doing the same. They wanted to kill somebody and they got a man named Zeb. They hung him on a big tree over by Church Street,” states Roberts.”⁹

“It (the Atlanta Race Riot) is still a horrific memory in the city’s past,” recalls James Jackson, “people today weren’t even born when it happened, but we still talk about it. It affected us because one of our own was killed. I think that was the beginning of the KKK reign of terror on our community,” adds Jackson.¹⁰

East Point’s city officials concluded that Zeb Long’s lynching was justified. Records show that no person was questioned, charged or arrested for this lynching. There remains one

⁸ Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression*, 116.

⁹ Sam Roberts, interview by author, 12 September 2006, transcript, 1.

¹⁰ James Jackson, interview by author, 12 September 2006, transcript, 1.

certainty; on September 23, 1906, a white mob lynched an African-American man. That man was named Mr. Zeb Long.¹¹

The period of the Great Depression caused an increase in racial violence in East Point. As businesses closed and citizens lost their jobs, racial tensions intensified. The hate group at the root of East Point's racial terror was the Ku Klux Klan. The East Point chapter of the KKK, Klan Number 51, had organized after 1915. By the 1920s, it was an "especially strong organization" with a membership of "approximately five hundred of the city's white men." It included East Point's mayors, councilmen, policemen, and "most of the people in city government."¹² Klan Number 51 organized parades on Main Street, held city oyster dinners, attended church worship services together, provided food baskets for poor whites, held anti-communism rallies, but mostly "retarded improvements in East Point's race relations."¹³

The East Point Klan Number 51 joined other Klan orders in local Thanksgiving Day parades and initiation services, held political rallies, and proudly wore the Klan logo "over the left breast of their uniform" when they "blasted Baptist Tabernacle to win the 1924 Dixie League championship" in Atlanta's amateur baseball league.¹⁴

While Klan Number 51 apparently committed no acts of violence in the 1920s, Klansmen threatened and beat individuals in the 1930s.¹⁵ Residents are not sure what triggered Klan activity. They do not recall whether the violence was geared towards the entire community or aimed at specific individual, like in the case of James Langford, John Langford's father.

¹¹ Dodd, "East Point, Georgia: A History, 1821-1930," 59.

¹² Ibid., 82.

¹³ Ibid., 83.

¹⁴ Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 41- 42.

¹⁵ Ibid.

According to John Langford,

“The Klan was always marching. They came into our community on a regular basis. If we were outside, Momma would yell and tell us to go in the house and cut the lights off. When I was seven or eight, they came to my house and got my daddy. They beat my daddy and told him that he was gonna have to do better. They didn’t beat him bad, but they let him know that he wasn’t doing something that they wanted him to do. He left (moved away) a little after that.”¹⁶

Andrew Dyer also witnessed a beating. This time the thrashing was done by the police. He recalled a day in the 1930s when a Black man was tied to a tree and publicly whipped in Junglefoot. Apparently, this man was caught merely “looking at a white woman while he was walking to work,” recalls Dyer. “They said that he looked at her, but we knew that he didn’t. It was hard for a Black man then, especially if he tried to make a better life for himself. This man was just going to work. That was the problem. They were mad that he had a job and a lot of them (whites) didn’t,”¹⁷

Between 1939 and 1940 “an outbreak of floggings in and around East Point resulted in at least three deaths.”¹⁸ Many of these floggings were frequently reported to city officials, who more often than not, did little or no investigation into the matters. But when the dead body of Ike Gaston, a white East Point barber, was found on March 8, 1940, the Solicitor General’s office conducted an investigation of its own. Gaston had been whipped with a “long cleated belt and left to die of exposure in an isolated glade.”¹⁹ He was reported missing the day before his body was found by his friend “Red” Johnson, who also worked as a barber in the city. Johnson claimed that the group who killed Gaston was comprised of policemen and KKK members. He

¹⁶ John Henry Langford, interview by author, 13 March 2008, digital recording.

¹⁷ Andrew Dyer, interview by author, 22 November 2004, transcript, 1.

¹⁸ Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: the Black Experience in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 355.

¹⁹ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 43.

stated that knew who they were because they had also “flogged” him before. Johnson exclaimed that groups of men had beaten African-Americans citizens on a “regular occurrence for the preceding twelve years.” These groups were known as “flogging crews.”²⁰

As witnesses and victims testified to the grand jury, some members of the flogging crew were granted immunity in exchange for their testimony. By the end of the trial, the sheets had come off. Some of the indicted defendants were revealed as policemen and sheriff deputies.²¹

The Ike Gaston case did not stop the reign of terror on the East Washington community. “The Klan didn’t stop marching or their night rides,” recalls Jackson, “for about a year they went into a little hiding, but after that they were still very active in East Point.”²² Somehow though, East Washington residents turned racially violent incidents into endurable situations. For instance, from 1948 until the early 1950s, James Jackson credited community member Frank Hightower with “picking the community up, after Klansmen tried to put it down.” “The Klan burned a lot of crosses over here,” recounts Jackson “when they left, it’s not like they would clean up the messes that they made. But, there was this man named Frank Hightower who did. Every time that the Klan burned a cross, Frank would pick-up that burnt cross and start singing ‘Jeepers Creepers,’ while he cleaned the mess. It was the darrest sight. Then, the community would come back out and began again.”²³

²⁰ Anne S. Larcom *Centennial Chronology of East Point History 1887-1987* (East Point: East Point Historical Society, 1987), Part III-29. Also- Jessie Guzman and W.H. Arden Hughes, *Lynching Crime A Review of Events Affecting Negro Life 1944-1946*.
<http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:IPi3qdTOxuUJ:nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/segregation/text2/lynchingcrime.pdf+ike+gaston+murder+east+point+georgia+1940&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=4&gl=us>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jackson interview, 17 June 2008.

²³ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

The depressed times that helped to encourage the spread of racial violence also led to the creation of the New Deal. The New Deal was instrumental to the City of East Point. In 1935, the federal government financed the construction of a new post office. It built a new library, paved city streets, improved city landscaping, instituted adult education classes and established a city sponsored welfare society. In 1939, Grants from the Works Progress Administration financed new water and sewer systems. By the end of the decade, city officials hailed East Point as “Atlanta’s Leading Suburban City.”²⁴

Although the New Deal brought considerable improvements to East Point, the East Washington area changed very little in the 1930s. Residents agreed that urban progress in the East Washington community developed slowly. “Holcomb was a dirt street until 1948,” recounts John Langford, “gravel was put over it in 1948. It was not paved (concreted) until 1959 or 1960. Until then it was just gravel. All of the streets in our (East Washington) area were. Main Street and streets in the white sections have been paved all of my life, since at least 1940.”²⁵ “Until the late 1940s, Holcomb Street was nothing but potholes and craters,” echoes James Domineck, “most people didn’t have cars. We walked everywhere. So, I guess the city thought we didn’t need them (paved streets).”²⁶

James Jackson claims that everything that the East Washington community received came with a struggle. “We’ve never been given anything,” exclaims Jackson, “We’ve fought for everything we have. Whether it was for paved streets, running water, electricity, schools equipment, school buildings, an athletic department, books, supplies, little pay, some pay, equal

²⁴ Anne S. Larcom, “East Point, Georgia: Overview of a Century,” *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the* , The Atlanta Historical Society, vol. XXXII, numbers 3-4 (Fall 1988-Winter 1989):51.

²⁵ John Henry Langford, interview by author, 13 March 2008, digital recording.

²⁶ Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

pay, civil rights, human rights, voting, whatever you can think of always remember that some Black man and woman fought for it. Nobody has ever given us anything. You'd better believe that!"²⁷

East Washington residents were determined to survive on their own. They stress that their community sustained itself through the difficult times of forced residential segregation, the Great Depression, and racial violence through self determination and self-reliance. By the mid 1930s, the East Washington community had grown. It included six churches and an elementary school. Soon after, more black and white-owned grocery stores, funeral homes, home restaurants, social organizations, barber shops and beauty salons opened. Most were home-based businesses that benefited the community. "Whatever, we needed, somebody had," declares Domineck, "If the person you asked didn't have it, he'd get it. Somebody would get you whatever you needed. I don't care what it was."²⁸

The needs that Domineck spoke of were purchased at one of the "ever changing" stores located within the community. Besides selling material goods, the roles of these businesses were many. They provided employment to community residents, which instilled pride to the employers as well as the employees. They provided a buffer for the humiliation that African-Americans endured while shopping in white-owned businesses and more importantly, these businesses kept finances in the community.²⁹

²⁷ James Jackson, interview by author 22 February 2008, telephone interview.

²⁸ Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

²⁹ Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye and E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 95.

“We had a variety of stores to shop at,” states Domineck. “We could go to one of our own, one in downtown, or one of the white owned stores in the community.”³⁰ Stores that opened during the 1920s and remained opened until urban renewal included Sutton Grocery, Hallman Grocery and W.W. Camp Grocery. Sutton Grocery was on the corner of Washington and Harris. Hallman was situated on the corner of Washington and Randall and W.W. Camp was on the corner of Randall and Georgia Avenue. “Camp was more inside our community, but it was always owned by whites,” remembers James Jackson.³¹

These white owned stores were strategically located on Washington Avenue, the racial boundary line, so that they could serve both the black and the white communities. “Whites hardly ever ventured into our area,” recalls Domineck, “they stayed on their side of Washington and we usually stayed on ours, except in the stores. The races mixed in the stores.”³²

Other white owned stores where the “races mixed” were located in downtown East Point. “I remember Ms. Georgia’s bakery on Main Street,” recalls Domineck, “she sold fresh breads, pastries and doughnuts everyday. We (African-Americans) could go in and buy what we wanted, but we had to leave. We couldn’t eat in there, like whites could and at Forest’s Five and Dime, there were two water fountains; one said ‘colored’ and one said ‘white.’”³³

One business that permitted both whites and blacks to sit and enjoy themselves, although on a strictly segregated basis, was East Point’s Fairfax Theatre. “Now everybody sat down in the Fairfax,” remembers Domineck, “whites sat downstairs and we sat upstairs. That was after we entered on the side. We couldn’t even go in through front, but we paid the same price that they

³⁰ Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

³¹ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

³² Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

³³ Ibid.

did, one nickel.”³⁴ “We went upstairs and they stayed down,” echoes Wanda Williams, “I think I really learned about segregation at places like the Fairfax.”³⁵

When Williams was asked to explain that comment, she answered

“Segregation was something children learned by watching. I watched how my mother responded to whites and I learned to do the same. In places like the Fairfax Theater, Main Street Pharmacy and other downtown stores, blacks entered on the side. We were not permitted to go in the front. As children we saw this. We didn’t understand it, but we saw it. So, we learned to do the same thing. In the drug stores, we could go in and buy whatever we wanted, but we couldn’t sit at the counters. We had to come out. We learned to do what we saw our parents do. To us it was a way of life.”³⁶

“Another place that I enjoyed going to was Georgia Dairy on Cleveland,” remembers Domineck, “we could go in there and get an ice-cream cone, but again we couldn’t sit down. We couldn’t even hang around. We had to get our ice-cream and eat it on the way home.”³⁷

Several East Washington residents recalled a local grill called Fishers’ Burgers. “Another good eating place was Fishers’ Burgers,” recounts Domineck, “After we bought our food at the side window, we had to leave. Whites bought their food then sat out on the patio and ate it. Segregation was like that until the late 1950s. That’s when integration was coming. They (whites) knew integration was coming.”³⁸

African-American owned businesses were oftentimes based out of the owner’s home and always located “completely inside” the black community. Some were additional locations to successful establishments in Atlanta. For example, in 1931 Charles S. and Gabriel Cox opened their second funeral business, Cox Brothers Funeral Home, at 531 Holcomb Avenue. Their

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Williams interview, 15 February 2008.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Domineck interview, .27 August 2007.

³⁸ Ibid.

primary location had opened in Atlanta in 1900 and was located at 258 Auburn Avenue. One business that opened in 1933 and operated until urban renewal was Elijah Sim's barber shop. It was located at 431 Holcomb Avenue in 1933.³⁹

By 1935, the center of business activity was located on the corner of Randall Street and Holcomb Avenue. It contained several businesses, including a Masonic lodge; "We called it Kingdom Hall," recalls Wanda Williams.⁴⁰ Kingdom Hall housed Bankhead Grocery, Peyton Lyon's barber shop and Ann Martin's beauty shop. Bill's Sims "weekends-only" bar-be-que stand, Holbrook's shoe repair, Tommy Alexander's restaurant and Charlie Nixon's grocery store were also located in the center.

Since beauty was an important aspect to the ladies of the community, Ann Martin's shop was a busy, local, well-known, and, according to James Jackson, "well-ran" establishment. "Ms. Ann has always been, and still is, an icon in the community," states James Jackson, "she ran her shop as well as Reverend Martin, (Ann's husband and pastor of Neriah Baptist Church), ran Neriah."⁴¹

Ann Martin was one entrepreneur who benefited from East Point's convenient proximity to Atlanta. Because Auburn Avenue was "the leading business street in this country for African-American people,"⁴² proprietors aspired to own an establishment there. Ann Martin owned and operated Mae West, one of Auburn's beauty salons. Although East Washington residents were patrons of Mae West, for their convenience, Martin opened Mrs. Ann's Beauty Salon in East

³⁹ Chronology, 13.

⁴⁰ Williams interview, 15 February 2008.

⁴¹ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

⁴² Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye and E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta*, 95. This was quoted by Atlanta *Daily World* publisher C.A. Scott.

Washington's Thornton Hall. Martin worked in Mae West in the mornings and, because East Washington was "only thirty minutes away," worked at Ann's in the evenings. As she recalls,

My members and friends in East Point always supported me. The ladies would come way to Auburn to get their hair done, but it was hard for them to get there. They'd have to pay to ride the bus, walk, and then pay again for their hair. So, I decided that the shop on Auburn Avenue wasn't enough; if they couldn't come to the shop, I'd take the shop to them. I sent John (John Watson) to beauty school. He and Charlie Mae Swain worked at the salon in East Point during the day. I ran the Auburn shop in the morning and would come to East Point in the evening. Charlie Mae Swain could do hair real good. She'd slap grease on a customer's hair and put that hot comb through it. I mean it was looking good in no time.⁴³

Some community residents succeeded in maintaining home-based businesses. For example, Miss Lynn Mobley sold candy, tobacco and soda-pop from her home.⁴⁴ Some women worked in their homes as independent laundresses. "My mother moved to East Point from Griffin in the 1930s," remembers Annie Parham, "she did private home work; bringing in, washing, ironing, and returning white people's clothes. Ms. Jimmie Lou Tucker also took-in clothes."⁴⁵

Jimmie Lou Tucker was a laundress originally from Hogansville. She moved to East Point in the 1920s with her sisters Mattie and Bennie and was a laundress until the mid 1970s. "Aunt Jimmie lived on the corner of Holcomb and Bayard," recalls Erma Lemons, "she washed white folk's clothes. They always tried to pay her what they wanted her to have, not the amount that was agreed upon. She was always fussing and threatening them for her money. So, she was glad when she got some black customers."⁴⁶

⁴³ Ann Martin, interview by author, 27 February 2008, digital recording.

⁴⁴ Chronology, 13.

⁴⁵ Annie Parham, interview by author, 01 April 2008, transcript, 1.

⁴⁶ Erma Lemons, interview by author, 02 April 2008, transcript, 1.

In the mid 1960s, one prominent African-American customer of Jimmie Lou Tucker's was Gus Thornhill, Jr. Thornhill, a native of East Point and 1958 graduate of South Fulton High School, along with George Clifford Burnette desegregated East Point's police force in 1965.⁴⁷ As the founder, owner and operator of Gus Thornhill's Funeral Home, he remains one of the community's most successful businessmen. Residents take pride in the fact that his character has not changed since the days of his humble beginnings. "Aunt Jimmie used to wash Gus's clothes," remembers Erma Lemons, "He said that he wouldn't have made it on the police force if she hadn't kept his uniforms clean. She charged whites, but, at first, she did Gus' clothes for free. After he got his money, he paid her. He never forgot what she did."⁴⁸

Another lucrative, but illegal, home-based enterprise was the production and distribution of alcohol, "homebrew." "My daddy (William H. Dennis, Jr.) lived in the valley," explains Wanda Williams, "the valley was where the poor people lived, at the lower end of Holcomb, by Martin Street. Well, my daddy had money because he was a bootlegger. He worked at the alum plant (Hercules Chemical Company) and at Fulton Bags in Atlanta, but he got his spending money from making moonshine. Daddy and Mr. J.B. Bailey both sold liquor."⁴⁹

According to Wanda Williams, J.B. Bailey's illegal moonshine business was so successful that he purchased three homes from the profits. "He used the money he made from bootlegging to build homes," recalls Williams, "Mr. J.B. was the first African-American to build a brand new house in this community. He built three houses and rented two of them out. His house was over by New Street, where his café was."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Herman "Skip" Mason, *Black America Series: East Point, Georgia* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 122.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Williams interview, 15 February, 2008.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Social organizations and religious institutions were extremely important to the East Washington community. One social association that was imperative to the neighborhood was the Progressive Lodge. This “self-help” group, founded in the 1930s, held social activities such as community dinners and dance parties. But, more importantly, it provided burial services for its membership. Membership was open to anyone who participated in the lodge’s functions and regularly paid the allotted monthly dues. Dues were “collected, invested and held in trust until a member’s death.”⁵¹ Upon a member’s demise, the lodge treasurer paid the funeral costs for the deceased. On most occasions the treasurer paid the funeral home directly, instead of giving the money to the deceased’s family.⁵² “The burial service gave people peace of mind,” explains James Jackson, “that way a person knew that his burial was taken care of and his family didn’t have to worry about ‘passing the hat.’”⁵³

Besides a proper burial, East Washington residents were concerned with where their deceased would be buried. Prior to the mid 1930s, East Point’s deceased African-American citizens could be “laid to rest” in the “black section” of the Connally Cemetery. This memorial ground, located on the former Connally plantation, was the only place in East Point that offered burial space for deceased black residents. After it “closed to the public,” African-Americans were forced to find other “resting places” for their deceased friends and relatives.⁵⁴

The closest cemetery that allowed burial for black citizens was in the adjacent town of College Park. In the 1940s, College Park Cemetery opened a “Black Cemetery” where many East Washington residents buried their loved ones. It was located on Simmons Drive. (The

⁵¹ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 94.

⁵² Chronology, 7.

⁵³ James Jackson, interview by author 11 February 2008, telephone interview..

⁵⁴ Chronology, 7.

street's name was changed to J. T. Alexander Way in 1995.) "Remember, College Park Cemetery (on Virginia Avenue) was for whites only," states Charles Dowdell, a resident of College Park for over sixty years, "it did not allow Blacks to be buried there until the 1970s. Before then, Blacks were buried in a small "black section" on Simmons."⁵⁵

There were other cemeteries that offered space for African-American burials, but they were located in Atlanta; Lincoln Cemetery, which opened in 1925, and South View, chartered in 1886. "We've always been an African-American cemetery," exclaims South View employee Charlene Watts-Addie, "Southview was founded because after the Civil War black people could not find places to bury their dead. If you didn't have property or were not a member of a church with property, then you had a difficult time finding a place to bury your deceased."⁵⁶

Although Southview and Lincoln offered burial alternatives for East Washington residents, both were located in Atlanta. Residents paid more to bury their loved ones in Atlanta because funeral directors traveled further to transport the body. Travel expenditures as well as other funeral costs made membership in a burial association like the Progressive Lodge more advantageous. "The lodge membership offered residents security," explains James Jackson, "'security of burial insurance' for both the member and his family."⁵⁷

Another beneficial social organization for East Washington residents was the Hyacinth Art Circle Sewing Club. Organized in 1913, this women's' association was extremely active during the mid to late 1930s. The club's primary purpose was fellowship. Unlike the Progressive Lodge, residents could not just join the Hyacinth Art Circle Sewing Club. These "elite" ladies

⁵⁵ Charles Dowdell, interview by author, 02 April 2008, digital recording. College Park's "Black Cemetery" was condemned in 1997 and closed to the public. Residents, like Annie Parham, whose brother James Bryant is buried there, mourn that they cannot go and visit their relatives' gravesites.

⁵⁶ Charlene Watts-Addie, interview by author, 02 April, 2008. telephone interview.

⁵⁷ James Jackson interview and Chronology, 7.

were nominated and selected by other members. Its membership, no more than fifteen women annually, produced “beautiful, decorative, and useful articles of needlework.” The women displayed their “artistic skills” by wearing their favorite garment on May Day.⁵⁸

Other community social organizations for women included the Friendly Twelve, a young women’s association which began in the 1920s and the White Rose Handy Craft Sewing Club. A prominent male society for men “who were honest, temperate, and of good moral character”⁵⁹ was the Ajax Social Club, which was organized in 1932. “I was a drifting member of the Ajax Club,” recalls James Jackson, “we were the young men who comprised the social side of the East Point Community Civic Club.”⁶⁰

The East Point Community Civic Club originated in the 1930s and was led by “great, community minded” men like Charles A. Green, H.C. Walker, Eddie McMichael, and W.A. Quillian. “These men helped to create, build, and sustain this community,” remembers Jackson, “they envisioned our recreation center, organized fund-raisers to establish it, and then donated the building to East Point under the restriction that the city always uses it for a community recreation facility. Mr. Green even gave the first dollar towards financing the pool,” adds Jackson.

Local branches of national secret African-American organizations like the Order of Eastern Stars and the Masons were a vital part of the community. “Once I got out of the service, I became a member of Atlanta Lodge Number 581 of the Masons,” remarks James Jackson, “we were a secret society so I can not tell you about a lot of what we did in the community. But, I

⁵⁸ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 90.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁶⁰ James Jackson, interview by author, 26 April 2008, digital recording.

will say that our lodge along with East Point Lodge Number 630 took care of each other. That was the point of the Masons, to make sure that lodge members' families survived racial hatred.”⁶¹

For community relief programs, political, social and economic autonomy, and spiritual uplift, the residents had six churches that they could attend. Church offered African-Americans a place of agency. It gave community residents a place where their voice, vote and membership was validated; a place where they were could become leaders. “Everybody belonged to a church,” states Jackson, “you may not have gone regularly, but you were on somebody’s membership roll.”⁶²

According to the residents, where you lived, where your parents worshipped and your perceived social status played a significant part in which church you attended. Emory Darden stated that the early members of Neriah lived in Junglefoot. “There were already five other churches in the area, but they looked down on us,” remembers Darden, “so I guess that’s why the people who founded Neriah began their own church.”⁶³

Neriah Baptist Church officially began in Junglefoot, on Willingham Drive, around 1923. It is the youngest of the six churches in the community. Initially, its members did not have a place to worship, so they held services in a Methodist Church on property that was owned by the Gate City Cotton Mill.⁶⁴ In 1934, Rev. R.N. and First Lady Ann Martin were “called” to serve as the church leaders. Reverend Martin was “born and reared” in College Park and Mrs. Martin, born in 1916, was from Thomaston in Upson County. “I was five when we moved to College

⁶¹ James Jackson, interview by author, 03 May 2008, digital recording.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Emory Darden, interview by author, 23 November 2004, transcript.

⁶⁴ Ann S. Larcom, “We Have Come this Far by Faith: A View of Six Historic Churches in East Point, Georgia” (Masters thesis, Georgia State University, 1988), 20.

Park,” recalls Mother Martin, “my parents, Mr. Ben and Mrs. Dora Hutchinson, owned land and were farmers in Thomaston. We moved here because my aunt, Ms. Clora Spear, convinced my mother that we would have a better life in the city.”⁶⁵

From the time that the Martins arrived to Neriah, until the time that they retired, the church maintained an important role in the East Washington community. “Everybody under sixty years old joined Neriah,” remembers Jackson, “Reverend Martin brought the young people in.”⁶⁶ The Martins’ first act as leaders was relocating the church from Willingham Drive to Barrett Avenue (During Urban Renewal, Barrett Avenue was closed. Today, the church is located on Holcomb Court). Ann Martin:

When we were called to Neriah, it was located on the Hapeville Car Line. That was over in “New Town.” (Junglefoot) The church was in such poor condition that it was propped up on its side to keep the wind from blowing it down. The city condemned it and we had to move from Willingham. We rented the top floor of Kingdom Hall for worship service while we raised money to build the wooden church on Barrett Avenue in 1937. That area, where the church is located now, wasn’t even cleared. People didn’t live there. The only things that were there were gamblers and people getting shot.

Now, the folks over by Siloam (Baptist Church), those were the worldly (more prosperous) people. They lived better than the folks over on the other side of town. Those were the gamblers and all. The “uppity” folks were afraid to come through by those gamblers. As a matter of fact, when Reverend put that church over there, Siloam and those other churches thought that he was crazy, ‘Why do you wanna go over there with all those people?’ Somebody was getting shot and killed over there every Saturday night. Matter of fact, the police didn’t want to come through there because the people were so rough and bad.

We had to walk from Main Street to the church from services. Men were gambling on the sidewalk and we just walked around them. The Rev. would always say, “Good morning fellas.” They’d say, “What’cha say?” and go right back to gambling.

One Saturday morning, there was no air in the church, so the windows were up. This man was walked across the yard. The choir was singing “Blessed Assurance.” He took his cap off and he stood out in the yard and listened to the

⁶⁵ Ann Martin, interview by author, 27 February 2008, digital recording.

⁶⁶ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

entire service. He was a known drunkard and gambler. That's when the spirit told me that we had moved to the right place; that we were doing the right thing.⁶⁷

Under the Martins' leadership, Neriah grew from its initial twenty-three members to more than four hundred. Besides owning two beauty salons, Mother Martin founded several community organizations as well as the locally renowned Martin Singers. Reverend Martin founded and moderated the Cane Creek Congress, a state-wide church association, ordained more than fifty deacons, and licensed seventeen ministers.

With an inception date of 1866, Union Baptist Church was the oldest in the community. In 1884, its members "acquired property from Miss E.A. Mangum" and moved its location from near the junction of the two railroads to the end of East Washington Avenue, its present location. In 1891, it housed the community's first official African-American school, "probably the first time that the community had formal classroom education available to its black citizens."⁶⁸

Siloam Baptist Church, the community's most "prestigious" house of worship, opened in 1888. It was started by a group of Union Baptist members, who wanted to worship closer to their residences. Siloam later moved "up the hill" on Bayard Street. The Hyacinth Sewing Club, the Progressive Lodge, the Ajax Club and other social organizations had their foundation at Siloam. To many residents, Siloam was deemed the "uppity" church that was located on the "other" side of the community. However, John Langford recalled a different version.

"My mother and I were members of Siloam. When I was very young, the church was divided into four wards, A through D. One time when I was eight years old, Deacon Brooks came to our house to collect our church dues. We weren't able to go to church that Sunday, for some reason. My mother only had fifty cents, but she wanted to put at least put a dollar in church that week. Deacon

⁶⁷ Ann Martin interview, 27 February 2008.

⁶⁸ Chronology, 3.

Brooks added fifty cents and wrote her weekly donation as a dollar. Every time that I think about that, I thank Deacon Brooks. Siloam was really a united church.”⁶⁹

Residents who wanted a different “style” of worship began Grant Chapel African Methodist Episcopal in 1894. Grant Chapel was East Point’s first African-American Methodist Church. The Church derived its name from Bishop Abram Grant, who was the presiding bishop over the Georgia’s AME Sixth District from 1892 until 1896.

James Jackson was a member of Mallalieu Methodist Episcopal. He proudly exclaims, “I’ve been at Mallalieu my whole life. That’s the church that my family attended.” Mallalieu was named after Bishop Willard Francis Mallalieu and began in 1901. Its first location was “east of the railroad tracks,” where Tri-Cities High School is presently located. Mallalieu moved to Randall Street in 1925, when the City began the construction of its “whites only” William A. Russell High School.⁷⁰

East Point’s oldest African-American residents were descendants of enslaved people, who worked on the Connally Plantation. This small community, who in 1907 still resided on the Connally land, formed Evans Grove Baptist. The church later re-located to the East Washington community. (Presently it is located on Hendrix Avenue and named The New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church.)

According to the residents, the six churches in the community “made the community.” “Your church was your means of support,” recalls James Domineck, “it was your community within the community. Oftentimes, your church members fed your family, took care of your

⁶⁹ John H. Langford, interview by author, 13 March 2008. digital recording.

⁷⁰ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 115.

children, hid people out if the police was looking for them and protected one another. The churches had cookouts, social functions, bake sales, holiday festivities.”⁷¹

Although the six churches were separate entities and held different styles of worship, community residents oftentimes attended several churches. For example, Neriah Baptist Church held worship service the first and third Sundays of each month. On the second and fourth Sundays, Reverend Martin preached at other churches. So, if Neriah members wanted to attend church on those Sundays, they had to go to another church. Many did. “For my family, church wasn’t a choice,” recalls Elizabeth Darden, “we went to church every time Neriah’s doors were open. If they weren’t, like on second and fourth Sundays, we went to another church in the area. You may as well have gone, because the deacons were gonna knock on your door Monday morning to collect your dues anyway.”⁷²

James Domineck recalled that his parents were members of Siloam, while he and his siblings joined Mallalieu. “Mallalieu was right across the street from our house,” remembers Domineck, “my mom would get us ready to go to Sunday School and we’d just walk across the street. We attended Sunday School and worship service at Mallalieu, while my parents went to Siloam. The only time that my parents would join us at Mallalieu was on Easter Sundays when we recited our speeches.”⁷³

According to James Jackson, the primary role of the churches was community survival. “The six churches held the community together,” recalls Jackson, “although each church was different and we often fought, in times of trouble, we came together. When our schools burned,

⁷¹ Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

⁷² Elizabeth Darden interview, 31 December 2007.

⁷³ Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

the churches housed our students. When the city discriminated against us, the churches held meetings to discuss how we would fight back, and when our community needed something, like a community center, the churches pulled together to finance the construction. We built the East Washington community, not the city of East Point. We built it through our churches.”⁷⁴

Besides the church, education was also an essential institution to East Washington. “Education was always important to our communities,” recalls Ann Martin, “when I think about the 1940s, I think about our struggle for better schools.”⁷⁵ East Point’s African-American community had struggled for the right to educate their children since the 1880s, when the first known African-American school began in Union Baptist Church.⁷⁶

The Union Baptist Church school was initiated by African-Americans for African-American students in the mid 1880s. In 1891, East Point city officials approved a referendum that included building three new schools. One of the schools planned was for African-American students.⁷⁷ In 1896, the city opened Central School, East Point’s “modern and well-equipped” white school; the first of three planned in 1891. Ten thousand dollars in revenue from business licenses was used for its construction. By 1898, it educated 220 white children and by 1899 went to the tenth grade. At this time, East Point’s 139 African-American students ranged in age from six to eighteen and still attended school in Union Baptist Church.⁷⁸

By 1917, the city finally constructed East Point Colored School, a wooden structure located on Randall Street. (By this time, the city had built two other white schools, Church Street

⁷⁴ James Jackson, interview by author, 18 October 2007, digital recording.

⁷⁵ Ann Martin interview, 27 February 2008.

⁷⁶ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 109.

⁷⁷ Dodd, “East Point, Georgia: A History, 28.

⁷⁸ East Point Town Council Minutes, 10 June 1896, 18 August 1896, 28 May 1899, Dodd, “East Point, Georgia: A History 28-29.

School and Harris Street School.) In 1920, there were 225 students who attended the East Point Colored School.⁷⁹

Like most school systems of that era, the “white schools were better equipped than the African-American school”⁸⁰ and the white administrators and teachers were paid more. For example, the principal of East Point Colored School was D.H. Butler. In 1917, the city paid Butler \$35.00 per month. This amount was far less than the \$90.00 per month that the council paid M.R. Ramsey, the principal of Central School; whose secretary, Mrs. Anna Malone, earned \$5.00 per month more than Butler.⁸¹

With the opening of William A. Russell High School, East Point’s white high school, in 1923, East Point had four schools.⁸² At that time, there was not a school for African-Americans who desired to matriculate beyond the eighth grade. This changed when Atlanta’s Booker T. Washington High opened in the fall of 1924.⁸³

Booker T. Washington, “at that time one of the finest buildings in the system (Atlanta)”⁸⁴ was constructed to hold 2,000 students. However, by 1935, over 6,000 students attended the school, including students from East Point.⁸⁵ “Parents scraped up money to send their children to Washington High,” recalls James Jackson, “somehow, I was privileged to go. I rode my bicycle to get there.”⁸⁶ James Jackson explained that he felt “privileged” to attend Washington High,

⁷⁹ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 53.

⁸⁰ Dodd, “East Point, Georgia: A History,” 28.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸² Larcom, *Centennial Chronology of East Point*, 49.

⁸³ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 55.

⁸⁴ Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye and E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta*, 139.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁸⁶ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

because by the ninth grade, most African-American children “got a job, not an advanced education. Kids in our community were poor. We had to work to help support our families.”⁸⁷

John Langford recalls that he began working in elementary school. “I had to be at Rich’s Grocery Store at seven o’clock in the morning. I left there around eight-thirty to go to school. It started at nine and ended at two-thirty. After school, I went back to work and stayed until the store closed, which was usually around seven-thirty.”⁸⁸ Langford exclaimed that although his family needed his pay for their survival, quitting school was never an option. “We all knew the importance of education. That’s why, although I worked everyday and every weekend, I still graduated from high school.”⁸⁹

The community was devastated when fire destroyed the East Point Colored School, (Randall Street School) in 1926. In 1928, a new African-American school was built on Bayard Street. By this time, the East Point School System had merged with the Fulton County Board of Education, which meant more money was available for the construction of Bayard Street School. Unlike the Randall Street School, Bayard was erected of brick and included ten rooms. Ironically, in 1940, the Bayard suffered the same fate as Randall Street. It too was reduced to ashes on New Years Day.⁹⁰

“When the Bayard School burned, we went to school in the churches,” remembers James Jackson, “Union Baptist was always good at opening its doors for the school. Teachers taught two and three classes at the same time. That was the only time that I ever saw three girls of such

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Langford interview, 13 March 2008.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 57.

different ages in the same class. Lucille, Fannie and Lethia were at least eight years apart. But, we wouldn't let a fire keep us from getting our education. It was too important," adds Jackson.⁹¹

While the school was re-built, upper grade students went to Booker T. Washington and lower grades attended school in community churches. In 1941, the school re-opened and was once again named East Point Colored School. (Perhaps not surprisingly, the building smoldered two more times; in 1948 and in 1982)⁹²

Education in the East Washington community from 1932 until the 1960s included instruction with Principal Frank S. McClarin. "Professor" McClarin, as he was called by students, faculty and community residents, began his legacy as principal of East Point Colored School in 1932. He undertook the school's transformation to a high school from 1947 until 1952, when East Point Colored School added a grade a year, along with the construction of a new annex. In 1948, McClarin personally helped to re-build the school after it was destroyed by yet another fire. And in 1952, when the high school was finally completed and separated from East Point Elementary, McClarin took the position as principal of East Point's new South Fulton High School.⁹³ "The day that the high school opened was a good day. We were proud to have our own high school," remembers James Jackson, "our students didn't have to go way over to Washington anymore."⁹⁴

"McClarin was a great man," recalls Annie Parham, "Because of him, we got a high school. Not just for us here in East Point, but students attended from Palmetto, Hapeville, College Park and other surrounding places. We had the only African-American high school in

⁹¹ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

⁹² Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 57.

⁹³ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 56-57. James Jackson, interview by author, 25 March 2008, digital recording.

⁹⁴ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

south Fulton County. McClarin did that,” recalls Annie Parham. She exclaimed that McClarin was educated, tall and solid. He walked and talked with authority. Students cleared the hallway when they heard or when they just thought that “Fess” (Professor McClarin) was coming. “He spoke well and he demanded that we do the same,” adds Parham.⁹⁵

“Frank S. McClarin was my daddy’s principal when he was in elementary. The school was on Randall Street then,” explains Wanda Williams, “he was mine in high school when it was South Fulton High on Bayard. He knew me because he knew my daddy. He was a part of the community and he worked hard to get us what we needed for our education.”⁹⁶

Professor McClarin was one of many community residents who were known to fight with Fulton County school officials for books, desks, and school supplies. “When we were in high school, we hardly ever got any new books,” exclaims John Langford, “all of our books were left over from Russell. White students’ names were still in them. Most of the books had the backs torn off. The white students knew that the books were coming to South Fulton, so many contained racial slurs,” remembers Langford.

Langford exclaimed that used dilapidated books that contained racial slurs did not upset Professor McClarin. He told students that he struggled with school officials to get these books and they would use them. The books were state approved and required for graduation. “He made sure that we had new supplies,” recalls Langford, “like pencils, paper and tablets, but our books were old. I never saw a new book and after a while, I never cared.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Annie Parham interview, 20 February 2008

⁹⁶ Wanda Williams, 15 February 2008, interview by author, digital recording.

⁹⁷ Langford interview, 13 March 2008.



Figure 10- Frank Sheridan McClarin, 1958
(courtesy of East Point Historical Society)

McClarin and his administrators made it difficult for students to quit school for any reason. His school maintained an unusually high retention rate. “If you started high school, then you completed high school,” states Annie Parham. “When my friend stopped attending school because of his job, McClarin went to his home and spoke to his mother. He was at school the next day,” remembers John Langford.⁹⁸

Despite McClarin’s efforts, some students did leave school early, especially with the advent of World War II. “Remember, a lot of students who were in upper grades, were older than

⁹⁸ Annie Parham interview, 20 February 2008; Langford interview, 13 March 2008.

students are now. We had some young men who were in the eighth grade who were old enough for the draft,” explains James Jackson, “some were my friends. We went to war together. I was nineteen when I came out of the service. I upped my age (lied) just to go in the Army when I was fifteen.”⁹⁹

By the early 1940s, the small enclave that constituted the East Washington community was practically self-sufficient. It contained grocery stores, restaurants, beauty and barber salons, social organizations, and religious institutions within its well-defined boundaries. Although the community still struggled with segregation and unpredicted bouts of racial terror, residents educated their children, initiated leisure activities, including a semi-pro baseball team, established more businesses, a bus line, two additional funeral homes, and somehow managed to minimize the effects of men leaving for military duty. Upon their return, many veterans were at the center of the fight for civil rights. Over the next fifteen years many East Washington residents fought to build an inclusive community without racial, political and social class divisions.

⁹⁹ Jackson interview, 25 March 2008.

“INTEGRATION? WHAT A HIGH COST”: GROWTH, CLIMAX AND URBAN RENEWAL, 1940S - 1962

World War II impacted East Point residents the same way it did much of American society; it exposed racial hypocrisy in the US. “The first time that a white woman looked at me as a man, not as a black man, but a man, was in the war,” recounts Jackson, “we were stationed in Berlin immediately after the fall of Hitler. German citizens were happy to see American soldiers. They didn’t care about skin color. I realized later that they didn’t know about skin color discrimination. That was an American thing.”¹

James Jackson was not the only African-American World War II soldier who realized that racism “was an American thing.” When African-American veterans returned home from the war, many were at the forefront in the battle for human rights. They had successfully fought Japan, Italy and Germany for the freedom of all American citizens, now African-Americans must fight Jim Crow racism for their own personal liberties. The contradiction between the ostensible aims of the war and the reality of their second class citizenship was unmistakable. “They had fought for their country and consequently believed they were worthy of full citizenship.”²

Military service abroad exposed African-American men to integrated societies, a practice that was not prevalent in the United States. Prior to World War II, East Washington residents only knew segregation. The community was strategically divided by physical boundaries which were so embedded in residents’ minds that according to many, such as James Domineck, “I can tell you where I could and where I couldn’t go in the community today.”³ For example, Domineck explained that there was a “boundary box” that African-Americans were “safely”

¹ James Jackson, interview by author, 25 March 2008, digital recording.

² Clifford Kuhn, “World War II and Civil Rights,” Presentation, Newport News, Virginia, February 22, 2006, 10.

³ James Domineck, interview by author, 27 August 2007, digital recording.

confined to. The box was bordered by Bayard, Martin and Washington. “Although Washington was definitely our perimeter, since the left side of it was all white,” states Domineck. “Georgia Avenue was really our first street. When I ventured past it, towards Washington, my attitude would change. It’s as if I knew that people were watching me and I was on unsafe ground. You see, segregation was a feeling. It was just as mental as it was physical. The physical has changed. We own all of this community now, including Washington. But, the mind can’t change as quickly as surroundings can.”⁴

James Jackson also recalls the boundary line. He states that as a child he “never crossed that line. I didn’t have anywhere to go. The school house was on Bayard. The church (Mallalieu) was up the street. I never needed to cross that line stayed on one little block most of my childhood life.”⁵

Both Domineck and Jackson recall that racial boundaries became more mentally precise as they grew. “As a child you moved around on your own,” states Domineck, “there were no real places that you thought that you couldn’t venture to. Everything seemed big to you. As you got older, your parents outlined where you could and could not go. You realized that you never saw anything on the left side of Washington but whites. So, as you grew, you just knew. It was ‘this far and no further.’ That (Washington) was the dividing line.”⁶

Domineck’s perception is supported by Jennifer Rittenhouse. In *Growing Up Jim Crow*, Rittenhouse claimed that racism is a learned behavior that is first taught in home and then reiterated in public. Rittenhouse argued that white women taught their children the basis of

⁴ Domineck interview, 15 May 2008.

⁵ Jackson interview, 16 May 2008.

⁶ Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

social etiquette, while white men were the self-appointed enforcers of social limits and boundaries. African-American parents taught their children the importance of staying within physical boundaries as a means of self-protection from dangerous whites.⁷

For James Jackson, his “sense of equality” while in Germany made him hunger for a more egalitarian community. He stated that after the war he came back to the East Washington community, but racial segregation was hard “after being overseas.” So, he went north to live with his mother in Connecticut. “I thought that I would be treated differently there,” remembers Jackson, “I sat down on a bus beside a white lady and she got up rather than sit down besides me. I was in uniform then. It was disgusting to me. We had just fought for this country and were treated like that.”⁸

World War II challenged many African-Americans to take a firmer stand against racism. “When we were fighting for this country, no one cared about our race,” exclaims Jackson, “Once the war was over, we were back to being black. We knew that things in this country had to change,” declares James Jackson, “I think that that’s what sparked McClarin, Oscar James (O.J.) Hurd and others to take a stronger stand for our students’ future. In the mid 1940s, this community really started doing things. More businesses developed, Hurd masterminded a community voter registration drive, and our semi-pro East Point Bears sparked a huge interest in sports.”⁹

From the late 1940s until the time of urban renewal, the East Washington community peaked. There were funeral homes, a bus line, a baseball team, cab and ambulance services,

⁷ Jennifer Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow: the Racial Socialization of Black and White Southern Children, 1890-1940*. (Chapel Hill: University of NC Press, 2006), .

⁸ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

⁹ Jackson interview, 27 July 2007.

dozens of restaurants, cafes, beauty salons and barber shops, and for the first time African-American students received a free education from kindergarten to the twelfth grade.¹⁰

The people of East Washington love their community but a special sense of pride is conveyed when they talk about the decade before Urban Renewal. “This community has always had its problems,” remembers James Domineck, “whether it was poor race relations, our extreme poverty or trying to get kids educated, we had our share of difficulties. But during the 1950s, when Blacks were fighting for civil rights and most Whites were fighting for continued segregation, it was the fun times that kept us going. We really knew how to have fun.”¹¹

Watching the East Point Bears was one way that the community spent its leisure time. Organized in 1938, the East Point Bears was one of the four community’s amateur baseball teams. The other three were the East Point White Sox, Swift Black Caps and the East Point All Stars. The Bears, a division of the National Baseball Congress, were sponsored by Neal Morgan and Joe Collins. As long time employees of the Swift and Company mill, Morgan and Collins were two of the few African-American plant supervisors. This position elevated their community status to one of respect, as well as provided them steady income, income that they invested in the Bears. “Morgan and Collins financed the teams,” recounts Jackson, who played for the Bears from 1949 until the early 1960s, “they provided our uniforms, transportation,

¹⁰ South Fulton High School opened in 1952. Before then, students who matriculated beyond ninth grade were forced to attend Booker T. Washington in Atlanta. Although attending Washington was free, students were required to pay for their transportation to and from school.

¹¹ Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

eating and sleeping arrangements, made our schedules and handled everything that it took to run a successful baseball franchise.”¹²

The East Point Bears were a Division C team. “Back then players started in C League farm clubs, moved to A, AA, AAA and those who were good went to the Major Leagues,” remembers Jackson. “We had a few players to make it to the big leagues. Our pitcher Dave Davis, from College Park, went to Cincinnati and Clifford Burnett was signed by the Giants. By the time that I was contracted with the Bears, they were already a dominant team. In 1954, they beat Atlanta’s Robinson Dodgers to win the State Championships. In 1957, we won the League Championship.”¹³

Playing for the Bears gave the owners, as well as the players, a sense of dignity. It leveled the playing field. Off the field, team owners were leaders. On the field, players were champions. They were considered heroes to many community residents. “There was a game every Saturday and most Sunday afternoons,” recalls Jackson, “the whole community came out to watch teams play. The Bears played teams from all over Georgia and Alabama, including exhibition games against the Atlanta Black Crackers and a Cuban All Star Team. “We played the College Park Indians, Forest Park Braves, South Atlanta Panthers, Atlanta Robinson Dodgers, Carrolton Honeydippers and Atlanta Federal Penitentiary on a regular basis.”¹⁴

Jackson recalls that the non-segregated Atlanta penitentiary team was the best team in the state. “No one could beat them,” remembers Jackson. “They beat Atlanta’s Black Crackers, White Crackers, and every team that they played. There were some professionals on the pen’s

¹² James Jackson, interview by author 17 May 2008, digital recording.

¹³ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

¹⁴ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

team. In fact, the best pitcher that I ever saw played for them. He had been on Montreal's farm team and could throw any pitch. He actually asked me what pitch I wanted him to throw me; what pitch I could hit. I told him and I still didn't hit it. We played the penitentiary team more than any other players. They told us that they appreciated us coming. But, we appreciated playing against them. They were the best.”¹⁵



Figure 11- East Point Bears, 1954
(courtesy of James Jackson)

boys seated – Wilbert “Chicken Pie” Deion, Howard - (boy in DeVon’s arm is James’ Jackson’s son Russell)
men seated 1st row- Floyd Talley, DeVon, Robert Jackson, Clarence Jackson, Roland Wood, Emerson Smith (mgr)
2nd row- James Jackson, Sam Roberts, Charlie Parks, George C. Burnett, Fred Shepherd, Clarence Lovett (asst)
3rd row -Neal Morgan, Charlie Walker, Benny Lovett, Richard Whatley, (man in hat?), Robert Lovett.

¹⁵ James Jackson, interview by author ,17 May 2008, digital recording.

Elizabeth Darden recalls that the games were played “well into the evening. On Saturdays we’d watch two or three games. It was our entertainment. It was free. The games were the only thing that people on Holcomb Street did. The players were like our celebrities. Parents, wives, kids and friends watched, ate hotdogs, yelled and just had fun.”¹⁶

The baseball games were primarily played in Bell Avenue Park or Green Park, East Point’s black fields. According to James Domineck, they really were not parks. They were actually cow pastures that were unleveled and full of rocks, holes and dirt piles. “We named them ourselves,” recalls Domineck, “Bell Avenue field was next to Bell Avenue. That’s how it got its name. Until the 1950s, Green’s Park was just called the park. When South Fulton High School opened, the students used the field for physical education classes and their sports program. Because of that, Fulton County School System started taking care of the field. That’s when it started to be called a park. In the late 1950s, the city named it Charles A. Green Recreation Center after Mr. Green. He did so much in our community that the city had to name something after him. We made sure of that.”¹⁷

Sometimes, with permission, African-American teams played at Ponce de Leon Park, the white Atlanta Crackers field. “We mostly played at Bell Avenue,” recalls James Jackson, “but sometimes the whites allowed us to play on their field, especially if they wanted to watch us play.”¹⁸

By the mid 1950s, residents’ leisure activities also included watching South Fulton High School’s sport teams. “From the time that the high school opened, we were tops in

¹⁶ Elizabeth Darden, interview by author, 14 May 2008, digital recording.

¹⁷ Domineck interview, 14 May 2008.

¹⁸ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

football, basketball and certainly baseball sports,” recalls John Langford, “Most of the kids were kin to someone who played for the Bears, so they had played ball all of their lives.”¹⁹

South Fulton High School opened in 1952. That same year it competed against ten schools including Atlanta’s Booker T. Washington, Griffin’s Fairmont, Macon’s Ballard Hudson, Augusta’s Lucy Laney and Columbus’ Spencer in basketball and baseball. “We even had a girl’s basketball team,” boasts John Langford.²⁰ In 1955, the school started a football team and went undefeated. The Mighty Lions football team defeated Price, Greensboro, Griffin, Carrollton, Rome, Newnan, Decatur and Marietta in the regular season. They beat Griffin, for the second time, in the district playoffs, Fort Valley in the regional playoffs, and Valdosta’s Dasher High to win the State Class A Championship.²¹

“South Fulton was a major force in sports,” remembers James Jackson, “we won championships in football, baseball and basketball several times from 1955 to 1969. Those coaches produced great athletes; Charlie Grier of the Denver Broncos, Don Adams who played for the Atlanta Hawks and Chicago Bulls, Lewis Wright was a star at Northwestern, and of course John Milner who starred with the New York Mets and the Pittsburgh Pirates. Milner was the South Fulton Boosters first scholarship recipient. He received a one hundred dollar book allowance when he went to college.”²²

Many residents believe that the high school was so successful in sports because of the Pony and little league teams that the South Fulton Booster Club instituted “practically as soon as the high school started,” as James Domineck recalls. “I was born in 1946,” recounts Domineck,

¹⁹ John Langford, interview by author 13 March 2008.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ 1958 South Fulton High School Year Book. East Point Historical Society Archives

²² Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

“from the time that I was able to walk I played baseball. Everybody did, girls too. Then, we would play for the Pony Leagues. Those who wanted to keep playing, or whose parents wanted them to keep playing, continued on through high school.”²³

James Jackson remembers that the first Pony League was started by the South Fulton Booster Club in 1960 as a means to keep kids active in sports and out of trouble. “If boys were outside in an organized sport,” explains Jackson, “then they couldn’t get in a lot of trouble. Organized sports meant supervision by an adult. A coach would be there. Parents would be around. Kids, who wandered off, especially over to Washington, ran into racial problems. Many whites looked for something to pin on our kids, especially our boys. That’s why the Pony Leagues were so important.”²⁴

Residents recall that the East Washington community had at least two Pony and one Pony Colt teams. The East Point Cubs were the Pony Colt. They were ages fifteen and sixteen. Standard Oil and the Raggedy Nine were Pony teams. They were ages thirteen and fourteen. “The Cubs and Standard Oil were good,” remembers Domineck, “they were always headed to some championship, but no team could match the Raggedy Nine. They were called that because they didn’t have any uniforms. They were all neighborhood kids, just like the kids who played for the Cubs and Standard Oil, but the Raggedy Nine were the poorer kids from the community. Their parents lived on the bottom of Holcomb, in Junglefoot or Green’s Alley. But, they played real good ball. They hustled well and usually beat everybody.”²⁵

²³ Domineck interview, 14 May 2008.

²⁴ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

²⁵ Domineck interview, 14 May 2008.

Oscar James Hurd played a significant role in the development of East Washington's youth sports programs. Born the son of sharecroppers in Kossuth, Mississippi in 1903, Hurd moved to Atlanta in 1925 to attend Morehouse College. During the 1930s he furthered his education at Clark College, while working various jobs to support himself. In the early 1940s, Hurd was hired by George Pullman to work as a porter for the Southern Railroad Company. Always the proponent of entrepreneurship, Hurd worked for the Atlanta Life insurance company and in the transportation department for Fulton County Board of Education, where during the 1950s he drove African-Americans students to and from school. It was at Fulton County that he decided to open his own transit company, The Friendly Peoples Busline, in 1952.²⁶

James Jackson credits Hurd for spearheading and organizing the Pony and Pony Colt Leagues. Jackson remembers that the community petitioned the city of East Point in 1960 to allow its students to play in the city's little league. The city council refused on the grounds that African-American boys were not permitted to play against white boys. As a result, Hurd, who led the petition, decided to organize a community league. "Mr. Hurd never took 'no' for an answer, when it came to racial issues, especially with our kids," recalls Jackson, "We all knew that the city would deny our request. Mr. Hurd began organizing the East Washington league before he even began the petition."²⁷

²⁶ Patricia Hurd and James Jackson, "A Tribute to Oscar James Hurd," Emancipation Proclamation Celebration held at Mallalieu United Methodist Church on 17 January 1988.

²⁷ Jackson interview, 03 March 2008.



Figure 12 – Pony Colt Team, 1961
(courtesy of James Jackson)

Jackson adds that back then African-Americans did not wait for the city, state or federal governments to give them anything. They took action when an idea was conceived. “We all knew that the city would come back with a negative response on any issue that we requested,” explains Jackson, “But, we still had to follow proper protocol and ask. We asked them. O.J. Hurd taught us not to depend on them.”²⁸

Hurd, described as an argumentative, tenacious, community activist, was recognized as the mastermind behind South Fulton High School’s successful sports program and most of the East Washington community’s athletic activities. “O.J. Hurd was a businessman,” recalls Jackson, “he worked independently to get our sports programs up and running. Hurd was

²⁸ Jackson interview, 27 July 2007.

responsible for getting the sports equipment to our schools. He fought tenaciously with Fulton County school officials so that our kids had the necessary equipment to compete in athletics.”²⁹

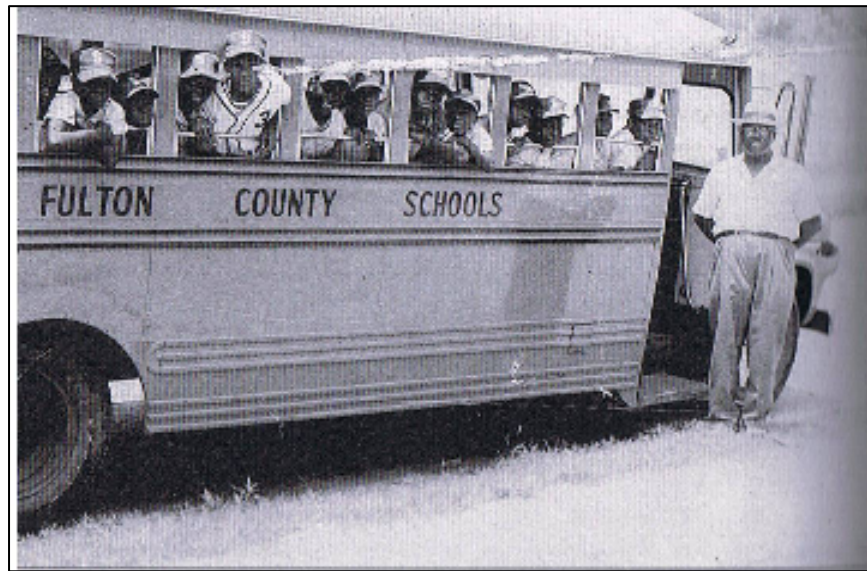


Figure 13- Oscar James Hurd with Pony Cubs Team
(courtesy of James Jackson)

Because of Hurd’s unwavering persistence, South Fulton High received basketballs, footballs, baseballs, bats, a basketball court and a gymnasium. “Hurd argued so much with the county that they grew tired of just seeing him come to meetings,” remembers Jackson, “he always asked why Russell High had all the supplies that they needed, while South Fulton, the newer and supposedly more modern school, had a dirt basketball court. He embarrassed them.”³⁰

Hurd, always expecting county officials to answer “no” to African-Americans’ educational requests, built a dirt basketball court outside of the new school building. Then, he put a pole in the ground and connected a steel rim to a piece of plywood and placed this at the

²⁹ Jackson interview, 17 May 2008.

³⁰ Ibid.

top of the pole. Basically, he constructed a crude looking basketball court. At the next school board meeting, he asked why South Fulton had to use this raggedy court while Russell had a concrete court and a gymnasium. “Within a year, South Fulton had a concrete basketball court and a gym,” chuckles Jackson.³¹

Residents claim that Hurd was a hard man. He was stubborn, inflexible and extremely closed mind. He did things his way or he did not participate in them at all. “People called him mean,” recalls Jackson, “but he wasn’t mean, he was smart. He was smart and he was crafty. Like a pitbull, he would not let go of something until he got what he wanted. What he wanted was what our community needed.”³²

Because the city’s bus service did not come into the East Washington community, Hurd purchased a bus and started the Friendly Peoples Bus Line. Because many students would not take the time to register to vote, Hurd, as part of the Booster Club, took all new high school graduates to Atlanta and registered them to vote. That became a part of their high school graduation requirements. When the city did not allow African-American boys to participate in East Point’s little league, Hurd created the East Washington Pony League. “He had to call it a Pony League, because the city said we could not use the term ‘little league’ for our program,” states Jackson, “they said that was the term that the whites used for the real little league that played on Norman Berry Drive.” Hurd managed to collect the four hundred dollars insurance fee, a state requirement for any youth league. When county school officials said that they did

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

not recognize a Booster Club from South Fulton High, Hurd initiated and applied for its charter, which was granted May 29, 1959.³³

Jackson reiterates that Hurd was not a people person. He worked independently or with a small group of hand selected people, whom he chose. Jackson called him an activist, not a leader. “He was our community activist,” declares Jackson, “he was not a community leader. I asked him why he did not participate in most group activities and he answered that most people just want to meet and discuss, very few people will do whatever it takes to get a goal accomplished. I work independent, so I don’t have to answer to the masses. I work independent so that the job gets done. That was O.J. Hurd. He loved kids. He loved sports and he got things done.”³⁴

Attending sport programs was recreation for residents of all ages, but there were some leisure activities for adults only. From the late 1940s until the early 1960s adult residents could enjoy themselves at one of the community’s night spots, the Squeeze-In, J.B. Bailey’s, the Zanzibar and Dyer’s Place, which later changed to Lucy’s. Elder residents remember Dyer’s Place as relaxing and enjoyable. “Andrew Dyer had a nice spot,” recalls Elizabeth Darden, “he opened it when the place next door to him became empty. He lived on one side and made a night club on the other.”³⁵ Dyer’s Place was one of the first establishments that provided drinks, music and “somewhere to go” in the community. “Other than going to Dyer’s Place,” adds Darden, “we just stayed at home, like our parents.” Darden states that although her

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Elizabeth Darden interview, 31 December 2007.

parents did not allow her to go to clubs, she and her friends would “sneak and go anyway. It was fun and it gave us something to do.”³⁶

Although Erma Lemon’s father, Andrew Dyer, was the owner of Dyer’s Place, she never frequented his “joint.” “I was a little girl when Daddy’s place opened,” remembers Lemon, “by the time I was able to go to clubs, Daddy had sold his establishment to Ms. Lucy and moved to New York. My friends and I went to the Zanzibar, the raggediest place in the world. We were under age, but at the Zanzibar, we could buy beer and raise hell.”³⁷

As with a resident’s church and home address, the night club that a resident attended reflected his community social status. For example, “the Zanzibar was raggedy, but only high class people went there,” declares Erma Lemons, “Bailey’s Do Drop In and the Squeeze In were for the other folks. Remember, there was a line in the community, for the uppity and the lower classes. The Zanzibar was for the upper classes.”³⁸

The invisible status line that Lemons referred to was the middle of Holcomb Street, “really right before the corner of Holcomb and Randall,”³⁹ recalls Lemons. “As you traveled on Holcomb towards Siloam, you went up a hill. The people who lived up the hill had money. The people who lived in the valley didn’t,” remembers Wanda Williams, “Bailey’s Do Drop In and the Squeeze In were in the valley. They were for the people who had little money to spend on entertainment.”⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. Interviewees did not remember Ms. Lucy’s last name.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Williams interview, 15 February 2008.

Bailey's Do Drop In was a pool hall. "According to my daddy, there was a lot of business conducted in that pool hall," recalls Williams, "mostly men went in there."⁴¹ Williams believes that Bailey was a successful businessman because he did many things and, more importantly, conducted business with the entire community as well as people on the outside. "Bailey worked with everybody," states. Williams, "he sold moonshine to winos, rented his houses and evicted people who didn't pay, plus whites hired him for bulldozer work."⁴²

Jackson agrees with Williams about Bailey's success as a businessman, but disputes that women did not frequent the pool hall. "J.B. was successful. Not only did he own the café, three houses and a cab service," recalls Jackson, "he also owned a bulldozer along with his lumberyard. Whites even hired him to clear land for them. Now, Wanda may be right when she said that women didn't come into the pool hall," declares Jackson, "but there were sure a lot of women outside. Mr. Bailey had a patio area outside on a deck. Young couples sat, ate and held hands out in front of his café. We called the place Lover's Lane."⁴³

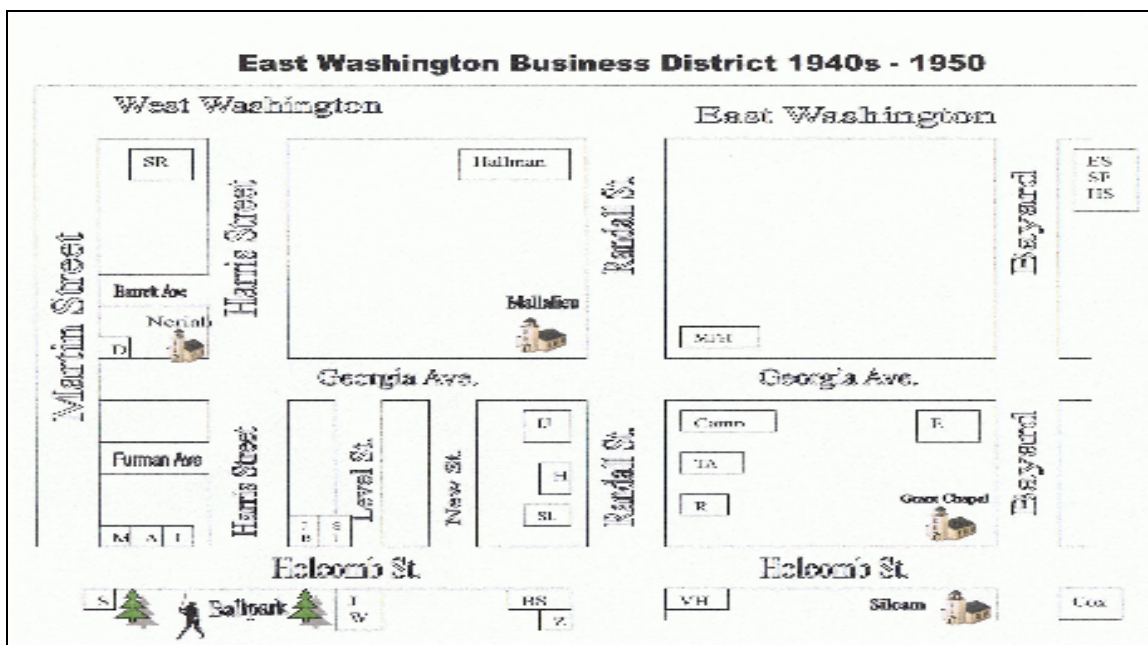
The last place for night entertainment was the Squeeze In, which was owned and operated by Odie Bell. "Odie Bell was my aunt," recounts Williams, "one of the main reasons that she opened the Squeeze In was because Mr. Bailey didn't want women in his place. The Squeeze In was right next door to Bailey's. She gave women a place to go, when they weren't invited next door. Aunt Odie called it the Squeeze In, because the place was so small that's what people had to do. She always said 'come on, just squeeze on in.'"⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

⁴⁴ Williams interview, 15 February 2008.




S	Scoggins Groceries	M	Miller's Groceries
SI	Squeeze-in (Club)	Z	Zanzibar (Club)
D	Dyer's Place (later became- Lucy's Inn	BS	Bill Sim's Bar-be-que
L	Lyle Sims Funeral Home	A	American Legion
JB	JB Bailey's Do Drop In	VH	Victory Hall (Thornton, Kingdom Hall) inside: Lyons Barber Shop, Ms. Ann's Beauty Hall, Will Long's Place (appliances repair shop), Scrap Glass, John Fallen Barbershop/Pressing & Dry Cleaning
TA	Tommy Alexander's ribs		
Cox	Cox Brothers Funeral		
Camp	Camp's Grocery		
Hall	Hallman's Grocery		
SR	Sam Ramsey's		
MFH	MC Austin Funeral Home		
JW	JB Bailey's Woodyard		
	Mallalieu UMC	R	Rich's Place
	Grant Chapel AME	E	Ethel's School Store
	Siloam Baptist	IJ	Ida Jones candy/soda
	Neriah	GH	Gordon Hinesman shop
	Evans Grove- one block north of Washington	H	Holbrook's Shoe Repair
	Union Baptist (further east on East Washington)	SL	Scott's Lunch
	J.B. Bailey's Cab Service	ES	East Point Elem. School
Other	J.R. Chambers GO-CAB Cab Services	SFHS	South Fulton High School
	John Thomas Snack Shop		Transportation- Friendly Peoples' Bus Line- OJ Hurd: owner and operator
	Fuller Woodyard & Coal	Other	

Figure 14- East Washington Community Map
(created by and courtesy of James Jackson)

One leisure activity that a few young boys enjoyed was going to Ruby Henderson's house. "Ms. Ruby was the first person that I knew who bought a television," remembers James Langford, "we lived at 302 Holcombe and she lived at 313 Holcombe. This was during the early

1950s. After I got home from work, remember I worked everyday after school, she would allow us to come to her home and watch her television for two to three hours. Melvin Clark, James Dodd, Bernard Cofield, Clifford Darden, the other James and I would all go in her living room and watch the small set until nine or ten in the evening. I thought that was the best thing ever. I felt privileged and because she owned that TV, I thought Ms. Ruby was rich.”⁴⁵

One activity that, although illegal, was entertaining and provided a sense of instant fortune was playing the Georgia Bug. The Georgia Bug was a gambling numbers game. Residents claim that from the 1940s until urban renewal it was at its peak in the East Washington community. Customers played either a three or four numbers game with a minimum of three cents. “You played numbers straight or in a box,” recalls Gloria McDowell, “straight meant that the numbers had to come back just like you played them. For instance, if I played 523, the numbers had to come back in that exact sequence for me to win. If I played 523 in a box, the number could come back 235 or 532, as long as those three numbers hit, I won.”⁴⁶

People picked numbers from their address, birthdays, kids’ grades, Robert Quillen’s syndicated cartoon “Aunt Het,”⁴⁷ “dreambooks,” and different sorts of methods. “Mr. Walter Quillian, a prominent East Pointian who worked for Atlanta Life Insurance Company and organized East Point’s first African-American Boy Scouts troop, wrote a poem titled ‘*What Fell Today,*’” remembers Jackson, “it was about the Georgia Bug game and how people reacted to it.”⁴⁸ People chose their number and oftentimes had their children take it to the writer. In turn, writers employed runners to take the numbers to a central location. “Writers got fifty cents from

⁴⁵ Langford interview, 13 March 2008.

⁴⁶ Gloria Jean McDowell, interview by author 25 May 2008, digital recording.

⁴⁷ Robert Quillen’s “Aunt Het” was a syndicated single paneled newspaper cartoon. During the late 1920s until the late 1940s, the cartoon appeared in more than four hundred newspapers.

⁴⁸ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

every dollar won,” recalls Jackson, “it was a lucrative business then. It’s a lucrative business now.”⁴⁹

What began as Georgia Bug is still played in East Point today. It is called Street Number. “You can win more by playing Street Number than the Georgia Lottery,” declares McDowell. “For fifty cents, I can play Street Number and win six hundred dollars. In Georgia Lottery, I have to pay a dollar to win five hundred dollars and I’m playing against millions of people. In Street Number, I’m just playing against local people, so the odds are better. My family won playing the Georgia Bug. I’ve won playing Street Number. I don’t know anyone who’s won playing the Georgia Lottery.”⁵⁰

East Washington residents had mixed emotions about playing Georgia Bug. Some residents felt that gambling took money away from the well-being of the family. They felt that gambling was addictive and detrimental to the community. Other residents believed that the Georgia Bug kept money in the community. They felt that it gave honest jobs to residents who were either too young, old or who could not find employment in local businesses.⁵¹ The game employed residents as runners, writers and operators. Quillian’s poems give perspectives of people played the Georgia Bug.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ McDowell interview, 25 May 2008.

⁵¹ Ibid.

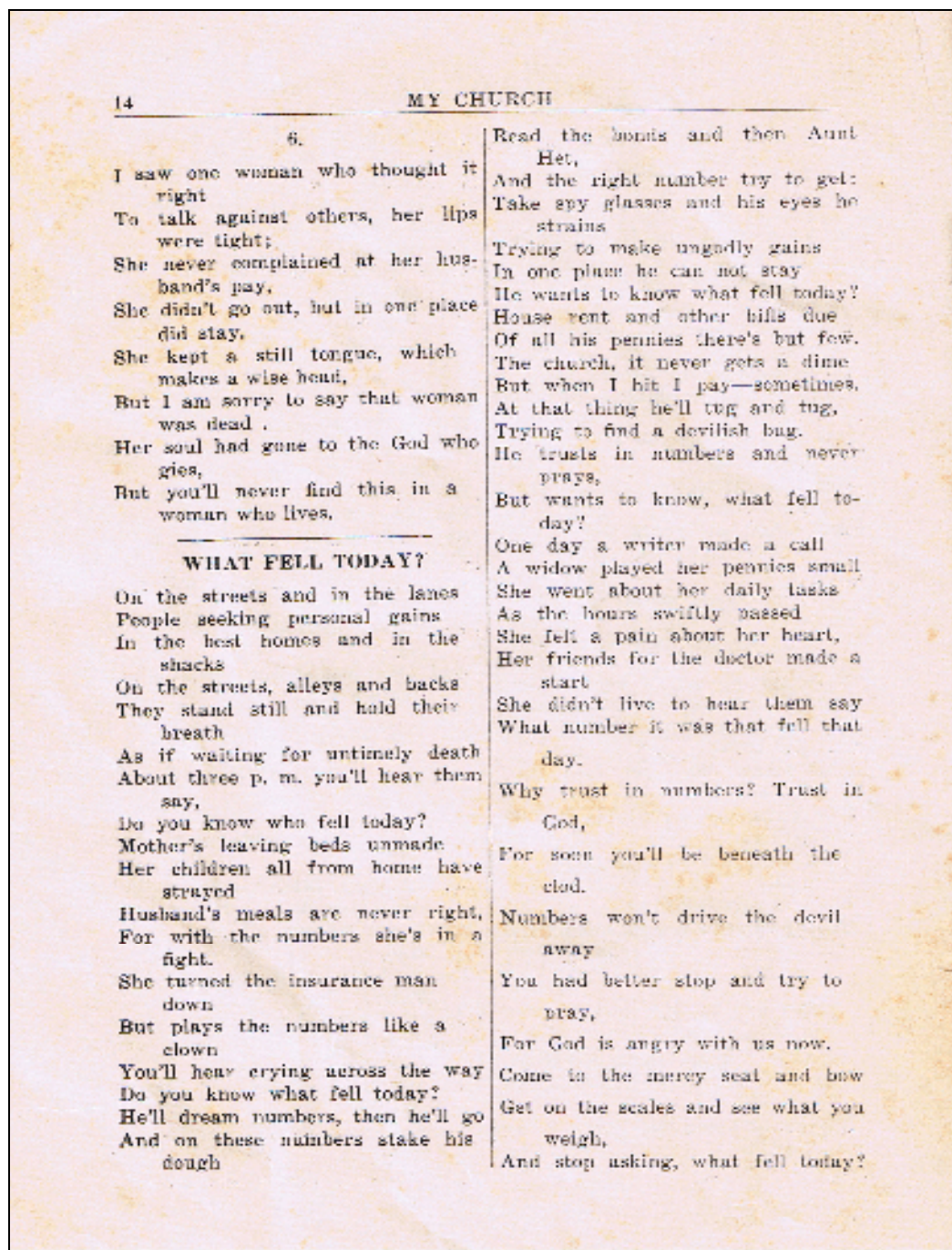


Figure 15- What Fell Today?, 1953, by W.A. Quillian
(courtesy of Betty Maddox)⁵²

⁵²W.A. Quillian, "What Fell Today?," *Black Mothers of the South and Twenty Other Poems* (East Point, Georgia: W.A. Quillian, 1953), 13.

Besides additional leisure activities, the late 1940s and early 1950s brought an increased awareness in obtaining racial equality. Voter registration drives and secret NAACP meetings enabled residents to take a more active role in enhancing their socio-economic and political lives as well as the lives of future generations.

“Hurd was big promoter of voter registration,” recalls Jackson,” the only formal organization that he was a member of was the NAACP.” Although East Point did not have a NAACP chapter, residents were extremely active in the Atlanta association. “Hurd and Alice Washington got me interested in joining that chapter. We operated out of Paschal’s,” declares Jackson, “there were many night meetings. Mr. Paschal, and other Atlanta big wigs were there. King was there one night.”⁵³

East Washington residents were strongly urged to register to vote. “Hurd, Green, Quillian, myself and others demanded it,” exclaims Jackson, “we told them that it was their obligation. As a matter of fact, that’s the main reason why Hurd bought a bus. When people said that they could not get to Atlanta to register, he was prepared with the solution. He took everyone to register for free. He felt that that was his duty. He said that that was his purpose for being in this community.”⁵⁴

During the late 1940s through the 1960s, African-American residents were required to register at one of two drugstores in Atlanta. “One was located on Fair Street; the other, Yates and Milton, was on Auburn Avenue. The same people owned both,” recalls Gladys Jackson, “I registered as soon as I graduated. We had to. James (Jackson) was working with Hurd then.

⁵³ Jackson interview, 17 May 2008. This was not the famous Paschal’s Restaurant of the 1960s. In 1947, James and Robert Paschal (brothers) opened a luncheonette on Hunter Street. In the 1950s they built Paschal’s Restaurant across the street from the luncheonette. “Atlanta in the Civil Rights Movement,” Atlanta Regional Consortium for Higher Education, <http://www.atlantahighered.org/civilrights/>, 3.

⁵⁴ Jackson interview, 17 May 2008.

Community leaders didn't respect you if you weren't registered. James (Jackson) probably wouldn't have married me."⁵⁵

To East Washington residents, voting was so important that once during Atlanta's Love, Law and Liberation bus boycott in the late 1950s, residents walked to Auburn in order to register to vote. "About twenty of us walked from East Washington to Auburn," recalls Jackson, "only to be told that the Auburn drugstore could not register East Point residents. So, we walked to Fair Street, registered and walked back to East Point. I don't remember why we had to walk. Either Mr. Hurd was gone or something was wrong with his bus, but we walked that day. That's how important voting was to us. Half of us didn't know who or what we would vote for. But, we knew that if it was important enough for whites to try to stop us from doing it, then it had to be something that we needed to do."⁵⁶

Once registered, East Washington residents had a difficult time casting their vote. "I registered to vote in 1958 and voted that same year," exclaims Langford, "we all went to Atlanta as part of our graduation requirements. Registering was easy. Walking past those white people at Russell High to vote wasn't."⁵⁷ Langford does not recall who or what he voted for. He remembers the place because that was the first time that he saw the inside of the all white Russell High School. "It was really nice," remembers Langford, "a lot different from what we were used to at South Fulton." But, Langford mostly remembers the feeling, a recurring one to East Washington residents. "The building was nice, but the feeling. I can still feel that feeling; a feeling of hatred. Passing by those white people who hated me, I remember that."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Gladys Jackson, interview by author, 17 May 2008, digital recording.

⁵⁶ Jackson interview, 17 May 2008.

⁵⁷ John Langford, interview by author, 26 May 2008, digital recording.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Maya Angelou wrote, “People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”⁵⁹ This sentiment is conveyed when residents speak of their first experience voting. “It was scary,” remembers Williams, “we had to do it, because Fess (McClarín) told us to. But, it was scary. I don’t remember who I voted for. I was shaking when I made my mark. It was so quiet. I don’t think any of us talked until we were back on the bus. I really think we were back in our neighborhood before we talked again. Those people hated us and I’ve never really known why.”⁶⁰

Jackson claims, and other residents agree, that students voted for whomever they were told to vote for. “We did what we were told,” remarks both Langford and Williams. Therefore, the community leader who “told” students who and what to vote for possessed both political power and community influence. From the late 1940s until “well into” the 1960s, Mr. Charles A. Green was that person. “When the people came around looking for votes, they came to Charley,” recalls Jackson. “I can remember when we only had fifteen voters in our community (1946). Candidates seeking office would give Charley fifty dollars and tell him to give the community a fish fry. Charley would give the fish fry and then tell us who to vote for. That’s who we voted for too. White folks never had to come in the community and say vote for me, it was always cut and dry.”⁶¹

Prior to the late 1960s, East Point was divided into four political wards. The East Washington community was located in the Fourth Ward, which encompassed the area from Jefferson Park to Willingham Drive. “Our elected officials seemed to always come from

⁵⁹ Maya Angelou, http://thinkexist.com/quotes/maya_angelou/

⁶⁰ Wanda Williams, interview by author, 27 May 2008, digital recording.

⁶¹ Jackson interview, 18 May 2008.

Jefferson Park,” remembers Jackson, “I don’t think that that was a coincidence. We knew who are our next city official was, before elections took place. Politics were that way in East Point until the 1980s. For instance, when I ran in 1972, I knew that I wouldn’t win. I just ran so that whites knew that a Black man could run. Olen (Gunnin) was set up to win. That was definite.”⁶²

Besides the NAACP, the East Washington community was not affiliated with civil rights national organizations. “I had heard a little about students fighting for civil rights,” recalls Langford, “but that was little. I heard about students at Spelman and Morehouse joining forces to integrate Atlanta restaurants, stores and Grady Hospital, but our group wasn’t a part of that. We were told to vote and we did that. We were proud that we did that.”⁶³ “And of course, we all knew when King was marching,” adds Annie Parham, “by then, we had an old black and white television. Almost immediately after we would hear King’s speeches, we would hear the Klan. They’d come through yelling obscene things; that we’d better not get that civil rights stuff in our heads.”⁶⁴

Neither white poll workers’ racial hatred nor Ku Klux Klan marches deterred residents from believing in racial advancement. The community knew that change was inevitable. “When segregated schools were declared unconstitutional in 1954,” recalls Parham, “white people were mad. They said that they would leave East Point rather than go to school with us. My mother

⁶² Ibid. James Jackson was the first African-American to run for office in East Point. Jefferson Park was a white middle to upper class neighborhood during this time. It is located north of Norman Berry Drive. Norman Berry is its southern border. Its western border was Russell High School (now Tri-Cities High School). Its eastern border is Sylvan Road and its northern border is Nabell Avenue. In 1982, Joes Heckstall became the first elected African-American city councilman. Earlier that year, Joe Johnson was the first African-American to serve as a city official. Johnson was appointed acting city manager when Don Stone resigned. He was not elected.

⁶³ Langford interview, 13 March 2008. In 1957, Under the direction of white Spelman professor Howard Zinn, Spelman students protested Georgia state capital galleries. “Atlanta in the Civil Rights Movement,” Atlanta Regional Consortium for Higher Education, <http://www.atlantahighered.org/civilrights/>. 6.

⁶⁴ Annie Parham interview, 20 February 2008.

wouldn't even let me go over to Washington Avenue alone then. She was scared for our safety.

But, I knew times were changing. They (whites) knew it too.”⁶⁵

One of the most momentous changes for East Washington occurred in 1957, when the City of East Point received a Georgia state grant, under the Georgia Urban Redevelopment Law.

The law states that if,

“it is found and declared that economically and socially depressed areas exist within the city [county] and that these areas contribute to or cause unemployment, limit the tax resources of the local government while creating a greater demand for governmental services and, in general, have a deleterious effect upon the public health, safety, morals and welfare. It is, therefore, in the public interest that such areas be redeveloped to the maximum extent practicable to improve economic and social conditions therein in order to abate or eliminate such deleterious effects (O.C.G.A. § 36-44-2).”⁶⁶

The funding was awarded on the premise that the forty-five acre site, that constituted the East Washington community, was completely revamped. The renovation process took nine years to complete.⁶⁷ “Around 1959 and 1960,” states Domineck, “we noticed that whites started moving from Washington. It’s almost like they were here one day and gone the next. We kept hearing the phrase urban renewal, but we called it white removal.”⁶⁸

Urban renewal was the term used by the local, state and federal governments in their efforts to enhance urban communities after World War II. In the East Washington community it began in the early 1960s and ended in the mid 1970s. It included massive demolition of almost every residence and business in the area. Homes and businesses were required to be brought up

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ §10-4 *Urban Redevelopment/Downtown Development*
<http://209.85.215.104/search?q=cache:z3OoNN2bHVgJ:www.dca.state.ga.us/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/documents/Part10dRedevelopmentAgency.doc+georgia+urban+redevelopment+law&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us>

⁶⁷ Mason, *East Point, Georgia*, 50.

⁶⁸ Domineck interview, 27 August 2007.

to county regulations. Shanty homes were destroyed, indoor plumbing and electricity were installed, and streets were paved. “We thought Urban Renewal was a good thing,” explains Jackson, “In fact, I was one of the main people who pushed for it. White people kept telling us don’t believe the federal government. They told us that the government was using it as propaganda and was really trying to steal our property. They told us that if we allowed the government to upgrade our homes, then we would owe them a lot of money. They told us that when, not if, we could not pay the loans back, then the government would take our homes. Remember, I was taught that if whites were against something, then it was for our best interest. That’s why I pushed it.”⁶⁹

During the mid 1960s, East Washington residents were forced to make a decision. If they were already property owners, they could remain on their property and have the city completely rebuild their home, bringing it up to county standards. In the event that they did not have the finances to renovate their home, the federal government provided a home loan. If they owned their home and wanted to leave the community, they could sell their property to the City of East Point. Lastly, if they were renting, they could continue to rent but move in one of the newly built government project apartments. “Those were your choices,” recalls Jackson, “we didn’t know what to do.”⁷⁰

To some the decision was easy, “I knew that I was leaving,” declares Elizabeth Darden, “Emory came home and said that he had found a house in Adamsville. (Adamsville is located in southwest Atlanta) The government gave him a home loan and we were moving on Friday. That

⁶⁹ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

was on a Monday.”⁷¹ To others, the decision was more difficult. “Everybody was scared,” remembers Jackson, “no body really wanted to stick with it. Most of the solid citizens sold their land to the City of East Point and went downtown (East Point). We (Hurd, Green, Quillian) were trying to convince people to stay in this area and build.”⁷²

John Langford remembers that his family moved from a two room “falling apart” duplex, to a four room house. “My mother bought that house,” exclaims Langford, “we moved from one end of Holcomb (the valley) to the other and we felt good.”⁷³ Although Langford and his mother stayed in the community, some of his family moved away. One brother bought a home in the Cascade area, two others moved elsewhere in Atlanta. “Because of Urban Renewal,” declares Langford, “they got home loans. We all branched out, but none of us moved outside of the Atlanta area.”⁷⁴ Like Langford, Annie Parham spoke very highly of Urban Renewal. “We moved to Martel Homes,” recalls Parham, “My mother said that we really came alive then. Her apartment had four bedrooms and two full baths. It was beautiful.”⁷⁵

In 1960, there were over thirty African-American businesses in the East Washington community. By 1965, there were less than five. “Urban Renewal,” stresses Jackson, “dissolved all of this community’s in-house businesses; every one of them.”⁷⁶ The businesses that encompassed the East Washington community had provided more than just mere economics.

They had provided employment to neighborhood residents. They gave the community a sense of

⁷¹ Elizabeth Darden interview, 31 December 2007.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Langford interview, 13 March 2008.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Annie Parham interview, 20 February 2008; Wanda Williams noticed something that she stated was “peculiar.” Apparently, gender issues were extremely evident during this time. She stated that city officials only wanted to talk to men, asking to speak to your husband or whatever man lived in the house. This bothered many African-American women, many of whom were head of house hold, single parents, including her mother, Williams 15 February 2008.

⁷⁶ Jackson interview, 25 July 2007.

pride, dignity, and an internal African-American economy, finances that remained in the community.

Urban Renewal completely revamped the East Washington community. There were plusses and minuses, gains and losses. Residents who remained no longer shopped at the local grocery stores neither could they party at the local bar. By the time that construction was completed, sewer systems, side walks and storm drains were installed, streets were paved, and “everyone had electricity,”⁷⁷ declares Annie Parham. The project cost the city over two million dollars.⁷⁸

“When Urban Renewal came,” recalls Langford, “all of our streets got paved. Many streets closed such as Barrett Avenue, New Street and Level Street. Bayard no longer went through our community, but stopped at the end of the high school. City buses started to come through our community. No need for Mr. Hurd’s buses anymore.”⁷⁹

“Looking back now,” remarks Jackson, “I see that after World War II, and Brown vs. the Board, change was inevitable. We wanted Civil Rights. We wanted equality and better living conditions. We got a lot of things that we fought for. We just didn’t know that they came at such a high cost.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Annie Parham interview, 20 February 2008.

⁷⁸ Mason, *East Point, Georgia* 50.

⁷⁹ Langford interview, 13 March 2008.

⁸⁰ Jackson interview, 18 May 2008.

Conclusion

From 1912 to 1962, African-Americans in East Point, Georgia developed social networks in an attempt to improve their subordinate status during Jim Crow. Beginning in 1912 as a result of white residents' refusal to live adjacent to blacks, the African-American community was strategically placed next to the fertilizer, chemical and oil plants that hired them, in the most undesirable section of the city.

East Washington residents did not see themselves as oppressed individuals, but rather played a major role in the development of their community. Although the community's physical boundaries were imposed by Jim Crow, the inner workings of the community were instituted by the residents themselves. They created the economic, social and religious organizations that helped sustain their community. They instilled, encouraged and upheld a continued dedication to education from elementary school to college. More importantly, they maintained a strong work ethic that allowed them to work for little wages and a place to live, the purpose that many African-Americans migrated to East Point in the early twentieth century.

Upon arriving in East Washington, many early twentieth century residents were guaranteed employment from one of the nearby factories. Most of the residents interviewed were descendants of Hercules Powder Company employees and Swift Oil Mill. Plant recruiters visited rural areas in order to perpetuate a cheap and constant labor force. Once the newcomers arrived, they rented a house, owned by the company. Although the companies did the marketing, recruiting and in many cases paid the relocation costs for their employees, the success of the East Washington community is due to its ordinary, everyday, common citizens' desire to improve their status.

This work focuses on the unsung heroes of the East Washington community. It illuminates those who provided a safe haven for children, cleaned up messes left by klansmen while singing ‘Jeepers Creepers,’ placed a church in the center of illegal activity, allowed neighborhood boys to watch television well into the evening, laundered police recruits’ uniforms, educated youths of all ages, taught high school students the importance of voting, walked to Atlanta to register to vote, instituted Pony League baseball, opened entertainment night spots, sponsored a semi-pro baseball team, worked throughout the week then hit home runs on the weekends, created a booster club, were runners and writers for the Georgia Bug numbers game, started churches, attended churches, sang in choirs, made moonshine, sold and drank moonshine. It focuses on the deacons who collected church members’ dues on Monday morning when such members inadvertently missed church on Sunday. This work focuses on those who were behind a grass roots civil rights movement, largely only known and appreciated within the community that they nurtured. These residents demonstrated the vigor of the East Washington community. They epitomized the tenacious spirit that enabled African-Americans to achieve specific goals in their segregated city, although they oftentimes conflicted among themselves over the methods necessary to attain the desired objectives.

For five centuries African-Americans, who made their home in East Point, were mandated to live in the East Washington community. When they ventured out, public places, that accepted their patronage, displayed signs that read “whites” or “colored.” In 1957, their boundaries began to change. East Washington residents noticed that whites on Washington, Lyle and Francis Streets started selling their homes. Many African-Americans were not privy to the fact that the city of East Point had just received a two million dollar grant under the Georgia

Urban Redevelopment Law. They did not realize that East Point city officials declared the East Washington community “economically and socially depressed,” an assessment that affected African-American communities throughout the country in the early 1960s. City officials failed to see the vitality of East Washington. They failed to notice the economic, political and social achievements of the residents, who created employment for themselves and others. They did not discern the creative survival strategies of African-Americans who endured Jim Crow racism. Fitzhugh Brundage claims that “whites, blinded by both hubris and racism, ignored the wholeness of black community life in targeted areas and saw only degraded environments that impeded their ambitions for their cities.”¹ Ironically, some African-Americans saw the same image. The mixed blessing that was called urban renewal changed the East Washington community forever. Residents no longer shopped at Scoggins Groceries, nor danced at the Zanzibar. Women no longer visited Ms. Ann’s beauty salon, nor did men gather at John Fallen’s barber shop. By the mid 1960s, most of the forty-five acre community was bulldozed over. Despite the complete overhaul of the residences, businesses, churches, schools and social institutions, despite the emigration of many of its citizens, the East Washington community left a legacy that is inundated with thousands of unsung heroes.

These resilient African-Americans created a self-sufficient community despite Jim Crow, Ku Klux Klan violence and a lack of government assistance. This community that emerged from segregation and environmental racism became a beacon of community, extended kinship and racial uplift. Families helped kin migrate to a better place. Neighbors helped friends survive every day struggles and adults helped children remain within the boundaries of safety.

¹ W. Fitzhugh Brundage. *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), 230.

While many residents today reach for hand outs, East Washington residents, with little financial and political resources, sought to help out. Their commitment to struggle along with their uncompromising will to provide a better world for future generations is voiced in this collective history.

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