

**MEACHAM PARK:
A HISTORY**

1892 - 1989

PROLOGUE

This Brief History of Meacham Park ends in 1989. Since that time there have been many changes, both in the lives of residents and former residents, and in the community as a whole.

This history was the wish and desire of one man. The community of Meacham Park and its people were always foremost in his mind and he worked for their benefit in many ways. Through the publication of this book he hoped to give the people and community a sense of history, to draw them together, and give them pride in their heritage.

IN MEMORIAM

William J. Jones

1921 - 1996

Rest In Peace, Bill

Lonnie Speer
Garnet Thies



William J. Jones

MEACHAM PARK: A HISTORY

by
Lonnie R. Speer

in
collaboration
with
Bill Jones
&
Garnet Thies

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Wedged among St. Louis County's southwest suburbs is a totally unique community that has struggled since the 1890s to preserve its own heritage.

Bounded by the municipalities of Kirkwood on the north and west, Crestwood on the east, and Sunset Hills on the south, the community of Meacham Park has been one of the few predominately black communities in history to resist urban renewal. Its strong ethnic identity has been preserved and reinforced through the years as other municipalities have incorporated around it.

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The Beginning

The land which would later become known as Meacham Park was originally owned by a John McLaughlin, of St. Louis, in the 1870s. By 1878, McLaughlin had two buildings on the 150-some acre area, but later sold it all. By 1892 the acreage, still consisting mostly of farm land, had been split in ownership between two St. Louis families: Chas. A. Baker and his wife, Mary; and Henry B. Seammel and his wife, Martha.

On July 8, 1892, the Bakers and Seammels sold their land, totaling 158.61 acres, to a real estate speculator by the name of Elzey E. Meacham, a 45 year old white man who had just arrived in St. Louis from Memphis, Tennessee. Meacham and his wife, Lula, paid \$33,308.00 for the site.

Meacham established a real estate office at the rear of 1019 Chestnut Street in St. Louis and soon began to sub-divide his newly purchased west county land into 25-foot lots with a crisscross pattern of streets, providing the street names himself. On September 16, 1892, the following was recorded in the St. Louis County record books: "I adopt this as my subdivision 'Meacham Park', being the S.E. quarter of Section 12, Township 44, North Range of 5-East, in the County of St. Louis and State of Missouri . . . signed, Elzey E. Meacham."

Today the original plat drawing of the sub-division signed by Meacham is on file at the Engineer's office in Kirkwood City Hall, on which Meacham proclaimed "to henceforth be known and referred to as Meacham Park."

Meacham began selling lots on September 20 of that year. He sold two lots to Annie Byrne of St. Louis County for \$64 and two more lots to Annie Trent Leahy of St. Louis County for \$60. He went on to sell lots to George F. Fares of St. Louis, Joseph LaMotte of St. Clair County, Illinois, Peter Byrne of St. Louis County, Philip O'Toole of St. Louis County, Jacob Schwegel, Jr. of St. Louis, Herman Bernds of St. Louis, and Catherine Ganley of St. Louis.

Others who quickly settled in the area were B.H. Laux, Louis Gardmann, Frederick Heiland, and James and Edward Carr.

Although Meacham sold a few lots to Whites, most were sold to Blacks. In fact, it could be argued that he sub-divided his property into smaller-than-usual lots in order that it could be more easily afforded by Blacks at that time. Some lots were originally sold for \$50. but the average price was \$15. A few, like that sold to George Fares, went for as little as \$10.

Early Black Settlers

One of the first Blacks to settle in Meacham Park and to still have descendants in this area was Sandy Spears. The Argus Directory of St. Louis County of 1896 lists Spears as a farmer residing along Big Bend Road in Meacham Park at Kirkwood.

Spears raised ten children in this community. According to his daughter, Bertha Evans, Sandy was also a real estate broker for many years. In fact, the family home that is located at New York and Shelby streets today was built by money that Sandy made in his real estate dealings.

"I remember growing up with white families in Meacham," Bertha recalled, "and my father sold milk to a lot of them. Everybody was very friendly then. We grew up together, black kids and white kids. There were a lot of white families in Meacham then. I remember a white family named Rogers, and we played with their kids. Sure, we had fights, but we always made up the next day. We used to go swimming together in a creek in the summer, and in the winter we'd skate on a nearby pond."

Meacham Park was still mainly surrounded by open fields and forests at the turn of the century. Its streets were no more than dirt paths and the area was sparsely populated.

Another early resident during this time was Ed Smith and his wife, Molly. They, too, still have descendants in the area. Ed Smith, whose nickname was "Tallow", was described often in the writings of George F. Heege in his articles about local history that appeared years later in the Kirkwood Messenger newspaper. Smith was Heege's father's constant hunting companion, and keeper and caretaker of Heege's hunting dogs. The hounds were kept in a pen at Smith's home in Meacham Park.

Ed Smith was described as being black, partially bald, having a stocky build, a cheerful disposition, and being a wonderful story teller. Heege wrote: "He would sit for hours in the kitchen with us children and describe a chase, a fox hunt, a coon hunt, a political rally, or how, one time when the train failed to stop at south Kirkwood, he hopped off and fell, digging his arm into the cinders."

Smith owned a mule team and an old wagon and was often hired by Kirkwood residents to haul away trash. He also raised hogs at his place.

His wife, Molly, was described as appearing much younger than Ed, light colored, slim, and as having kept their two-room cabin in Meacham Park neat and tidy.

Smith often accompanied Heege to political meetings and county conventions. About Smith, Heege wrote, "... he was observant to a degree that approached a science. He could describe personalities, catalog characters, and ... (although he could not participate) ... predict elections with uncanny accuracy."

Ed Smith, according to Heege, was well-known and well-respected within all of the communities surrounding Meacham Park. He remained a popular figure in this area for many years.

Sara Ann Walker Campbell and her husband, John, were also well-known early residents of the area. Sara was born in March of 1865 in Cole County, Missouri. She married John Campbell in 1903 and in that year they began to build a house in Meacham Park. Their home was built on a hill at Tolstoy and Chicago streets and this area soon became known as Campbell Hill.

For many years the children of the community were quite familiar with that hill. It became a place for sled riding in winter and nut-picking in the fall. Meanwhile, Mrs. Campbell often handed out cookies to the children who gathered there.

Many years later, Sara worked for the H.M. Young family, long-time residents of Kirkwood, and remained in their employment for quite some time. Although her husband died many years before, Sara died in April, 1969, just short of her 94th birthday. She had enjoyed quilt making and embroidery for many years, and today many of her creations have become prized possessions by many residents throughout St. Louis County.

When the Campbells moved here it was a rural community and farming was the general rule. They began by raising hogs, chickens, and planting gardens. Chances are John and Sara knew Ed and Molly Smith as well as Sandy Spears and his family. Many others who lived in this community as farmers at the time included Moses P. Spears, Lott and George Bailey, and Georgia Brown.

Other early residents who came to settle in the community included George Allen, Austin Davidson, the Hannah, Ellington, and Yancy families, and Bobo Walrys.

Meacham Park's Founder

As settlement of Meacham Park continued, and urbanization of the surrounding communities began to crowd its borders, information about the founder became lost in history. Controversy and confusion about the actual founder and his background continued until recent years. Now after several years of research we can set the record straight.

Elzey Eugene Meacham was born November 20, 1848, on the old Meacham estate in Memphis, Tennessee. He was the son of M.L. Meacham, a pioneer cotton factor and wholesale merchant in Memphis, and Martha Galbreath Meacham. Elzey was one of four children. He had one brother, Majors Louis Meacham, and two sisters, Annie and Ida.

His brother, M.L. (Majors Louis) Meacham, married the former Emma Fontaine, a member of a well-to-do Memphis family. Her parent's home, The Fontaine House, has been restored in Memphis by the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities. It can be seen at Victoria Village, a cluster of restored nineteenth-century homes on Adams Avenue in downtown Memphis. The Fontaine House, a French Victorian mansion built in 1870 and furnished with period antiques, is one of three homes open to the public at the Village, but is the only one rumored to be haunted!

People have reported the feeling of someone or something unseen walking up and down the stairs behind them in the Fontaine mansion. Curators of the house also claim that often an upstairs bedroom suddenly becomes unnaturally cold and the bed there appears as if someone has been lying or sitting on it.

Elzey Meacham's sister, Annie, married a Mr. McCallum and was said to have been very beautiful. On the occasion of a visit to Memphis by British author Oscar Wilde, it is said that he referred to her as "the magnolia of the South."

Ida Meacham married William Stewart from Londonderry, Ireland. Mr. Stewart

was first cousin to the owners of what was once known as "Historic Oak Alley" in Memphis. Ida's father built a house for the couple next to the Meacham family home and gave it to Ida and William as a wedding gift.

The Meachams and Stewarts lived on Union Street. The neighborhood, then called the "Silk Stocking Ward," was a section of magnificent homes in the exclusive residential area of town. This area, where many said "houses were spacious and the living was gracious," was occupied by the most wealthy, influential families of Memphis.

Today, however, as so often happens as time passes by, these homes have been gradually razed over the years and the area is now referred to as "automobile row" where car dealerships are abundant. The Ida Meacham Stewart home survived until 1955. When the sale of the house was made, for demolition, a clause provided that Ida's daughter, Martha, who was still living in the home at the time, could remain there "until the rose garden bloomed once more in the spring of that year."

Meacham's Education

Elzey Meacham received all or a portion of his education at the Kentucky Military Institute, which is no longer in existence. Col. James Darwin Stephens, president and curator of the Institute's records, KMI, Inc., has advised that over the years, a total of five fires at the school destroyed many of the records prior to the year 1867. He can, however, confirm that Elzey E. Meacham did attend the school in 1867 and 1868.

Biographical sketches obtained from the Memphis Public Library and the Memphis Press-Scimitar simply state that he was "educated at the Kentucky Military Institute."

Business Ventures

Meacham went into business with his father around 1869 and is listed in the Memphis city directory of that year as a clerk with the company of Meacham and Treadwell.

Upon his father's death years later Meacham went into the real estate business and was immediately successful. Like many men of this era, he amassed a small fortune speculating in undeveloped land. Meacham, however, was one of the first men to become interested in suburban development and speculation, creating several of what are now subdivisions in south Memphis.

In fact, Meacham used many of the same street names in south Memphis that he later used in Meacham Park. These include Saratoga, New York, Orleans, and Aldridge. And similar to Meacham Park, the subdivisions are located a short distance from railroad tracks with streets laid out in a crisscross pattern.

Meacham Family History

Meacham married a socialite debutante, Miss Lula Gilchrist, from Panola County, Mississippi. Lula was the granddaughter of John S. McGehee, one of the original pioneers

of the county. The town of Panola no longer exists today, but its original site was one mile north of Batesville, along the Tallahatchie River just inside the county of Panola.

Lula was ten years younger than her husband and she remained active in their social life and in the business world until the birth of their first child, a son named Malcolm, on August 9, 1884.

Shortly thereafter, they left Memphis for Louisville, Kentucky, where Meacham was again successful in suburban real estate speculation.

It was after the Louisville venture that Meacham proceeded to St. Louis to do the same. Here he purchased the acreage later to be known as Meacham Park as well as a tract of land that is today located on the west side of Lindbergh just north of Highway 40 in Frontenac. It, too, is a predominately black neighborhood.

While he was in the St. Louis area, Meacham lived and worked from a small office at the rear of 1019 Chestnut Street in St. Louis, continuing to maintain his permanent residence in Memphis. By 1899, probably his last year in St. Louis, he was working out of an office at the rear of 1021 Chestnut but residing at the Hotel Beers, which was located on the northwest corner of Grand and Olive.

By 1900, Meacham had left St. Louis leaving very little documented information about Meacham Park after that. It has been handed down for generations that a white man named George Angles appeared in the area sometime between 1900 and 1904 representing himself as a real estate broker, buying and selling untitled land to Blacks for a while before the truth was discovered. Research has been unable to confirm or deny that story.

What is known is that the original street names plotted out by Meacham for his subdivision are still in use today, except for four: Meacham Street was originally named Brooklyn, Aldridge Street was originally Arcadia, Handy Street was originally named Friscoe, and Spears was originally Boston Street.

One of the area's few remaining original documents bearing the signature of Elzey E. Meacham was possessed for many years by long-time resident Lucille Johnson. The signature was on a deed for the property at 341 New York Street. Meacham sold this lot on July 17, 1894, to Frederick Heiland, a German, who later sold the property to a Herman C. Darkow. Years later, Darkow sold the lot to a Mr. and Mrs. Hubert. This property was purchased from them by Lucille Johnson in 1934. Although this property has a long history traceable by this deed, today it is a vacant lot in the 300 block of New York Street.

Aside from this, few documents exist explaining any history of Meacham Park between the 1900s up to the 1930s. The founder, on the other hand, can be traced.

Sometime between 1900 and 1903, Meacham and his family, which now included a teenage son, gave up their residency in Memphis and moved to New York. Meacham's name appears in the 1903 yearbook of the 5th Avenue Presbyterian Church there, along

with his wife, Lula, and son, Malcolm. Later, in 1926, Meacham transferred to the Collegiate Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in New York. There is no reason given for the transfer in membership; however, there is speculation that he may have been interested in Dr. Daniel A. Poling, minister of the Collegiate Reformed from 1923 to 1930. Dr. Poling founded the Christian Endeavor Movement. Dr. Poling's son, Dr. Daniel K. Poling, advised that the name of Elzey Eugene Meacham is familiar to him, but there is no record of him in his father's papers.

In New York, Meacham established the real estate firms of E.E. Meacham and Son and the Meacham Realty Corporation. The family lived at 320 Central Park West in New York City and later moved to 830 Park Avenue, while developing many properties in the New York City suburbs, particularly in Long Island and New Jersey, again plotting his streets out in a grid pattern and using names familiar to Meacham.

Meacham is said to have originally gone to New York with Memphis financier, Barron Collier, and together they invested heavily in south Florida real estate.

Collier had been born in Memphis on March 23, 1873, and was later involved in the advertising business in the city until 1900. In that year he left for New York and within a few years was listed in "Who's Who In America" as a capitalist, but he was a man of many interests. Collier was primarily known to the public as a leader in the field of street-car advertising, a distinction he held from 1900 until his death in 1939, after he came up with the idea of placing advertising placards in streetcars and, later, subway cars. He later had financial interests in hotel chains, railroads, bus lines, several banks, newspapers, a telephone company, a steamboat line, various farming operations, and he owned Luna Park at Coney Island, Brooklyn.

He and Meacham both had winter homes in Florida, and Collier became prominently identified with the development of the lower west coast section of the state. Collier became the largest land owner in Florida, possessing thousands of acres in Collier County, which was named after him in 1923, and is believed to have encouraged Meacham to purchase land in that area also.

By draining swamp land in the Everglades, Collier developed much of the Florida property and encouraged others to invest in his ventures. He built country clubs and resorts on many islands off the coast. Present-day Goodland, Florida, in fact, was originally named Collier City. Upon Collier's death in March of 1939, his Florida investments alone were estimated at over \$16,000,000.

Because of Collier's investment ventures in the area, and of his encouragement of others to do the same, the interest in Florida's Everglades land exploded all across the country. By the mid-1920s, the trustees of the Gilchrist administration, whose very name may well have been influenced by Meacham himself, in honor of his wife's maiden name, boasted that where there had once been only twelve land owners, there were now 15,000. One of those is believed to have been E.E. Meacham.

It is known that Meacham spent considerable time in Florida and had a winter

home in Miami. It is believed that because of his close relationship with Collier, Meacham invested to some extent or another in the swamp land projects. Collier had been instrumental in the construction of the famous Tamiami Trail, that great roadway project that ran across the Everglades from Miami to Tampa, which took fourteen years to complete. Although Meacham's name is not mentioned in any historical accounts of the building of the Tamiami Trail, his descendants claim he was involved with its endeavor. Research does indicate, however, that Meacham was probably financially involved with that project and owned land along its route. In fact, as late as 1937 there was a town named Gilchrist in south-central Charlotte County, just north of the Lee County line. Today, Gilchrist is a ghost town and approximately one mile south of it, just inside Lee County, the actual town of Tamiami once existed.

The Tamiami Trail, by the way, was quite an interesting accomplishment. It was first conceived by Captain J. F. Jaudon, a developer having land holdings at several different locations in south Florida. A rough road was begun in 1916 that extended west from Miami for about sixty miles, but the project had to be abandoned when World War I began.

After the war, Barron Collier became involved. He lined up financial backers for the project, advanced money of his own, and encouraged everyone to complete the route.

Seminole Indians had to be used as guides for the first surveyors. Slowly they hacked their way with axes and machetes while crews laid gravel in layers to build up a roadway upon the bedrock that was uncovered beneath the swamp muck. Little by little the new roadway continued to stretch across Florida's Everglades in nearly a straight line. With enough good days, the roadway progressed at a rate of two miles a month. It wasn't unusual for their heavy machinery to sink out of sight in the mud. Workers died from snake bites, fever, drownings, and dynamite explosions, but finally, in 1928, at a cost of 13-million dollars and 3-million pounds of dynamite, the route between Miami and Tampa was completed. It has been hailed as one of the most remarkable engineering feats ever.

Today, U.S. Highway 41 out of Miami follows the route of the original Tamiami Trail, pioneered by a host of investors including Elzey Meacham.

That road, of course, greatly increased the value of everyone's land holdings in the area and made possible all future development as time went on. But Meacham soon learned that being born into wealth and living an affluent and successful life was no armor against loss and grief.

Two of his children died in infancy. A son, Eugene Elzey, baptized on April 6, 1889, died on September 24, 1889, as did a daughter around 1905. Both are buried in the family plot at Elmwood Cemetery in Memphis. On March 23, 1920, Meacham's wife, Lula, died after a brief illness. She was 61 years old. Their only surviving child, Malcolm, met a tragic death at the age of 44.

Malcolm had graduated from New York University in 1907 prior to going into the realty business with his father. They had a realty office at 15 Park Row in New York and another office in Florida. In addition, Malcolm had a fire-insurance sales office at 30 Madison Avenue in New York, was a vice president of the Palm Beach National Bank and a

member of the Everglades and Palm Beach Yacht Club, in Florida.

In January 1925, Malcolm had married the former Dorothy Hurt, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harry A. Hurt of 124 West 55th Street in New York. To this union a daughter, Marjorie, was born.

Malcolm continued to prosper in the real estate and fire insurance business, but in early 1929 he became ill and began suffering from dizzy spells.

During the early morning hours of March 13, 1929, Malcolm was found dead on the sidewalk in front of 55 East 72nd Street. New York police attributed his death to an accidental fall from his apartment on the eleventh floor of that building. His wife, Dorothy, and their three year old daughter, were asleep in the apartment at the time and were awakened by police with the shocking news. During the investigation, police learned of Malcolm's ill health and the dizzy spells. They determined by the evidence present, that Malcolm, suffering from one of these spells, went to the window for fresh air and lost his balance.

(Years later Meacham's granddaughter, Marjorie, would suffer through another tragedy. She married a Mr. Dunn, to which three children, two sons and one daughter, were born. One son, Elzey's great-grandson, drowned off Peacock Point, Long Island.)

Deeply saddened by the loss of his wife and then his son, Elzey himself began suffering ill health and moved to Miami where he lived in retirement. He died there, at the Kellogg Sanatorium, on February 10, 1931, at the age of 82. His niece, Martha Stewart, was with him at the time of his death and accompanied the body back to Memphis on the Frisco Railroad for burial.

On the following Friday, February 13, funeral services were held in Memphis for Elzey Meacham at the home of his sister, Mrs. Ida Meacham Stewart, on Union Street. He was buried at the family plot in historic Elmwood Cemetery, alongside his infant son and daughter, wife Lula, and son Malcolm.

The entire Meacham family had always been involved in community affairs. Along with his other financial interests, Elzey Meacham's father, M.L. Meacham, had founded the Union and Planters Bank and Trust Company of Memphis and had been deeply involved in his church. He went on to inspire interests of civic concern and involvement in his children and other generations of the family that followed.

Elzey's brother, Majors Louis Meacham, was well known for his interests and involvement in the development and building of Memphis, and for his deep love of animals. In fact, at one time he was referred to as a "one-man humane society" of the city. Majors died on December 11, 1936, just a little over a month after sister, Ida, died on November 4, 1936.

Mrs. Catherine Meacham, wife of Elzey Meacham's nephew, Fontaine Meacham, for many years was the Fashion Editor of the Memphis Press-Scimitar. Her community concern was evidenced by her continued interest and support in the LeBonheur Children's Hospital and the Los Passees Treatment Center for Cerebral Palsied Children.

Another item of interest is that Elzey Meacham's great-granddaughter was named "Debutante of the Year" when she was presented to New York society in mid-1970; an honor equal to that received by her great-grandmother, Lula, many years before in Panola County, Mississippi.

Elzey Meacham himself was quite involved in community affairs. While he prospered in the realty business, Elzey Meacham built more than twenty churches out of his own generosity, even providing the first few years of the ministers' salaries and other church expenses from his own pocket. He was also known to have built churches of several different denominations in some of the same subdivisions. At the time of his death he was still supporting three churches which he had built on Long Island.

Elzey Eugene Meacham was a lifelong Presbyterian. His former daughter-in-law Dorothy, who has since remarried several times, writes that Elzey was in his late 70s when she married his son Malcolm in 1925, and she never had the opportunity to meet him. However, she was aware that Elzey was very much involved in church and was a deeply religious Scotch Presbyterian who was very sympathetic to black people and their problems.

The Naming of Meacham Park's Streets

Elzey Meacham named the streets in Meacham Park when the sub-division was platted in 1892. Knowing that he had a great interest and concern for Blacks, and given the fact that the sub-divisions he developed in other cities are also predominately Black, it appears as though he had some knowledge of Black History and the contributions they had made in America up to that time. In some cases the street names relate directly to Black History while in other cases the names relate indirectly, in a somewhat abstract manner.

Of course there are no written records to substantiate this, so in the indirect cases we are only speculating what could have been in Meacham's mind when he gave the streets their names.

The crisscross pattern of streets marked out by Meacham within his sub-division created an area eleven blocks long and four blocks wide, thus the sub-division he created contained thirteen streets (originally). An interesting fact to consider is that when the United States was created it contained thirteen colonies. That fact seems nothing more than coincidence until realizing that Meacham's first east-west street south of Big Bend has a name derived from the Revolutionary War.

Attucks is the name of the first east-west street south of Big Bend Road. Created after Meacham's original plat drawing, it was probably named in tribute to Crispus Attucks, the first man to fall in the American Revolution.

Attucks is believed to have been a runaway slave from the Framingham, Massachusetts, area around 1750. He later took to the high seas as a sailor on a whaling vessel.

But, around 9:00 P.M. on March 5, 1770, history found Attucks in the foreground

of an angry crowd which had assembled in front of the Custom House in Boston. Members of this crowd yelled at and threatened the British soldiers who were stationed there. As the crowd became more angry, the "red coats" lowered their bayonets and at once were pelted with snowballs, chunks of ice, and an array of sticks and stones, during which the order to "FIRE" was given.

The first to fall was Crispus Attucks, undoubtedly one of the few Blacks in the crowd. A white man named Samuel Gray ran to Attucks' aid and was, himself, shot and killed. By the time the British soldiers withdrew, five "rebellious Bostonians," as they called them, were dead, and a half dozen others had been wounded.

Attucks, killed by a British bullet in what became known as the Boston Massacre, was the first man to die in the cause of American freedom!

New York, today south of Attucks, was originally Meacham's first east-west street south of Big Bend. This street name might possibly be in tribute to the fact that New York was where a Frenchman named Elias Nau established the first school for Negroes in 1704. It was also where the first African Free School was opened on November 1, 1787, and was the first state to abolish slavery, on July 4, 1827.

Meacham, of course, is named in memory of the founder, Elzey Meacham, but the original name for this street when platted in 1892 was BROOKLYN and may have been in tribute to Brooklyn, Illinois, one of the first "Negro towns" in the United States, having been platted in 1837.

Because of the increase in discrimination, some Blacks sought a measure of independence and self-government by forming their own towns. This town was originally platted as Brooklyn by five white men in 1837 but the name was changed to Lovejoy, in honor of the martyred abolitionist editor, Elijah P. Lovejoy, when the town was incorporated in 1874. The town name was soon changed back to Brooklyn but the post office has been known as the Lovejoy branch ever since.

By 1900, Brooklyn's population had grown to over 1,900, only fifty of which were white.

Saratoga is the next east-west street and is believed to have been named in honor of a major battle in the American Revolutionary War in which black soldiers participated and, in many cases, were honored heroes.

Out of a total combat force of 300,000 men, approximately 5,000 black soldiers saw service in this war. In fact, enlisted Blacks represented each of the 13 colonies.

There were several Blacks honored as heroes at Bunker Hill and at Stony Point, as well. Generally they fought in integrated units but there were a number of all-black regiments such as those in the Battle of Rhode Island on August 28, 1778, when 400 Blacks held off 1500 British soldiers. And a highly decorated unit of Revolutionary War soldiers known as "The Black Regiment" disbanded on June 13, 1783, at Saratoga, New York.

Alsobrook is the next east-west street, south. The significance of this name to history or to Elzey Meacham is unknown but Meacham used it several times in his suburban developments, including the first one in what is today south Memphis.

The name does, however, appear several times in the Memphis city directory and may have been chosen as a street name by Meacham in honor of some pioneer black resident in one of his first sub-divisions or was someone he knew in some other way.

Electric is the next block south, and although the electrical age was in its infancy in the 1890s, Meacham may have known about Lewis Howard Latimer, a Black who worked with Thomas Edison.

Latimer was born in Boston in 1848, served in the Civil War and afterwards worked as an office boy in a company of patent lawyers. He rose to the position of chief draftsman for the firm. By 1876 he was an expert electrical engineer, held various jobs, and in 1884 joined the engineering staff of the Edison Electric Light Company. Latimer worked for Edison for many years, becoming the only black member of the famous Edison Pioneers.

Aldridge is the next block south and was originally named Arcadia by Meacham. Arcadia simply means a region of simple, quiet contentment and probably referred to what Meacham had in mind for his newly-formed sub-division. Later this street was renamed Aldridge in honor of Ira Frederick Aldridge, a black American actor who was very popular and enjoyed great success in Europe in the mid-1800s. He was one of the great Shakespearean tragedians of his time.

Aldridge was born sometime around 1805 in New York City, the son of a freed slave who had become a preacher.

In preparation for an acting career, Aldridge studied in England at the University of Glasgow and made his debut in Othello in 1826 at the Royalty Theatre in London. He went on to make appearances in Dublin, the English and Irish provinces, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, the United States, and made many other tours. He remained quite popular well into his career, as late as 1867, when he died on tour in Russian Poland.

Chicago is the next east-west street and is so named to give tribute to the fact that Chicago, Illinois, second largest city in the United States, was founded by a Black, Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable.

DuSable was born in St. Marc, Haiti, of mixed French and Negro parentage. His father was a pirate and his mother was a stolen slave from a Danish plantation in St. Croix. DuSable's parents had settled in Haiti where his mother could remain free.

DuSable attended school near Paris, France, and later left to seek his fortune in the New France of the New World, Louisiana. While in New Orleans DuSable became fearful of becoming mistaken for a slave, so he ventured into the interior of this new land and eventually arrived in St. Louis. For a time DuSable lived with the Illinois Indians, learned their customs and life style, and proceeded north to the shores of the Great Lakes, working for a time for the British governor of the region.

DuSable then met a beautiful Indian girl of the Potawatomi tribe, married her, and settled in an area of unsettled wilderness that the Indians called Eschikagou, or sometimes simply Chikagou. DuSable built a trading post, and slowly it prospered. Then he built a new five-room house at the site which became the area's first permanent home. His marriage produced the first recorded birth in the new settlement. Soon, through DuSable's efforts and the fact his trading post became known as the best between St. Louis and Montreal, a little city grew around him which in time became the second largest in the U.S.

It is said that for a long time the Indians in the area were known to often joke, "The first white man in Chikagou was black."

DuSable, by the way, returned to the St. Louis area years later where he remained until his death in 1818. He is buried in St. Charles, Missouri.

Memphis is the next block south. Meacham was quite partial to his home town of Memphis where he was born and raised. Undoubtedly the street is named, at least in part, in honor of that city but also recognize that during the Civil War the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.) were active in many battles, one of which was the Battle of Memphis where several Blacks won the Congressional Medal of Honor.

In all, over 200,000 Blacks fought with Union forces in the U.S. Civil War.

In addition, Memphis, Tennessee, is the location of the Beale Street Baptist Church, the first Negro Missionary Baptist Church in America. It was built between 1865-1869 entirely by black labor and was the location that Ulysses S. Grant used to deliver a speech after the Civil War ended.

Memphis was also the home town of the first black millionaire, Robert Church.

Handy is the next block south but was originally named FRISCOE after the railroad in which friends of Meacham had financial interests. Handy, of course, was named in honor of W.C. (William Christopher) Handy, the famous black American band leader, cornetist, and songwriter who composed the song 'St. Louis Blues'.

Handy was born on November 16, 1873. Around 1905, after several years with a minstrel show, he went to Memphis where he formed his own band and began composing and performing the "blues" that made him famous. Prior to the 'St. Louis Blues', written in 1914, Handy wrote 'Memphis Blues'.

From the 1920s until his death in 1958, Handy was a music publisher in New York

City and is considered the most successful pioneer of the blues as a form of American popular music.

Spears is the last east-west street and was originally named Boston when set out in 1892. Meacham used this name for a street in his first sub-division in Memphis as well.

Boston, as stated previously, was regarded as the "seat of the revolution" in the 1770s and is where the first colonist, a black man, was killed by British gunfire. A statue of Crispus Attucks stands near the site, today.

The street was later renamed Spears in honor of the first black resident in Meacham Park. Sandy Spears was a farmer who lived in Meacham Park along Big Bend Road.

Shelby is the first north-south street, east of what was originally called Denny Road (present-day Kirkwood Rd.). Shelby is believed to have been named in tribute to the county within which Meacham's hometown of Memphis is situated, Memphis being its county seat.

Shelby County, Tennessee, was named for Isaac Shelby who served in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, was governor of Kentucky and a member of the North Carolina legislature.

Milwaukee is the name of the next north-south street. Cities such as Milwaukee, Memphis, Brooklyn, New Orleans, Boston, and New York are all synonymous with the urbanization of Blacks in America after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect January 1, 1863. Many, over a period of time, went to these cities to find jobs and to build a new life. It was in these settings that ragtime, blues, and later jazz emerged and became the music of black Americans and later, all Americans.

Orleans is the last north-south street created within Meacham Park. The name is probably derived from another war in which black Americans played a major role, the War of 1812.

This speculation is made because Meacham appears to have named a street in honor of each war that was significant to black history up to the time the streets were marked out. Blacks served in the Revolutionary as well as the War of 1812, but by the 1842 war with Mexico, army regulations had been changed to exclude Blacks specifically. Then by the 1860s and the eruption of the Civil War, things changed again. Over 200,000 black soldiers served on both sides.

During the Spanish-American War, Blacks served in the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry and other units. But that was in 1898, years after Meacham had named his streets and left St. Louis.

In the War of 1812 Battle of New Orleans, the third war believed to have been honored by Meacham in the naming of his streets, General Andrew Jackson defeated 8,000 battle seasoned British soldiers in a decisive battle on January 8, 1815, with two battalions

of black soldiers. On January 18, 1815, Jackson issued a proclamation to the black troops at New Orleans telling them how great they did and how they had "surpassed all of his hopes!"

In that battle, in less than thirty minutes, 2,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded compared to the American loss of a total of 13 men.

What's more, Andrew Jackson and most of his troops were, like Meacham, from Tennessee.

Although we are only speculating in some cases what was behind the naming of the community's streets, it is interesting that all of them correlate in some way with the part that Blacks have played in the formation of the United States and the history of America.

Local government documents were recently uncovered which reveal how the addition of a street and the name changes of those four others actually came about.

Although not one of Meacham's original streets, what is known today as Attucks was originally no more than a wagon path extending into Meacham Park from the curve at Big Bend Road. As time went on, residents referred to this path as Orchard Street -- presumably because it passed by one -- but no street sign ever existed. Street signs of four designated streets (Brooklyn, Arcadia, Friscoe, and Boston) deteriorated or disappeared with time, causing their actual names to be forgotten.

Prior to World War II mail delivered to Meacham Park residents was formally listed as "Route #12; Kirkwood, Mo." Each family was then assigned a box number. These rural mail boxes were posted along Kirkwood Road near the corner of each intersecting street out of Meacham Park (i.e.- New York & Kirkwood Rd., Chicago & Kirkwood Rd., and on down the line). It wasn't unusual to see as many as ten or twelve mail boxes posted at each of these corners.

Through the efforts of various community groups such as the Women's Community Club, the American Legion, and the Volunteer Fire Department, the U.S. Post Office Department agreed to begin house-to-house mail delivery on April 1, 1941. Since no street signs existed for Orchard as well as the other four previously named, and those names were forgotten, postal authorities assigned the present-day names to those streets when door to door service began.

These particular streets -- Attucks, Meacham, Aldridge, Handy, and Spears -- have been officially known by those names ever since.

Chapter
2

THE
EDUCATION HISTORY

The Community's Schools

While the person who created this community was prospering in real estate in the East, the people he left behind were struggling for an education.

Since the beginning, Meacham Park has been part of the Kirkwood school district. Black children were required to attend the Booker T. Washington School on Adams Avenue near Geyer Road while white children attended Jefferson School located on Jefferson St. between Clay and Harrison Streets.

In 1908, concerned residents living south of the Frisco Railroad tracks met with the school board. They requested that a school be built closer to this area to prevent small children from having to walk the hazardous route into Kirkwood, 2 1/2 miles away.

Within three weeks of that meeting, the Kirkwood School District established the Meacham Park School, a small house rented for \$150. per year from a Mr. Phelim O'Toole. This house was located about 400 feet south of the entrance to Oak Hill Cemetery and, after a few alterations, opened on October 12, 1908. Miss Alice Alter was hired as teacher. This school, however, was for the white children of Meacham Park. Black children continued to walk the distance to Booker T. Washington School.

On October 3, 1908, black parents of the area again approached the Board, and a petition was presented by Charles Littlejohn requesting that a closer school be established for black youngsters. The petition stated there were 52 black children living south of the Frisco Railroad tracks who attended the all-black school at Adams and Geyer in Kirkwood. The new school established in this area had been for 14 white children.

No action was taken by the Board at that meeting. In its November meeting, however, it advised the residents that because \$1000. had been spent on recent improvements at Booker T. Washington, another building for black students could not be afforded. The First Baptist Church in Meacham Park offered its building for use as a school but that, too, was turned down by the Board.

In August of 1909 and again in December of 1910 a delegation of black parents from Meacham Park went before the School Board requesting the establishment of a grade school for their children. The Board denied their request but apparently formed a committee to study the possibility because on September 8, 1911, the following report was given:

Your committee visited the site and building proposed to be used by the colored children for a school in Meacham Park and found that the building had been put in pretty fair condition, requiring only a cistern and privies, together with a coal shed. The building is offered to this board at a monthly rental of \$5. All money expended on the building or premises to be deducted from this rental. The Meacham Park citizens reported that they had two teachers in view, either one of which is acceptable to them. Your committee recommends that the Kirkwood Board of Education give to the Meacham Park colored citizens the best educational facilities possible under the present circumstances and with the understanding that if same shows proper progress for one year, a just endeavor will be made to greatly improve same.

The recommendation was accepted. On September 19, 1911, the Meacham Park School of Negroes was opened. Alice J. Jones was hired as its first teacher.

Although longtime Meacham Park resident Arthur Jones, no relation to Alice, attended Booker T. Washington because he lived at Rose Hill and Harrison at the time, he remembers the original Meacham Park School. "It was a small brown, possibly shingle-sided, one-room house located at the east end of New York Street," he says. "Today, a two-story house stands on the site."

Other teachers hired for the school sometime between 1911 and World War I included Mrs. May Crawford followed by Mrs. Auvelin Arnold, but overcrowding and other unsatisfactory conditions began to plague the Meacham Park school by 1914.

A "portable" two-room building was being used at the elementary school on Jefferson to relieve overcrowding there. By November of 1914 the new Pitman School was completed, and the Board planned to move that "portable" to Meacham Park. A fire, however, broke out at the Booker T. Washington School in December, causing the Board to make the decision to move the portable.

The unsatisfactory conditions at the Meacham Park School continued to worsen. Records indicate that sometime during W.W.I the Meacham Park School was closed and, again, the black children were walking the distance to Booker T. Washington. A detailed listing of the Kirkwood School District facilities for 1921 reveals only one school in the district for black children, and that was B.T. Washington - "a four room portable on West Adams Avenue, between Van Buren Avenue and Geyer Road."

Each year graduation exercises were held for those completing their eight-grade education at Booker T. Washington. Records, however, were never kept on those graduations until June of 1920. In that year fourteen graduates were recorded in the official records of the Kirkwood School District:

Cecil Brown Bennett	Randolph Mack North
George Harold Brooks	Theron August Perkins
Elsa May Davis	Printes Edward Randall
Gladys Leslie Jenkins	Ezel Mose Rodgers
Edna Mae Merchant	Oliver Wendell Spears
Mary Elizabeth Ming	Myrtle Lee West
James Henry North	Inez Lillian Wright

Beyond the eighth grade though, black children, whether from Meacham Park or Kirkwood, had no place to continue their education. No formal arrangements were made to educate them beyond that level -- they were on their own.

Arthur Jones is a prime example of one who wanted a higher education during those times. After graduating from B.T. Washington, Jones entered an all-black high school in St. Louis by giving a false St. Louis address. After one month school officials noticed the discrepancy and Jones was expelled. His parents made a plea to the Kirkwood School Board, but it refused to provide or even help with the St. Louis tuition costs. "Times were

hard," Jones recalled, "but my father was determined that I should have a higher education. I don't know how, but he did it."

Jones' father struggled to send his son to the all-black Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. At that time the school included a boarding school for black students to continue their high school education before going on to college.

Today, Arthur Jones, in his eighties, is a retired postal employee. His parents also struggled to provide his sister, Emily Jones Harris, with a higher education. She went on to become a teacher for over thirty years, in that same school system which had expelled her brother many years before!

Like the Jones's, many parents found themselves in the same predicament. After voicing their concern and getting no results, several Meacham Park families traveled to the state capital in Jefferson City in 1918 to appeal for help in getting black children into high school. The possibility was discussed but no immediate action was taken.

The League of Women Voters in the Kirkwood area became involved in August, 1919. In their concern they encouraged black parents to send their children to high school. They found that many parents wanted to but couldn't afford tuition costs for St. Louis schools, the only district in the area having high schools for blacks. The League and other concerned citizens made an appeal to the Kirkwood Board of Education on February 9, 1920, pointing out that everyone would benefit from a better educational system in the community. The Board pointed out that no funds were available.

By July 19, 1920, though, the Kirkwood Board of Education relented and set aside \$400. "as a fund with which to assist paying the high school tuition in St. Louis for the colored pupils of this district who wish to attend." On November 8, 1920, the Board authorized the payment of \$40. to the St. Louis public schools "to pay tuition for four colored pupils for one quarter."

Tuition was paid to either Sumner High School in St. Louis or Douglas High School in Webster Groves. Both were all-black schools at the time. But even with tuition paid by the Board, many families deprived themselves in order to pay the cost of daily streetcar (and later bus) transportation to their chosen school. Here again, children were required to walk from Meacham Park to Kirkwood's Woodbine and Clay Streets to board the streetcar bound for their school.

Later, the School Board began including streetcar fare in the appropriations. Each student was paid \$.20 a day which covered the cost of transportation to and from the school.

The School Board's action represented real progress, but the arrangement wasn't without problems. Some residents can remember times when the school board neglected or postponed tuition payments to Sumner or Douglas and the student was expelled until the tuition was paid.

In April of 1921 a delegation of black parents met with the School Board to discuss

the possible site for a new elementary school. The voters of the district had recently authorized a new school to be built for black students. After much discussion, the board voted "that the new Booker Washington School be built in Meacham Park (and) that this be made a four room eighth grade school." The board also decided that the school for "Negro children" on Adams Avenue would be kept open for children living north of the railroad tracks.

In March of 1922 the architect, a Mr. Ittner, presented plans for the new Meacham Park School, even though the exact site hadn't been chosen.

Controversy erupted and continued for several years concerning the site for the new school. Several groups opposed the idea that the school should be located in Meacham Park. Others simply wanted the new school built on the Booker T. Washington site. Meanwhile, a study determined that more blacks from Meacham Park attended Booker T. Washington than from Kirkwood. So land was purchased, and the school board proceeded with plans for the construction of the new "Negro elementary school" in Meacham Park. Notices inserted in the local newspapers requested sealed proposals for "a four-room frame school building to be erected at Saratoga and Milwaukee." On February 7, 1924, the contracts were awarded for the work to begin.

Controversy continued though until it was decided to make improvements at the Booker T. Washington School as well. It was finally decided that "at the Booker T. Washington School, instruction in the first six grades will be provided for all colored children residing in Kirkwood and in the School District east, west, and north of the Kirkwood city limits. At the Meacham Park School instruction in the first six grades will be provided for all colored children in the School District south of the Kirkwood city limits. Seventh and eighth grade instruction for all colored children in the School District will also be provided at the Meacham Park School."

Work continued on the school throughout that year. In September, 1924, two rooms were equipped and opened to students prior to the entire building being completed. John Ben Davis, better known as J.B. Davis, was hired as the first principal. Davis, born near Pilot Knob, Missouri in 1875, had graduated from Lincoln University in Jefferson City. Before coming to this area he had taught in Fredericktown, Poplar Bluff, DeSoto, and St. Marys. He became a very popular teacher in Meacham Park and was quite dedicated to his work. He was often known to visit his pupils' homes at the end of his teaching day.

An active P.T.A. soon grew out of the Mother's Circle Organization established in 1924. Mrs. Retta Logan was the group's first president.

Records do not indicate names of all teachers employed at the Meacham Park School but one of the first was Mrs. Clothilde Bass, better known as Miss Alexander. Mrs. Bass was a resident in the community and, in later years, became deeply involved in the efforts to bring improvements to Meacham Park through the Women's Community Club that she helped organize.

Many detailed records, in fact, are lacking, but upon combing several sources, the

following information somewhat reveals the school's development over the years:

After the census of 1925, authorization was given to employ a third teacher and equip a third room at the Meacham Park School.

The first eighth-grade class to graduate from the Meacham Park School was the Class of 1925.

Planning for the future and realizing expansion would be needed some day, the School Board purchased an additional five lots surrounding the Meacham Park School in May of 1927.

In September, 1931, in an effort to relieve over-crowding at Booker T. Washington, all fifth grade children in the district were assigned to attend the less-crowded Meacham Park School. Shortly after that, black residents asked the Kirkwood Board of Education for the name of the Meacham Park School to be changed to the "J. Milton Turner School," in honor of the Missouri man who rose from slavery to serve in the Union Army during the Civil War, went on to be the founder of Lincoln University in Jefferson City, and later was appointed minister of the United States to Liberia.

The request was approved by the Board of Education in April, 1932, and J. Milton Turner became the official name of the community's school.

In 1933 the government announced that federal funds could be obtained to assist in the construction of new schools. After making additional land transactions around the district, an application was made for a federal grant.

Studies determined that expansion would be needed at the Meacham Park School as well as at several other locations throughout the district. Voters approved a bond issue in November of 1936 in the hopes that federal assistance would be obtained.

In October, 1937, the announcement was made that a substantial grant would be awarded the Kirkwood School District to assist in the cost of constructing three new school buildings, one of which would be a new brick building at the Meacham Park site.

Construction began, and in 1938 the new brick Turner Junior High School was completed. The original wood-frame building remained attached to the brick building, along the east and a portion of the south side, for the elementary grades.

That year, J. B. Davis retired. He was succeeded by William Young, who headed a staff of twelve teachers.

In 1942, a cafeteria and a new six-room elementary school, constructed of brick, were added to the junior high school building. The original wood structure attached to the building was eliminated.

During the following years the Booker T. Washington facility continued to deterio-

rate. On August 29, 1949, the Board met with black residents to discuss the possibility of eliminating the Washington school. The Board was reluctant to replace the building but couldn't eliminate it because black residents of Kirkwood insisted that it be kept open to prevent their children from walking the long distance to Turner School in Meacham Park. Finally, on June 12, 1950, the Board decided to abandon the school and conduct classes for Blacks at the J. Milton Turner School only. The board gave the following reasons for their decision:

1. The playground area was inadequate.
2. The school building itself was obsolete.
3. The number of students in 1950 and the number anticipated in the future were insufficient to keep it open.
4. Consolidation of the Washington and Turner schools would offer educational advantages.
5. Continued operation of the Washington school would lower the school district's standing with the State Dept. of Education.
6. Closing of the Washington school was recommended by the State Dept. of Education.

At the opening of the school year in September of 1950, all black students in the district began attending the J. Milton Turner School. Within a short time, the Booker T. Washington School was razed.

Over the years, other principals at Turner School, after Davis and Young, included Mrs. Winiford Brown, William Wynn, and Ollie Mack.

In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in the schools prompted the Kirkwood School District to become one of the first to absorb black students and teachers into their regular system. The all-black Turner School became part of the predominantly white Kirkwood School system for many years. Then, during the 1975-76 school year, Turner was closed and the student body was moved to Robinson School located at Couch and Rose Hill Streets in Kirkwood.

The reasons for closing Turner were much the same as the reasons for closing Booker T. Washington nearly 25 years before. What the School Board didn't say was that the school probably represented a "system" of education that the Board wished to forget. Even today, the J. Milton Turner School building still stands, albeit slowly deteriorating, much like the institution for which it stood: segregated education.

When the building was sold by the School Board in June, 1980, William Jones, long-time resident and editor of the community newspaper *In Our Opinion*, wrote in an editorial, "Now he stands like an old slave, who has carried a burden for years and now he is tired—his burden has been a much heavier one than the white schools. The Turner building has done everything he possibly could during his time when discrimination was at its height—he has educated—he has entertained, and he has served a black community."

Some Notable Teachers

Teachers at Turner School who were also Meacham Park residents included Mrs. Clothilde Bass, Catherine Lucas, Elma Webb, and Alma Powell Jones.

Alma was the only daughter of D. M. and Arsella Powell. Strong believers in education, they encouraged her to complete her schooling in the Kirkwood system, and she went on to graduate from Sumner High School. Afterwards Alma attended Stowe Teachers College in St. Louis and later obtained her Masters Degree at the University of Illinois. She began working in the 1940s, teaching at Turner School. In later years she was transferred to Pitman School and then to Hough. Alma retired after thirty years in the teaching profession.

Another popular teacher at Turner was Lewellyn "Mike" Smith, the Physical Education teacher for 37 years. "His heavy voice commanded attention and his 6' 6" physical frame demanded respect," wrote Bill Jones in an issue of In Our Opinion.

Smith attended high school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and was an outstanding basketball player. After completing his college undergraduate work in Oklahoma, Smith attended Hampton Institute in Virginia. He graduated from the all-black institution in 1938 with a degree in Physical Education and Biology.

In late 1938 Smith was contacted by the Superintendent of Schools, who persuaded him to come and teach at Turner School. Accepting the position, Smith began teaching at Turner in January, 1939.

Shortly after his arrival he met Estelle, the girls' P. E. instructor. She had just started teaching at Turner four months before, in September, 1938. Estelle also taught Home Economics and Art. Soon, a friendship developed between them and eventually Mike and Estelle were married.

Mr. Smith taught Boy's P.E., Industrial Arts, and Science at the school. He became a resident of Meacham Park and later attended Washington University in St. Louis. He received his Masters Degree in Physical Education there in 1956.

When the school district was integrated in the mid-1950s, Smith was transferred to Nipher School. By that time he had taught at Turner for 15 years. Mike Smith retired in January, 1976, after teaching at Nipher for 22 years.

As Bill Jones later wrote, ". . . the name Mr. Smith was said with much pride by the youngsters and it was their desire to be like him. Upon moving to Nipher Junior High, Mike Smith carried with him the same image. His fan club grew from the black students to the white students as well."

Smith served for several years on the Kirkwood Parks and Recreation Commission and has continued to maintain an avid interest in the welfare of the community's children.

One of Smith's former students, Cleo Lewright, later returned to Turner School as the P. E. Instructor. Lewright remained in that position for many years while Smith was still instructor at Nipher. Said Lewright: "Mr. Smith helped and turned me towards my athletic career. God Bless him."

Today, Mike and Estelle Smith reside in the 900 block of South Harrison in Kirkwood and have remained active throughout their retirement.

Community's Impact Upon The Nation

Some people who live outside of Meacham Park have formed a negative opinion of this community over the years. Problems of crime, lack of education, poverty, and continued aid for its poor often come to mind. But in reality, this community is no different than any other. Meacham Park has produced many professional Blacks within its borders who have gone on to become quite successful on a local, state, national, and even international level! And these accomplishments were made, in some cases, in spite of the many obstacles thrown in front of them.

To quote the current slogan of the United Negro College Fund: "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." The following are just a few who have proved that the struggle for equality in education that this community has fought for in the past was well worth the effort:

Dr. Russell Harrison

One of the first residents to rise up from the community to go on to a professional career was Dr. Russell Harrison. Harrison attended Turner School and, because of the segregated Kirkwood School system, attended and graduated from St. Louis' Vashon High School. He went on to Stowe-Teachers College and later served in the U.S. Army. After his service Harrison completed a medical education and graduated from Meharry Medical College in Tennessee. His internship was completed at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis. Today, Doctor Harrison, a specialist in radiology, has offices in East Oakland and San Francisco, California, and also does radiological work for the U.S. Government.

Alice Campbell Phillips

Alice Campbell Phillips is the daughter of John and Evelyn Ewing, early settlers who came to Meacham Park around 1918. As she grew up in Meacham Park, Alice went through the segregated grade school system of Kirkwood and went on to graduate from St. Louis' Sumner High School. Soon after, she began training at St. Mary's Infirmary in the laboratory and nursing facilities, and then went on to serve in the Army Air Force for three years. After returning to civilian life, Alice worked at Homer G. Phillips Hospital where she finished her education as a laboratory technician. She later became employed by the Jefferson Barracks Veterans Hospital for eight years and then spent twenty-five years as a Lab. Tech. for the Physician and Surgeons Medical Corporation in Kirkwood. Today Alice is an instructor at the Mid-West Medical Institute serving Kirkwood and St. Charles, Missouri.

Araminta Smith

Araminta, the second daughter of Maggie and Sylvester Smith and the granddaugh-

ter of Isaac and Minnie Hale, all early pioneers in the Meacham Park area, was educated in the segregated Kirkwood School system and went on to graduate with a Masters Degree. Araminta went on to become an Associate Professor of Social Studies at the University of Missouri at Columbia, Missouri. She was the first black tenured professor at M.U. and was conferred Professor Emeritus in 1985. Araminta Smith is now Director of Social Services with the National Benevolent Society, Social and Health Unit of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ.

Thelma Reid Williams

Thelma Reid Williams, Araminta's sister, attended Lincoln University in Jefferson City and went on to McKendree College in Lebanon, Illinois. After attaining a B.S. Degree in Elementary Education, she went on to graduate work at St. Louis' Washington University. Later she taught in the elementary school systems of New London, Mo., Lovejoy, Ill., and Golden Garden, Ill. Presently Thelma is in her thirty-second year of teaching reading and music at the Dunbar Elementary School in East St. Louis, Illinois. She is also active in her church, the Christ Memorial Baptist Church, where she holds the position of pianist-organist.

Dr. Edward Eugene Fields

Edward Fields was born in Meacham Park on June 24, 1918, and was the second of six children born to Archibald Sylvester Fields and Sarah Young Fields. Edward attended the segregated elementary school system in the area and later commuted the daily 38-mile-round-trip required to attend Sumner High School. Fields graduated in June 1936 and went on to attend Stowe Teachers College in St. Louis from 1936 to 1938. In 1940 he completed his B.S. Degree at Lincoln University in Jefferson City. By 1947 he had earned a Masters Degree at Kansas State Teachers' College in Pittsburg, Kansas. Fields also attended the University of K.C., Missouri University, and New York University. By 1959 he received the Doctorate of Education Degree from the University of Kansas at Lawrence.

Fields' professional career in education began in 1938 when he became an instructor at Lincoln University. With the arrival of W.W.II he served in the U.S. Navy Civilian Corps and returned to teaching in 1945. Since then his career has included elementary, secondary, and college teaching; elementary and secondary principalships; central office administration, including special director, compensatory program; director, career and continuing and vocational-technical education; Associate Superintendent, Instruction; Associate Superintendent, School Facilities Division; Assistant Superintendent, Emergency School Aid Act and Staff Development Division; Acting and Interim Superintendent of Schools; and instruction, supervision, and employment activities for youth and adults for the federal government and industry. His last position with the School District of Kansas City, Missouri: Assistant Superintendent, ESAA Programs and Staff Development Division. Fields retired from the K.C. School District in June 1979, after 34 years of service.

Over the years, Fields has been listed in Who's Who in American Education, Who's What and Why in Missouri: Personalities of West and Mid-West, Outstanding Educators in America, and Who's Who Among Black Americans.

In addition, Dr. Fields is an ordained minister and is currently pastor at Allen

Chapel AME Church in Kansas City, Missouri. His wife, Marshan Fields, who is also an ordained minister, is a Diagnostic Team Member of the Special Education Division of the K.C. School District. They have two children, a son and a daughter.

Atkins W. Warren

Atkins Warren was born and raised in Meacham Park and served in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1943 to 1946. In 1948 he joined the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department and worked in virtually all operations divisions, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in charge of Internal Affairs, Inspection and Evaluation, and Watchman Divisions. During that time he also continued his education, acquiring a B.A., Cum Laude, in Sociology at Webster University as well as a Master of Arts degree in Public Administration.

In 1980 he became Chief of Police in Gainesville, Florida, and served in that capacity for four years. In 1984 Atkins became a member of the U.S. Department of Justice, as a National Administration of Justice Specialist, based in Chevy Chase, Maryland. In this capacity his duties included: consultation, advice and guidance on police-community relations programs; staff-prison relations programs to reduce racial tension and crime in the nation's communities and prisons; consultation on issues involved in Cuban-Haitian refugee resettlement; inter-agency consultation with the U.S. State Department on police community relations training and human rights issues in Central American countries; and technical assistance to police departments in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico on police relations training and human rights issues in Central American countries; and technical assistance to police departments in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico on police relations topics and civil unrest.

Today, Atkins Warren is Associate Director of the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice in Chevy Chase, a suburb of Washington, D.C.

LeRoy W. Harris Jr.

Meacham Park is represented in the field of music by the talented LeRoy Harris. Born on February 12, 1916, Harris's uncle, a music instructor at St. Louis's Poro College, gave him violin lessons from ages five to eleven. At age twelve, Harris began playing the alto sax and clarinet. By the age of thirteen, Harris was playing professionally with St. Louis's own Chick Finney Band and continued to do so for about a year. LeRoy went to Chicago in 1930 and played in the bands of Burns Campbell until 1932, Ray Nuance until 1936, and at Chicago's "5100 Club" with Eddie Cole's Band.

Earl "Fatha" Hines hired LeRoy to play with his orchestra, during which time he traveled on many road trips, and he played with other bands such as Horace Henderson, Lull Armstrong, Erskin Tote, Dave Patton, and Walter Dyette, before being drafted into W.W.II. There he played in the Navy "A" Band from 1943 to 1945.

Returning to civilian life, LeRoy went on to play in such bands as Bill Doggett's Orchestra directed by Willie Bryant at the Savoy Ballroom in New York City, Coleridge Davis' Band in Atlantic City, which took a Larry Stelle show on the road, and, still later, the Bill Martin Band in Chicago. By the early 1950s, Harris was playing road dates with Clint Weaver's Four Tons of Rhythm Band.

In April 1952, LeRoy Harris returned to St. Louis and married Lola Wallace, an artist in her own right in the cosmetology field. During that year, Harris joined Ben Thigpen's Band and in 1954 returned to Earl Hines' Orchestra to play road dates with the Harlem Globetrotters.

By 1956 Harris returned home and joined Archie Burnsides' Band for a year. Then he joined Eddie Johnson's Trio at the King Brothers' Club and played there until the late 1960s.

From about 1967 until he retired in 1980, Harris served the Meacham Park area as an Employment Counselor for Metroplex but remained active in the music field. Today, at the age of 73, Harris still remains active as a member of Singleton Palmer's Band and as a member of the Gateway Festival Orchestra of St. Louis.

Lola Wallace Harris

Graduating from Sumner High School, Lola Wallace began preparing for a career in cosmetology. After completing cosmetology courses at the St. Louis Board of Education's newly established Carr Lane Technical school, she began her apprenticeship under the direction of Beulah K. Allen, a pioneer in the field of beauty culture. Lola continued to strive for excellence by taking advanced instructions at several institutes including Madame Carange's School and L' École Eugene in Paris, France, and at the House of Yardley in London, England.

By the 1950s, Lola owned and operated her own shop and since that time she has received several awards. Articles by and about her have appeared in numerous magazines and news-papers; she has trained at least ten young women who are now successful owners of their own beauty shops; and she has taught numerous courses on cosmetology at both the college and high school level. In addition, Lola is a professional consultant to such nationally known firms as Helene Curtis, Clairol, G.W. Godefroy, Gillette Company, and Ardell Inc., among others.

Married to LeRoy W. Harris Jr. since 1952, Lola has advised, counseled, and designed styles for exceptional and problem cases, national celebrities, and many clients through-out the Mid-West, including some who travel long distances for her services.

Her shop, known as "Lola's - Creative Hair Stylist," is located at 1025 North Grand, in St. Louis.

Marion Holmes

Marion Holmes was born and raised in Meacham Park and attended the local schools. He was told by his school counselor that he wasn't college material. Holmes refused to accept that opinion and became more determined than ever. He went on to graduate from the University of Missouri at St. Louis as well as attend the School of Commerce and the George Washington National Law Center.

Marion worked for a time as an Internal Revenue Agent and Tax-Law Specialist at St. Louis and at the IRS National Office in Washington, D.C.. From there he went on to be

employed by Ernst & Whinney in Washington, D.C., and Cleveland, Ohio. Some time later he became Director of Tax for the Cummins Engine Company in Columbus, Indiana, and then went on to Bausch & Lomb, Inc. in Rochester, New York, as Director of Tax.

Marion Holmes has been a member of the Board of Trustees for the Colgate Rochester Divinity School, past national president of the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA), on the national board of directors of the Tax Executives Institute, and a member of the advisory group for the Commissioner Internal Revenue Service. He is listed as a distinguished black CPA role model in the February 1988 issue of the Journal of Accountancy and is currently on the board of directors of the International Tax Institute.

Today, widely known and highly respected in his field, Marion Holmes is Director of Corporate Tax for the PHH Group, Inc., a Baltimore-based financial holding company. Luckily, many years ago, he refused to accept his counselor's opinion and went on to determine his own fate!

Dr. James Edward McIntosh

Dr. Edward (Swanky) McIntosh is one of the children of Rev. Edward Sr. and the late Mrs. Tiny McIntosh. Dr. McIntosh, known as "Swanky" to the community graduated from Turner Elementary School, Nipher Jr. High and the Kirkwood Sr. High. He received his premedical degree from the University of Missouri in Columbia and his medical degree from Meharry Medical University in Tennessee during the 1960s.

As a sophomore dental student at Meharry, he was selected to attend the Students' Dental Research Conference in Washington, D.C., as the only representative of his school. McIntosh was chosen by the faculty committee on the basis of his proficiency.

Dr. McIntosh did his internship at the Sybenbein Hospital in New York. Sybenbein was closed around the same time that Homer G. Phillips was closed in St. Louis. At that time, Dr. McIntosh held several debates with the New York Mayor in an attempt to prevent the Sybenbein Hospital from closing.

In October 1987, Dr. McIntosh received Fellowship into the American Academy of Dentistry, and he has also been named in the Who's Who of America.

Today, Dr. J. Edward McIntosh is Director of the Dental Program at the Harlem Hospital in New York.

Randy J. Shed

Randy attended the Kirkwood schools and proceeded to work on his B.S. Degree at Missouri University at Rolla. He received his B.S. Degree in Civil Engineering in July, 1985.

Randy is currently a Civil Engineer intern and will be a journeyman engineer by August 1988.

He lives in Rolla with his wife LaTonya Williams Shed who, until recently, was a

dispatcher in the Rolla Police Department. The family attends the First Christian Church in Rolla where Randy is a deacon, a Sunday School teacher for the high schoolers, and regularly preaches.

The list could go on and on. It's plain to see that Meacham Park has contributed to nearly every professional field. Because time and space does not permit, the list doesn't even include the contributions this community has made in providing individuals to the average work force in any given area: the contractors, the laborers, the factory workers, the store employees, the surrounding city's employees, and the like.

If people living outside this community knew the truth, an average cross-section of those born and raised in Meacham Park are no different than an average cross-section of people born and raised in any community. Except . . . maybe, for those born here to get where they are, it took an above-average struggle!

Chapter
3

THE YEARS OF GROWTH 1900 - 1920s

Growth of the Community

In the cycle of every community's development, once the settlers arrive, the establishment of a church is never far behind. Meacham Park was no exception. Nearly a year before obtaining a school was discussed, the First Baptist Church of Meacham Park was organized. The first services were held under a brush-arbor and for a number of years the church remained the center of the community's social life.

As the years passed, what had began as a farming community slowly grew into a small self-supporting community.

By 1912 George Cabiness, one of the community's white residents, with the help of 17 others, opened the first store in Meacham Park. In 1919 the first black-owned store, a grocery, was opened by Mr. D. M. Powell at the southeast corner of Meacham and Shelby streets. In 1922 Patrick Mullins opened a store and laundry combination, becoming the second oldest black-owned business in the community.

Other businesses established shortly thereafter included Schwenkers, a white-owned store on New York Street at Kirkwood Road, Rev. Weaver's store, black-owned, at the northwest corner of Meacham and Shelby, and Mr. Norman's confectionery. Mr. Norman, a black resident, ran his small confectionery in the basement of his home on New York Street. The house had a ground-level side entrance to accommodate customers.

During this time the streets remained mostly dirt, ranging from dusty to muddy depending upon the weather, but a few were cinder covered. Water was supplied in most homes by cisterns which were filled on a regularly scheduled basis by a water supply service.

Grady Wade came to the community in 1935. Over the years he has worked as a meat packer, a cab driver, and has been president of the Meacham Park Fire District, but Grady has some vivid memories of his first years in Meacham Park:

"I came to Meacham Park when the town was still in the horse-and-buggy days. If it rained, you were stuck. The streets were mud . . . It's something to live in a town with no streets, and no lights, and just outdoor plumbing. When I first came to Meacham, I couldn't get water from anywhere except my cistern, and a man from Valley Park came every week to fill it."

There was a well on Chicago Street for public use, but of course the water still had to be carried to the residents' houses.

Homes in Meacham Park were heated by wood or coal. Area residents used horse-drawn wagons to haul the coal to their own houses, or to their neighbors', because the coal company, located where Hill-Behan Lumber Company is today at Kirkwood Road and the Frisco Railroad tracks, refused to deliver in the Meacham Park area. However, the company did deliver to the white residents in Kirkwood, located two miles north of the tracks.

Long-time resident Gertrude Johnson remembers the sight of horse-drawn coal carts

in the community. Her family moved to Meacham Park in 1914 after the family home burned in the Osage Hills area. That house was next door to Quinette Cemetery at present-day Big Bend and Ballas Roads. It was her grandfather's tract of land, and he lived with them.

Gertrude's parents were Charles Johnson, who was in construction business, and Mary. Mary's maiden name was Buriel, and she had grown up in the Washington, Missouri, area.

When her family arrived in Meacham Park, Gertrude was six years old, and she remembers how the coal loads often bogged in knee-deep mud:

"Everybody in Meacham had wood or coal stoves, and if you didn't have your fuel in for the winter by November, you were in real trouble. I can remember the wagons sinking down in the mud, and the men would have to unload three or four tons of coal to get them out. Then they'd have to put it right back on to continue their deliveries."

There were very few telephones in Meacham Park until after the Depression. Gertrude, who remembers walking to Booker T. Washington School with children from some of the first families who settled here such as Spears, Beck and Crawford, further related, "There was a phone at Schwenker's Store and everybody in Meacham Park relied on that phone for their messages in the early days. When we came home from school, we'd stop by and bring any phone messages home to our family. Schwenker's was the message center."

Although businesses were built at several locations around Meacham Park, the center of the business district, the main scene of activity, was originally at the intersection of Shelby and Meacham streets. This area included Powell's Grocery and gas pump. The pump, by the way, was of the 'gravity' style. Gas was manually pumped up into the glass dome at the top and then gravity took over to drain the gas into the hose, and thus into the vehicle. After several additions were added to this store, Powell later built a large two-story store and home closer west to this intersection.

Just down the street, to the east, was Powell's outdoor movie theater. Weaver's store, a small confectionery, was located on the northwest corner of Meacham and Shelby. The Toledo Hall, also built by Powell, was on the southwest next to Moses' Pool Hall, and Bennie Wright's Tavern was west of the pool hall. Directly behind the Toledo Hall was Sloppy Joe's (a tavern and restaurant) which later became the American Legion Post.

Although the Post is the only original building still standing at this site, it is interesting to note that the 'old timers' of the community still gather at this location, on the lot where the Toledo Hall was once located. There, they sit on chairs and make-shift benches to chat and pass the time - and probably talk about the 'old days'. They refer to this site, today, as "Moses Park."

"Many of the residents in this area," says Gertrude Johnson, "were self-sufficient back then. They raised their own vegetables in gardens and raised chickens and pigs for

meat. Several people in the area had their own cows for milk and butter."

Gertrude's parents didn't have a cow, but they bought their milk and butter from an old German lady who lived up on Big Bend.

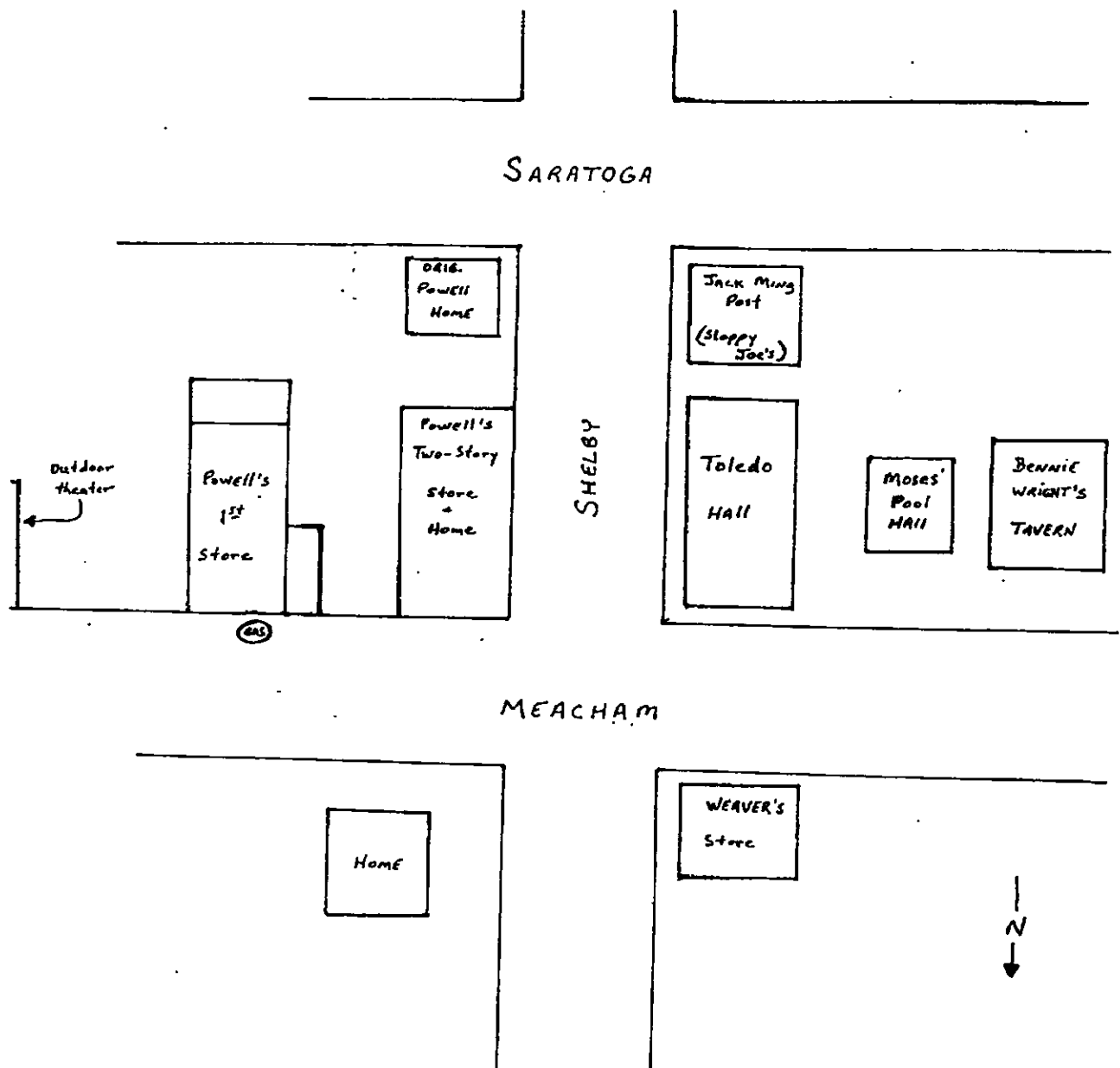
In fact it was the Germans living a block away, on Big Bend, who brought news to the community about Armistice Day on November 11, 1918!

Gertrude recalls that on that day the Quernheim family, who had two sons, Harry and Elmer, all rushed out into their back yard, turned large washtubs over, and began beating on them making a terrible racket. Later a plane flew over the area, a rare occurrence back then, pulling a banner declaring: "Peace Declared." The Johnsons, as well as many others in the area, weren't sure what was going on. There was no such things as T.V., and they didn't have a radio or daily newspaper delivery. Gertrude's mother ran out and got a newspaper. It was then that they learned the details as to what was going on. The Germans had surrendered and the Quernheims were celebrating that World War I had ended.

Of the large number of Blacks who served in World War I, there is no record of any residents from Meacham Park having lost their life.

By the end of "The Great War" the community was still interracial. At the close of the war additional Blacks settled in the area right alongside of the whites. One of these newcomers, in fact, was Mr. D. M. Powell, who would work to benefit the community in so many ways.

By the late 1920s, twenty to thirty homes in Meacham Park had their own phones. Other improvements were being made by this time too, as furnaces began replacing coal and wood burning stoves. But soon, all improvements came to a screeching halt as the Depression hit the area full force!



The "heart" of the Meacham Park business district, circa 1920s to 30s

Chapter
4

DEPRESSION YEARS
To
WORLD WAR II

Mr. D. M. Powell

During the Depression many of the residents were on relief because of the lack of jobs. Food, clothing, and fuel was provided, to some extent, by the welfare services of St. Louis County and the city of Kirkwood, but the community of Meacham Park was able to struggle through and survive this period, in part because of the community spirit created by D.M. Powell.

In 1930, Powell organized a community baseball team that challenged other teams all around the St. Louis area. In a short time, the Meacham Park ball club became the pride of the community.

In retrospect, Powell was probably one of the most innovative, energetic, and community-minded individuals to ever live in Meacham Park. He was born in 1892 in Yazoo City, Mississippi, where he later worked for the railroad and owned a pressing business. After serving in World War I, Powell moved to the St. Louis area, around 1919, to work in the packing houses and for a time, ran a restaurant at 3202 Chouteau Avenue in the City. Before long he and his wife, Arsella, purchased land in the county, Meacham Park, and built a house. Powell also worked as a night-watchman at the courthouse in Clayton and was soon able to open a store in Meacham Park. This business, a grocery, soon grew into other businesses as well.

For instance, he opened an ice cream parlor that also served lunches. As time progressed, it was remodeled into a tavern. Powell also built Toledo Hall and arranged for bands from St. Louis to come in and play on weekends. At other times the hall served as a movie theater. There, movies were shown --in the days when projectors served only to project the movie and records were used to produce the sound. Still later, Powell built a summer open-air movie theater farther down the street.

Powell was always a hard working family man who seemed to possess a never-ending source of energy. By all accounts, given any one or a combination of his business ventures, he probably could have become rich beyond imagination but he preferred, instead, to put his profits back into the community, evidently so his friends and neighbors could reap the benefits. It seems that everything that Powell did was in the interest of the community and never for personal gain.

Many residents remember, as children, going into Powell's store and being allowed to pick out nickel candy for which they were only charged one cent. Others remember Powell giving long-term credit throughout the Depression.

As a child, Frank Robnett remembers his father, Leslie, losing his job at the steel company during the Depression to someone with more seniority.

Before that, the Robnetts had been able to place large orders for groceries at Powell's on a weekly basis. With the Depression, however, the elder Robnett had trouble obtaining a good, full-time job. Still, each week Mr. Powell drove up and delivered the regular order of groceries, saying as he drove away, "Pay when you can."

Starts Baseball Team

It was during the Depression that Powell came up with another community-minded venture -- a baseball team -- and here he put the greatest part of his energy and personal finances.

Resident-historian Catherine Lucas once wrote that Powell started the ball team to help the community through the depression. To some extent that's true. He did, in fact, pay the players on the "Powell's Grocery" team. They sometimes split a 60-40 take at the gate. More often than not, though, a hat was passed among the crowd. The winning team got 60%, the losers 40%. The money did help out a lot of families. More than that, the team drew the community together and created a sense of pride during some very hard times. But research has since shown that for Powell it ran much deeper than that. He created the team out of a deep, passionate, love for the game itself. He was a good fisherman and a great hunter, owning his own hunting dogs, but baseball was his real passion! And those who joined him as players did so, not for the money, but out of an equal love for the game as well as a chance to travel and see other communities.

Powell started the ball team with twelve players in 1930. He dug into his own pockets to equip and promote it. He furnished his players with everything they needed. Hats, uniforms gloves, shoes, bats and balls were all furnished, but he didn't stop there. Powell went on to build a stadium, too.

The ballfield was located behind Father Dickson's Cemetery off Sappington Road in what is now Crestwood. The site was then known as "Spring Bottoms" because of several natural springs in the area. It was accessible by a little road that ran south off Big Bend, along the "Sappington Spur" railroad tracks.

At this site, behind the cemetery and along the railroad tracks, Powell built a ball diamond surrounded by a large wooden fence and a grandstand seven to ten seat-rows high. This was the team's home field for their Sunday games. The team played away games as far north as Hannibal, Missouri, and as far east as Union City, Tennessee. Missouri towns that they played included Valley Park, Black Jack, Kinloch, Moberly, Hillsboro, Cedar Hill, Maxwell, Jedburg, Potosi, Salem, Tinbrook, and Bonne Terre. In addition, many company teams were played such as Scullin Steel, and several Illinois teams, including Staunton, Jerseyville, and East St. Louis.

The team's uniforms were white with red lettering and the basement of Powell's Grocery served as their "locker room."

When the team was organized in 1930 the original twelve players were: Chester McCrary, left field, William Buckner, center field, and Richard James, right field. Lester Johnson served as an extra all-around outfielder.

The infield consisted of James Jones, third base, Fred Stanley, shortstop Arthur Jones, second base, Al Zampier, first base, Jessie Woods, catcher and sometimes pitcher, George Walker, catcher and sometimes third base, Harold Frazer, pitcher and Austin Massey, pitcher. Mr. Powell was owner and coach, with Arthur Bell, assistant coach.

Other players who came along later included pitchers Elmer Buckner, Elmer Hill, Rogers Ford, Junior "Doc" Savage, and Cleo Lewright, third baseman Carl Cables, and shortstop Andy Griggs, among others.

The team was good. Each season they won more than they lost. In fact, most seasons the team saw no more than one or two losses. The community of Meacham Park turned out in force to watch and support their team. The games became an event, a favorite pastime for Sunday afternoons.

Frank Robnett was only eleven, maybe twelve, years old when he started selling hotdogs at the team's ballfield. It was around 1932 to 1934, and hotdogs sold for a nickel; soda water sold for a nickel, too. He remembers that the local team was one of the best. "Scullin Steel (of St. Louis) had the best ball team in the area at the time, but they couldn't beat the 'Powell's Grocery' team," he recalls.

East St. Louis had an excellent team too. Their pitcher, George Glass, had yet to be beaten the day the team arrived at "Spring Bottoms."

Frank remembered watching that game from the stands while he sold hotdogs

The East St. Louis team was giving the local team big problems, and it looked as though they would leave this area undefeated. But Powell had been studying the situation throughout the game and was soon convinced there was only one way that Glass could be beat.

Manager Powell called his team together and instructed his players on how they could do it.

The Meacham Park team went to bat, and when the dust had finally settled, East St. Louis had been beaten with BUNTS! The crowd, went wild!

The players have fond memories of those baseball-playing days, too. Richard James recalled an incident that occurred in a game against Cedar Hill, Missouri, in 1938 or 1939:

Elmer Buckner was a good fast-ball pitcher with a lot of control. However Cedar Hill had a batter who would crouch real low and lean over the plate. At one point in the game the batter leaned too far and the ball smacked him square on the side of the head, bounced, and rolled toward third base. Third base-man, Carl Cables, playing it strictly as an attempted hit, fielded the ball and fired it to first!

Another incident involved left-fielder Chester McCrary during a game played in Jedburg, Missouri.

This community, which no longer exists today, was originally located between present-day Lone Elk Park and Eureka, along the north bank of the Meramec River.

The ball diamond in Jedburg was in good condition but the outfield was literally a cow pasture, covered with tall grass--too tall, in fact, on the day of this game.

At one point a long fly ball was smashed into left field as Chester gave pursuit. When the ball came down, Chester was so far out, and the grass was so tall, that no one field could see him.

The umpire ruled the ball a hit until a spectator, who had been sitting on a pick-up out in the pasture, came driving in at full speed and informed the umpire that the left-fielder had, indeed, caught that ball!

Short, thin, wiry and quick, Chester McCrary is said to have been the Ozzie Smith of his day. He an excellent fielder and an extraordinary hitter.

During one out-of-town game, McCrary came to bat and was interrupted by a spectator out of the stands. The spectator, an old white man, laid a dollar-bill (a lot of money during the Depression) on home-plate, looked up at Chester and said, "... If you hit the ball out of the park; you keep the dollar."

The first pitch came and --BAM--the ball sailed out of the park.

On McCrary's next turn at bat, the same spectator came out, laid a dollar on home-plate, and again said, "... (Mister), you do it again; you keep the dollar."

Within moments a pitch came and --BAM--out of the park!

McCrary was beginning to look forward to his times at bat more than ever before. When the time came, he fooled and fiddled around outside of the batter's box, waiting for his tormentor to show up.

After several minutes of delay, a voice finally came from the stands, "Hell with ya. Play ball. Ya ain't gettin' no more of my money!"

Chester caused a lot of excitement for the ball team. Each Sunday morning before a home game one of his responsibilities was to attach some old bed springs to the back of Mr. Powell's Model-A Ford truck and drive around the ball diamond to prepare the field. One Sunday McCrary was in a hurry because he was running late. He noticed that the truck needed gas so he quickly drove down to the service station on Big Bend.

As an advertising gimmick this particular station had a large man constructed of Quaker State oil cans on the corner of the lot. As Chester drove away in haste, he accidentally struck the oil-man, scattering oil cans everywhere.

McCrary arrived at Powell's Grocery just as the station was on the telephone with Mr. Powell, yelling that "your player ran over my oil man!" The players came running out of the store, all excited, accusing Chester of running over someone, and it took several minutes to get the situation straightened out before Chester could go "drag" the field.

Several players remember a game that was interrupted in Hillsboro, Missouri, by a man who drove up along side the first-base line in a pick-up and stopped. The bed of the

truck was full of beer, all iced down. The umpire called "time out" and everyone gathered around and drank the beer. After they all had their fill, the truck drove away, the umpire yelled "play ball," and the game resumed right where it had stopped.

Pitcher Elmer Hill was said to be a hard-throwing fast-ball pitcher, but just how fast no one was sure. There were no radar guns then to measure speed. Team member Richard James, though, recalled an incident during one game in Potosi, Missouri, that might give some indication of Hill's great throwing speed.

Hill usually had good control with his throwing, but during this game he unintentionally hit a batter. The pitch struck the guy in the chest and he collapsed immediately. The players all ran to him, and upon pulling up his shirt found a bright red, round bruise which even included the impressions from the stitching on the ball! With that, one of the players asked, "Are you all right to play?" To which the batter replied, somewhat groggily,

"I'll play -- but I ain't battin' no more!"

Although the players had many wonderful, as well as humorous, memories of their ball-playing days, there was also another, ugly, side, one that came with playing the small-town, all-white, ball teams of the 1930s and 40s.

However, even some of those were comical:

After getting off the team bus in Salem, Missouri, the town's children gathered around the players, looked them up and down and walked all around them, staring. The players stood still looking at the children, not sure what was going on until one of the parents standing nearby remarked, "Pay no attention to 'em, they've never seen black people before."

But other incidents were just down-right scary:

Powell's team once received an invitation from a small town southwest of here which stated, in part, "Come play our town's team. We've only lost one game this season." Impressed, Powell's team practiced hard, then went there only to find out they'd never played more than one game!

As this game progressed, "Powell's Grocery" had a big lead that increased with each inning. And, as each inning passed, the opposing players and the hometown crowd became more and more angry, a feeling they weren't trying to hide. Finally, as the last inning approached, Mr. Powell remarked, "I don't like the looks of this. We better get out of here."

He instructed some of his players to pack up equipment and start the truck. Just as the last "out" was called, the team scrambled to the bus and was driving away from the ballfield as the crowd poured onto the field looking for revenge.

End of an Era

At the end of each season the team traveled to Union City, Tennessee, where the St.

Louis Cardinals had a farm team at the time. Here they spent three days, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday playing baseball. The team would then attend a large picnic afterwards and return home to Meacham Park on Monday : These exhibition games were well attended, and the players looked forward to this trip each year.

But if it can be said that the baseball team was born out of the Depression, then it was brought to an end by World War II.

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, many of these ball players were called to serve their country. After the war, some returned to playing ball for a few more years, but for the most part, the team was broken up by the mid-1940s. The last games were played in 1946.

Many of these men were as good, or maybe better, than those playing in the modern-day major leagues but, unfortunately, segregation forced the races to play in separate leagues during this part of the nation's history.

The Negro American League and the Negro National League were completely separate from the all-white organizations in the major-league competition .

Jackie Robinson finally broke the color barrier when he was the first Black to be signed-on to the Brooklyn Dodgers' all-white minor league farm club team in Montreal in 1946. He went on to be signed onto the Brooklyn Dodgers team itself on April 11, 1947, paving the way for others to follow.

Unfortunately, by the time Blacks were finally incorporated into the "regular" major leagues, it was too late for most of Meacham Park's men. Age had become a factor. A few of the younger men did go to Kansas City and try out for the all-black professional Kansas City Monarchs, the team that Jackie Robinson originally played for. One of these was shortstop Andy Griggs, and he made the team. Rogers Ford pitched for the Chicago Giants in the Negro League, and pitchers Cleo Lewright and Junior "Doc" Savage played for a while for the Negro League's Memphis Blue Sox. Still others, such as Chester McCrary and Harold Frazer , stayed around the St. Louis area and played ball on the Matthews-Dickey team for a time.

D. M. Powell, on the other hand, continued his business interests in Meacham Park for a number of years, after which he retired and went to Wentzville, Missouri. Still active in retirement, he established the Friendly Neighbors Club which organized activities such as fish fries and other community efforts, including the building of a children's playground.

Damon Powell died just a few weeks short of his 90th birthday in 1982. His life greatly influenced the community no matter where he went, but especially that of Meacham Park and its people. To this very day Chester McCrary, who was close to him, and Frank Robnett, who knew him well, both agree that D. M. Powell was "one hell of a remarkable man."

Chapter
5

EARLY CIVIC CLUBS
AND ORGANIZATIONS

Needlework Guild

The Kirkwood Branch of the Needlework Guild of America was founded in 1893, a year after the Meacham Park community began. The "Guild" was an organization of a welfare nature that made and distributed clothing items to many St. Louis and St. Louis County institutions. These institutions included Bethesda Home, the old Folks Home, Koch Hospital, City Hospital, the Salvation Army Rescue Home, the St. Louis County Juvenile Court, and the Kirkwood Welfare Association, among others.

In December, 1919, a new division of the Guild, composed of thirty black women living in the Kirkwood area, including Meacham Park, was organized. The three directors of this division were Mrs. F.M. Carper, Mrs. Missouri Hayden, and Mrs. Pearl Singley. The thirty charter members were:

Mrs. Nellie Bibbs	Miss Violet Hayden
Miss Viola Blanton	Mrs. H. Henry
Mrs. John Briggs	Mrs. L. D. Jones
Mrs. Mary Brooks	Miss Lucille Jordan
Mrs. Cable	Mrs. Mamie Ming
Mrs. S. Cannon	Mrs. Addie Postum
Miss Angeline Davis	Mrs. Denver Powell
Mrs. Charles Davis	Mrs. Beatrice Reed
Mrs. William Davis	Mrs. Susie Reed
Mrs. Emma Elkins	Mrs. Emma Reins
Mrs. James Falker	Mrs. Sam Singley
Miss Aurelia Hayden	Miss Sophia Singley
Miss Florence Hayden	Mrs. R. Steele
Mrs. Howard Hayden	Mrs. Daisy Watson
Mrs. Robert Hayden	Mrs. Christina Woods

In addition to members who made garments, Miss Virginia Linder, Mrs. C. Alexander, John France, Burt Hayden, and Abraham Jackson often contributed money for the purchase of material.

During the first year of its existence, this division made seventy-two garments that were distributed to needy children at the Booker T. Washington School.

According to June Wilkinson Dahl's book, A History of Kirkwood, Missouri 1851-1965, the complete history of the Needlework Guild has never been found, so the details concerning the "negro division" and how long it existed is not known.

In fact, over the years a number of organizations began and ended in Meacham Park. Some of their records have been lost or discarded making their complete histories uncertain.

For instance, a little information is known about the Women's Community Club, the Meacham Park Volunteer Fire Department, and the Meacham Park Police, but no information exists concerning the Republican Club, the Crusaders, the Sunshine Social Club or the Civic Club, all of which existed during the 1920s and into the 1930s. These black-run

groups performed valuable work in their time, but today their histories are lost except for a mention in some form or another regarding their participation in an event.

Women's Community Club

On February 23, 1925, several Meacham Park women gathered at the home of Mrs. Clothilde Bass, a retired teacher, to discuss the need for a women's club in the community. On March 2 of that year the Women's Community Club was permanently organized. Its original founders included Lila Mullins, Eula Ellington, Evelyn Ewing, Mae Howell, Estelle Anthony, Ada Bell, Retta Logan, Elizabeth Bell, and Luvenia Cunningham Koen.

Over the years this club became instrumental in obtaining needed changes in Meacham Park. Each of these improvements was an enormous undertaking that took many years to accomplish. For instance, Mrs. Clothilde Bass paid for the first water main to be brought down her street, the 400 block of Saratoga, from Kirkwood Road. That accomplishment alone greatly benefited the entire community by making the initial cost of hookups less for many others in the area. However, getting the proper sewer systems for the area took many more years to accomplish.

As time went on, the club, along with several other community groups working together, acquired such benefits as street lights, house-to-house mail delivery, and much more.

Meacham Park Fire Department

In 1936, the Meacham Park Volunteer Fire Department was organized, formed by the Civic Club under a perpetual Charter with the Rev. Leon Hannah as president. Individuals paid ten dollars to become a charter member, and the organization acquired a used fire truck from the Glendale Fire Department.

In the mid-1940s, the volunteer fire department was reorganized by an independent organization started by residents B. L. Ewing and L. V. Rodgers. Rodgers was designated as the fire chief and Ellis Willis was appointed as the only paid volunteer.

Willis' duty was to stay with the truck at all hours and to be ready for an emergency at a moment's notice. Dan Garrett served as the alternate paid volunteer, who, in later years, took over the full-time position.

This organization raised \$500. with a carnival and the following year raised \$1000. in proceeds from a second carnival. After that, several more carnivals were held on a yearly basis, the proceeds of which went to the operation of the fire department. These carnivals enabled the group, by the 1950s, to purchase a new fire engine, because the original one had become mechanically unreliable, and to build a firehouse.

Prior to having a firehouse, the truck had been kept at the Arthur Bell residence on New York Street.

The number of volunteers on the fire department averaged between 12 to 15 men throughout its existence -- into the mid-60s.

The firehouse, built at Milwaukee and Electric, served a multi-purpose function for many years. It was often used for picture shows, dances, and other social gatherings.

The Meacham Park Police

In the early 1930s, law enforcement in Meacham Park was handled by two constables: Orange Ford Sr. and Sid Massey, both residents of the community. They wore no uniforms but their appointment to uphold and enforce the law was well-known and well-respected by the residents.

No different than most communities at the time, doors in Meacham Park were seldom locked in the early days. One-time resident William Slaten recalls that as a child he doesn't remember there ever being a key to his house. Slaten should know. His father, besides running an undertaking establishment out of the family home at 232 Attucks, was the first Black to be appointed to the St. Louis County Sheriff's Office.

Around 1937 or 1938, Fred "Pop" Slaten was appointed Deputy Sheriff to patrol and enforce the law in Meacham Park. His son, William, often drove for his father. They used a 1938 Ford for police work and a LaSalle or Packard for their funeral service.

As deputy, Slaten had the power to arrest anyone, but often found resistance to that power only along the outskirts of the community. William recalled one incident when he and his father noticed a car weaving badly down Big Bend Road one day. They jumped into their Ford to pursue the car and check it out. Upon pulling the car over, "Pop" Slaten walked up and noticed the driver was white and extremely drunk.

"Hey, you can't arrest me," the driver protested as he jumped out of the car.

"Why not?" Slaten asked.

"Cause you're a nigger!" came the reply.

Calmly, Slaten walked up to him, "You don't think so, eh?" And with that, handcuffed the guy and drove him to the courthouse in Clayton.

Like his predecessors, Orange Ford and Sid Massey, Slaten, too, had the respect of the citizens of the community. There were no major crime problems in Meacham Park - nothing like the problems occurring in Kinloch during this period - but still Slaten found plenty to do.

He kept an eye on the pool hall on Meacham Street. He knew it was a "gambling joint." When the patrons would see him approach, someone would yell "Here comes Pop Slaten!" and everyone would scatter!

Then, too, when he needed information, he knew where and to whom to go to get it.

At the start of World War II, William Slaten went into the service. Little did he realize he would never help his father enforce the law again.

On a March day of 1943, "Pop" Slaten was hurrying to a disturbance call at Saratoga and Milwaukee Streets. While southbound on Milwaukee, no more than a few blocks from his home, a car came through an intersection striking "Pop's" car broadside, killing him instantly.

Other appointees to the St. Louis County Sheriff's Office and assigned to Meacham Park were residents Booker Lemmie, who served as deputy sheriff for several years, and Jasper Gray, who had served as a volunteer under "Pop" Slaten until he was appointed deputy.

The American Legion

The building located on the northwest corner of Saratoga and Shelby originally housed Sloppy Joe's -- a bar owned and operated by resident "Big Joe" Ellis. Ellis had become well-known in the Kirkwood-Meacham Park area as a bartender at a club located along Big Bend Road.

Years later the building was purchased and converted into an American Legion Post for veterans of the First World War. It served as the hub of social activity in the community for many years. This Post, American Legion Post #269, was named in honor of Jack Ming.

Ming was a resident of Meacham Park who enlisted at Manila, Philippine Islands, on April 9, 1915. He served with the 24th Infantry Service Company, reaching the rank of corporal, and was honorably discharged from the service at Columbus, New Mexico on May 21, 1919. He then reenlisted for three more years and was finally discharged at Camp Shamon Hachita, New Mexico on May 21, 1922.

The original charter for the Jack Ming Post was drawn up and submitted on September 4, 1936. It was legally granted on September 16 of that year.

It began with seventeen charter members, all but four of whom lived in Meacham Park. The members were:

D.M. Powell	Leslie Robnett
Anderson Silvers	Luther Gooch
Robert Pearl	Sidney Massey
Sam Coleman	Sam Sheppard
Levi Brady	Ray Ford
Monroe Farar	Albert Bernard
Ben Perkins	

The four other charter members were William Willis of 220 Boyer in Kirkwood, William H. J. Williams of Overland, Frank Hayes of Overland, and Sam Futrell of Webster Groves.

The present-day Adjutant for the Post is Ernest Williams.

Chapter
6

TIMES OF CHANGE

W.W.II to the 1960s

Community Continues To Build

Although a number of Meacham Park residents served in the armed services during World War II, as far as records indicate, none lost their lives.

After the war ended, more Blacks settled in Meacham Park.

By the early 1950s, the Women's Community Club built their own club-house at 143 Electric Street to hold their meetings and activities as well as other community functions. In 1955, the Meacham Park Improvement Association was organized. This group organized in the home of Mrs. Laura Brassfield at 317 Meacham Street.

These two clubs, along with the Legionnaires, banded together and organized to seek improvements in the areas of water, lighting, sewers, and road maintenance within their community

By this time, Blacks owned and operated five grocery stores, five beauty shops, two service stations, a cleaners, an auto repair service, a radio & T.V. repair shop, and a trash disposal service within their community. In addition, there were six churches in Meacham Park -- The First Baptist Church, the Church of God, Church of God in Christ, the Catholic Mission, C.M.E., and St. Mary & the Pentecostal. The civic organizations having their own buildings, besides the Women's Community Club, included the Volunteer Fire Department, the Legionnaires, and the Republican Club. The population stood at 1,365 people, including about three-hundred whites. Regardless of race, they all struggled hard and worked together to build and maintain their community.

During this time several residents of Meacham Park volunteered and were accepted in the Kirkwood Police Department auxiliary policeman program. The first training class graduated in June, 1953, and included Meacham Park resident Clarence E. Spears. The second class graduated in December of 1956 and included Rufus Harris, David A. Mitchell, and George Kettles. Others involved in the program were James Mosley and T.D. Bell.

All of these men proved to be of great value and much help to that department over the years. Harris, by the way, continued to serve on the auxiliary force until 1985!

But the 1950s also proved to be the most difficult for Meacham Park. According to a paper prepared by resident Catherine Lucas, which was published in the Kirkwood Messenger newspaper in March 1959, "An influx of migrations from the South took place in the early 1950s and the community was not as homogeneous as before. Many of the community's long-time residents no longer knew everyone on their block nor those who gathered on the corners to talk . . . causing social deterioration."

Problems Increased

What took place outside of Meacham Park in the name of "progress" sometimes took its toll within the community, too, during this period.

In 1957 the city of Kirkwood annexed a 100-foot strip of commercial property from Meacham Park along Kirkwood Road, from Big Bend southward, and along Big Bend Road, from Kirkwood Road eastward. These strips had contained nearly all of Meacham Park's commercial area by this time, and because of this annexation many residents began to harbor a distrust for Kirkwood.

In 1968-1969, construction on the new Interstate-44 began, taking a swath of land out of the southeast corner of Meacham Park. Its path severed all of Spears Street from the rest of the community and eliminated half of Handy Street.

What's more, after the building of the Venture store on South Kirkwood Road in the late 1960s - early 70s, storm water poured into Meacham Park. Said the June '71 issue of In Our Opinion, the community's newspaper: "The water that was formerly absorbed by the grassy ground that existed before the huge hardtop parking lot was finished now pours (during heavy rains) into Meacham Park in such amounts and so fast as to cause water seepage in many basements, cracked foundations, and generally damaging gardens and properties .

Amid these problems, others surfaced: homes were abandoned or quickly rented out, old cars and other discarded items were abandoned out in the open, crime increased, and some residents became disillusioned with the future.

But during the 1960s there were a few persistent residents who pushed and worked for changes. Slowly the community worked toward stability. By 1966, through the pride, hard work and dedication of the residents, the community began to make a comeback.

Several hard won improvements were finally realized as streets were paved for the first time and an all-out effort was made to upgrade and improve the community through the removal of derelict cars and dilapidated houses.

The Cleanup Campaign

There had been a time when every resident in this community maintained great pride in their homes and property. Yards were fenced and always well-kept, no matter what condition the roads were in at the time and, in fact, some residents recall when dirt paths to the houses were even kept clean and swept.

But during the early 1960s trash and debris had begun to accumulate in many parts of the community. By this time, too, there were several vacant lots in the community which might have prompted the dumping of trash. There was, however, some controversy as to whether the dumping was actually done by residents or by people from out-lying areas and surrounding communities .

Whatever the case, in June 1966 Meacham Park residents initiated a large community-wide cleanup program, receiving help and cooperation, including trucks and drivers, from the County of St. Louis and the City of Kirkwood.

This entire project was conceived by the Gateway Center organization through the efforts of the program developer, Mrs. Ruth Washington, council chairman, William J. (Bill) Jones, and County coordinator, Mrs. Georgia Rusan.

To help promote the program, prizes were presented to all who participated. Special prizes went to those who gathered the most pounds of trash. That first prize, a wrist watch donated by Blust's Jewelers, went to George Thornton, who gathered over 500 pounds of trash along the roadsides and ditches in the area. Other prizes given out included transistor radios, pen & pencil sets, games, toys, and five camper-scholarships donated by various organizations, allowing the young winners two-week vacations at camp.

The Gateway Center

The Gateway Center was part of the County District's Human Development Corporation that had been in operation since June, 1965.

The purpose of the center was to create programs directed toward helping people help themselves in the areas of employment, housing, health and welfare, the elderly, and general social services.

Georgia T. Rusan became the first County Coordinator of the poverty program that year, and her first responsibilities were to establish six local Gateway Center substations in or near areas to be served, finding a suitable staff from the area, and developing a working relationship with the community. One of these centers was established in Meacham Park, at 10520 Big Bend, and a community Advisory Council was set up. The council's responsibility was to determine and advise the H.D.C. on the priorities of the community.

Meacham Park's council members were Rev. Lawrence Cannon, William J. Jones, Charles Runnels, and Isaac Russel.

Many others, such as Emily Bell and Charles Ellis, were involved as staff members for employment, housing, Head Start social services, general social service, health aids for Head Start children, and Neighborhood workers. In addition, Mrs. Annie Brown was the senior citizen's OASIS worker.

Because of the Advisory Council's mandates, Mrs. Rusan became instrumental in obtaining needed improvements for Meacham Park.

Slowly, Progress Comes to the Community

Sadly, the problems faced by Blacks in this community were typical of black Americans nationwide.

After World War II, the county of St. Louis had become more affluent but the community of Meacham Park had not. Until the 1960s, outhouses and rundown wooden homes were common here. The median family income of the community was less than half that of the countywide median, and many households were living below the federally

designated poverty line. A survey in 1966 found that there were 1,501 people living in Meacham Park, of which 13 were white. It also revealed that of the 396 homes in the community, 222 still had outhouses as their only toilet facilities.

Roads in Meacham Park were nothing more than wide dirt trails. Many had become completely impassable, and others were often blocked by wrecked or abandoned cars.

In July, 1966, St. Louis County Supervisor Lawrence Roos addressed the citizens of Meacham Park at a mass meeting held at Turner School. He announced some proposed programs for the community under the Nelson's Amendment. This amendment provided that the county would match funds advanced by the Federal Government so improvements could be obtained in certain areas.

The programs included health and sanitary projects, the building and equipping of two playgrounds and, most of all, road improvements within the community.

It was the realization of the dedicated and hard-working efforts of the members of Mr. Roos' panel, which included Mrs. Georgia T. Rusan and William J. Jones and many other residents who had worked so hard behind the scenes.

It seemed, for a time, that all would go well for Meacham Park. However, in the midst of all these improvements, the winter of 1966 also brought tragedy to this small community.

A fire broke out in a home at a time when the fire truck was broken down, and five children perished. Deeply saddened and upset by the loss, the volunteer fire department disbanded soon afterward, and the community began to contract for fire protection service through the city of Kirkwood. The Kirkwood Fire Department has provided service to Meacham Park since that time. The Meacham Park fire truck was sold to a private individual living in the Shrewsbury area, and the firehouse was later remodeled so that on April 5, 1967, it was opened as the Meacham Park Clinic.

Meacham Park Clinic

The Sister's of Mercy, St. John's Mercy Hospital, opened the medical clinic in the remodeled firehouse at Electric and Milwaukee through the efforts of William J. Jones, president of the Meacham Park Advisory Council, John Cutts, Frank Ellis, Mrs. Buford Cole, and Ray Prior, chairman of the Meacham Park Fire Committee.

Residents in the area, such as Floyd Manse, Bertram Ewing, Rufus Harris, "Alex" Alexander, Rufus Gates, Oscar Booth, and others worked on a voluntary basis to prepare the building. These volunteers remodeled the firehouse by putting up partitions, painting, etc.

Later, Mrs. Grace Davis, school nurse at Meacham Park, met with the Sisters to help outline policies, procedures, etc., for the clinic. Several years later, a new Meacham Park Health Center was built at 1150 Milwaukee.

Chapter
7

MEACHAM PARK'S NEWSPAPER:
IN OUR OPINION

Meacham Park's Community Newspaper

In the midst of all that was going on in the late 1960s, resident Bill Jones created a newspaper for the community. Named In Our Opinion, it was first published in September 1968.

It averaged twelve pages an issue, and each month the paper's 2500 copies reached beyond the borders of Meacham Park, into the communities of Kirkwood, Webster Groves, and other areas of the county and the city.

The paper wasn't always well-received though, in those outlying areas. Front pages depicting Santa Claus as a Black or showing a black Jesus Christ on the crucifix sometimes generated hate mail. At times so did the editorial copy:

"You have told your children we are a lazy people and we hate to work. Why don't you tell them we have farmed the lands, helped build the railroads, cleaned your houses and yards, attended your children, and cooked your food? We have helped build America (but) we have always been the underprivileged and underpaid."

"We were somewhat militant," Jones remembers. "But it got us some attention. It gave our people a voice for the first time, and it was (after all) 'in our opinion.' One of the things it did was give us some visibility -- and it helped put us in touch with some white people in government who could work with us on some of our problems. For that reason alone, the newspaper did an important job."

The whole endeavor kept everyone involved working very hard; but for the most part, Jones and the others remember the newspaper with fondness.

The staff consisted of Jones as the Editor, Cleo Lewright and Adel Allen as Assistant Editors, Gaynelle Jones, Henry Hall, and Gerald Hill as Junior Editors, Andy Greer as Staff Artist, and Patrick Jones as Staff Photographer. In addition, the paper's Executive Council consisted of Rev. Larry Cannon as Chairman, Dorothy Wallace as Co-Chairman, Mattie Berry as Secretary, and Lucille Kirby as Treasurer. Mechanical production was handled by Garnet Thies and the Messenger Printing Co.

The main purpose of the newspaper was an effort by the Executive Committee of the Meacham Park Community Council to inform the citizens of the events, programs, opinions, and other information about what was taking place in and around the community.

Although In Our Opinion was originally a 8 1/2" x 11" pamphlet-style paper, in June 1980 a newspaper-type format began with Jones as Editor, Rebecca Coleman and Jennifer Gordon as School Reporters, Tracy Cannon, Social Events, Bernice Taylor, Community and Organizations, Mary Williams, Senior Citizens, Dorothy Wallace, Housing, and Sandra Watts, Church and Obituaries Reporter.

Chapter
8

SPORTS IN
MEACHAM PARK

Professional Boxing

Meacham Park has had representatives in other sports besides baseball. One of these was Art Cooper, said to be one of the outstanding lightweight boxers in the country during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Cooper won the Golden Gloves Novice Crown in 1935, and in 1937 won another Golden Gloves title in Cleveland, Ohio. Again in 1939 and 1940 he won Golden Gloves titles in St. Louis and the Missouri State Crown in 1940.

While serving in the South Pacific during World War II, he won the New Zealand Lightweight Boxing Championship as well as the South Pacific Championship in 1945.

In 1946 Cooper fought Solbertello in the Featherweight Championship Of The World, but lost. He continued to box professionally until 1949. In the 32 professional bouts of his boxing career, Cooper lost only eight.

Community Boxing Team & Golden Gloves

In 1955 a boxing program was organized within the community by Bill Jones, a one-time C.I.A.A. middleweight champ at West Virginia State College, and Les Tatum, a former pro boxer. Jones was assisted by William Hayden, another former college boxing star, and Henry Carter.

The team was sponsored by the Y.M.C.A., whose Meacham Park branch, located in the Legion Post building at Saratoga and Shelby, was directed by William Hayden one year and George Elliott during the next. Spencer Gould, President of Reliable Life Insurance Company, along with Bob Dunkle, did a lot to make boxing a successful project in the community. Gould encouraged Jones to provide the boxing team with the proper equipment and provided the finances in that effort. Boxing shoes, trunks, gloves, and headgear were obtained and the team began working out at the "Y", at Turner School, and at the auditorium of the Catholic Mission.

Jones organized a team of twenty young boxers and began a rigorous training program. The St. Louis Globe-Democrat ran an article describing a unique training angle developed by him called "ring fright" where the boys were taught to endure three-minute rounds instead of the typical one- or two-minute ones. "We find that most young boxers need endurance training more than anything else," said Jones during the newspaper interview.

On January 23, 1956, the team exhibited their skills in their first community exposition. James Waters served as referee, Robert Reid was time keeper, and Jackson Williams was the announcer.

Some of the best featherweight boxers were said to be Lloyd Bibbs and John Cutts, as well as Clarence Mitchell, 'Windy' Bibbs, and Jimmy Abrams.

On February 7, 8, and 10, of 1956, several of Meacham Park's best were entered in the 17th Annual Golden Gloves Championship held at Kiel Auditorium. Those entered, and who paved the way for other teams in the following years, were Elroy Stanford in the

160-lb. class, David Parker in the 155-lb., James Abrams 126, Lloyd Bibbs 125, John Cutts 110, James Greer 98, and Clarence Mitchell in the 95-lb. class.

Nineteen-year-old Elroy Stanford was an outstanding member of the team and was also on the Volunteer Fire Department. Just a few weeks before the tournament, he cut his hand while fighting a fire. He was, however, able to make the tournament.

In later years some of the participants in the Golden Gloves competition included Orlando Holmes, James Glover, Lee Lawrence, John Stewart, and James L. Franklin, among many others. One member, "Sluggo" Sylvester Jackson, went all the way to the semifinals at the Arena.

Community Represented In Many Sports

In addition to boxing, Meacham Park has been represented in in a wide range of professional, semiprofessional, and amateur sports throughout the years. Included is everything from track and field, to baseball, basketball, and even to this very day, the sport of auto racing.

Drag Racing

As lines of competitors, many making last minute adjustments, form in the staging area, a throng of excited car enthusiasts and race fans crowd along the fences to watch the action of the first pair of high-powered machines that pull up to the beginning of the quarter-mile strip of concrete. With engines rumbling and their adrenalin building, the drivers sit poised, watching intently as the "light-tree" begins its countdown. Suddenly, the green light appears!

With a mighty roar and a trail of smoke, the two machines jump off the line and charge down the strip in a thundering process of elimination. The cars are loud, powerful, and potentially dangerous. The awesome power of these thundering machines can be felt by the spectators all the way to the top of the stands.

It is this kind of excitement that Bill "Cat" Jones, Jr. experiences time and again each and every year. Involved in drag racing almost since the age of sixteen, "Cat" Jones currently runs a high-powered 1967 Chevy Camaro on the professional strips of Missouri and Illinois. His car, light weight with a small-block 366 C.I. Chevy engine, can top-in at 99.4 - 135 mph in a quarter-mile run. Jones can be seen at the St. Louis International Raceway at Granite City, Ill., the Wentzville Raceway near Wentzville, Mo., and the Pevely Raceway near Pevely, Mo. throughout the summer. Whenever possible, take the opportunity to see the '67 "Cat" Jones Engineering" Camaro as it roars down the concrete!

Chapter
9

LATER CIVIC PROGRAMS
AND ORGANIZATIONS

SPROG, Inc.

In the late 1960s, William Jones, involved in many of the community's improvement projects, and Cleo Lewright, a teacher at Turner School who had been raised in Meacham Park, saw a need for some type of program to help the area's youth. The lack of job opportunities as well as a lack of appropriate leisure activities gave the youngsters too much idle time, which often resulted in juvenile delinquency problems.

In the winter of 1967 Jones and Lewright came up with the idea of "The Sponsors" program. The idea was presented in a talk in front of the Christian Social Relations Committee at Kirkwood's Grace Episcopal Church in March, 1968.

On that day, three church members, Mrs. Garnet Thies, Mrs. Anne Scharon, and Mrs. Ann Cook, sat in the audience and became impressed by the depth of the two men's concern for the boys and the urgency of the appeal. Inspired, they asked to help some of the boys who needed guidance.

The group worked together to develop and organize the program, donating a lot of time and hard work. The women drafted a letter to prospective employers and another to prospective sponsors. They, along with Jones and Lewright, labored over the introductions, explanations, indoctrinations, and personal contacts required to get the program "off the ground." By April, 1968, the program had become a reality!

Designed to help problem youngsters between the ages of 15 and 20, an adult would accept a youngster to work with on a one-to-one basis. The Sponsor, usually a male, provided counseling and guidance, and together they would attend recreational activities, have lunch together at least once a week, attempt to find a job for the youngster, and develop a relationship with the employer. If problems developed on the job or if the youth got in trouble in the community, the Sponsor and the youth worked together on these problems. Being a Sponsor involved a lot of hard work and long hours. It involved being concerned, understanding, and extending a helping hand. Sometimes it involved getting up at all hours for a youngster in trouble, paving the way for a job, seeing that the youngster got to work, and helping him adjust to conditions of employment. The program helped the Sponsor and the youngster establish an understanding and mutual respect for one another.

As time went on, there was an occasional failure, but there were many, many successes. One prime example is that of Marvin Hale Williams. Marvin was among the first youngsters to enter the Sponsors Program and was sponsored by H. Robert and Garnet Thies. Through their guidance, and that of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Williams, Marvin went on to graduate from Kirkwood High School in June, 1968. Through the Eliot Chapel Scholarship Fund, he entered Southeast Missouri State Teachers College the following September to pursue the field of physical education. Today Mr. Williams is a coach and teacher at Parkway School.

The Sponsors Program remained highly successful and stayed in operation for over five years. Within two years the youngsters who were being helped by this program came up with the idea of helping children between the ages of 6 and 15 so they could avoid some

of the problems experienced by those who were helped out by the Sponsors Program.

Thus the organization as we know it today, called SPROG, was born. The name is derived from the words: Sponsors Program. An organization in Jefferson City, Missouri, using the name Sponsors Program was already in existence, which made it necessary to alter the local program title before incorporation papers could be filed.

SPROG, a not-for-profit organization, was incorporated on October 28, 1970. SPROG is primarily a preventative program which provides such things as counseling, guidance, recreational programs, and an opportunity for social growth. In effect, it carries out a program designed to give black youngsters a head start with society.

The children are grouped according to age. These groups, in turn, are under the leadership of teenage aides. They participate in sports, crafts, creative skill, dancing, and other activities reflecting their wants and interests.

Girls were added to the program, directed by Mrs. "Kat" Ming, in 1973.

The first SPROG center was located at 118 W. Madison, across from the Kirkwood Police Department. When that house was leveled for a parking lot, Bill Jones approached the head of the the Grace Church congregation, the Rev. Arthur Steidemann. Thereafter SPROG has been headquartered in the lower east wing of Grace Episcopal Church at 514 E. Argonne in Kirkwood.

From 1970 through 1974, the program was funded by the Missouri Law Enforcement Assistance Council. In 1973 the children of SPROG, upon learning that government funding was coming to an end, helped put a coloring book together in the hopes that copies could be sold and the proceeds used to keep the organization going. The result was the "Famous Black Americans Coloring Book." The children chose and researched the subjects to be used and, under the sponsorship of the Western Litho Plate Company, Mr. Don Holmes sketched the pictures and did the layouts.

In 1975 the children developed the "Famous Black American Women Coloring Book" in the same way.

Both projects were quite successful. Since January 1, 1975, SPROG has continued through similar projects, in addition to the donations from churches, corporations, and individuals.

The original SPROG staff consisted of Bill Jones as director, Mrs. Garnet Thies as secretary and fiscal officer, and the original aides were Dave Walker, Soni Abernathy, Billy Roberts, and Larry Robinson. Later, Dave Walker became aide and advisor as a new group of aides was established. They were: Shannon Wright, Garrett Nash, Henry Stewart, Kenny Gordon, Elliott King, Ladonna Wright, and Kat Ming. Assistant aides at that time were Charles Wagner, Harold Newton, and Herbert Richardson.

Kem Mosley was director from 1974 to 1980. In 1981 he was elected Executive Director and his wife, Karen Mosley, became director.

Kem Mosley, who was born and raised in Meacham Park, is highly qualified for his position, having a Masters Degree in guidance and counseling. Karen Mosley, too, is highly qualified, having been a teacher for many years. In addition, she worked closely with Kem while he was director and has been instrumental in the development of the program.

Throughout the years SPROG has continued to function and grow, providing the children with a wider world in which they have become concerned, responsible residents of their community.

Club 44

Although the organization actually began in 1951, it didn't become a prominent community organization until the 1960s. In fact, much of the neighborhood clean-up and fix-up work during the '60s, and since then as well, was accomplished through the efforts of Club 44.

Club 44 is a youth organization founded by Joe Cole with the help of the Kirkwood YMCA. Through Club 44, many of Meacham Park's youth, and even senior citizens who have become involved, have taken on some very ambitious endeavors to help make their community a better place to live.

Cole moved to Meacham Park in 1926. For several 1969-1972, he served as Community Service Officer for Kirkwood Police Department.

In 1951 the organization was formed to provide transportation for area youth to attend swimming lessons. Because the bus being used would only hold 44 people, the organizers humorously referred to the group as "Club 44." By 1957 though, the group expanded their community service roll and elected to keep the name. By then the significance of that name, the members all agreed, stood for "working together 4 God and 4 country." They also accepted "Love" as their club theme.

The organization's first headquarters was established at Turner School from 1951 until 1969. For a short time they had a club house at Meacham and Tolstoy Streets. Between 1969 and 1971, Club 44 had its headquarters at the Kirkwood YWCA. Since 1971 its headquarters has been at the historic little cottage at 126 E. Washington Street, in Kirkwood.

Over the years, the club has engaged in numerous programs to help clean up the Meacham Park community, such as tearing down condemned houses, clearing off vacant lots, and painting houses and other buildings, as well as general cleanup work.

AMVET Post #69

For several years the community had an AMVET Post, located on Big Bend near Kirkwood Road. This Post was named and dedicated in the honor of H. Francis Cochran on October 17, 1962. Herbert Francis Cochran was born in Meacham Park on March 12, 1927. He was educated here and attended Douglas High School in Webster Groves.

He was quite involved with the area's youth, being president of the first young men's club called the Paysans.

Francis entered the service in September 1950 and served in Company "A", 5th Cavalry Division. In 1951 he was wounded while serving in Korea and died three weeks later in Japan. Today, he is buried at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in south St. Louis.

Francis was the son of Mrs. Sarah Johnson. Another son, Louis, also served in Korea and in 1952 was returning home after sixteen months in the Service when he was killed in an automobile accident.

When the Post was first founded, it was under the Commander-ship of Otis Stanford and Vice-Commander Robert Williams. Today, under the Commandership of Earl Turner, members meet in the various veterans' homes.

Crown Royals

One of the most recent social clubs to be organized in the community is the Crown Royals motorcycle club.

On August 30, 1975, the club was founded, beginning with seventeen original charter members, and a clubhouse was established at 215 Alsobrook. Within a short time the club grew to a membership of nearly forty members. Since then, the club has contributed in many ways to the community including organizing dances and other social affairs, contributions to the Meacham Park Day Care Center, providing baskets of food to senior citizens during the holidays, and working with the Club 44 youth group on numerous community projects.

Slowly Moving Forward

In 1968 the Metropolitan Sewer District and the St. Louis County Water Company began installing water and sewer lines in Meacham Park.

A federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.) assured that the community would receive a complete sanitary sewer system.

This culminated several years of efforts by the residents. In fact, Dorothy Wallace, a long-time community leader, and all of the community's civic clubs, had been campaigning for a proper sewer system since 1960.

The water main was first completed to Spears Street around March, 1969. The first resident to complete a contract to have run the water line from the main to their house was Mrs. Dixie Chapple.

Leading members of the Meacham Park water committee were: Mrs. Dixie Chapple, Mrs. Lucille Kirby, Tom Chapple, William J. Jones, and several others.

Meanwhile, the Metro Sewer District began laying trunk lines. As time went on, a map of the area was displayed at the Gateway Center office to keep residents informed of the progress of the sewer system. Twice a week the contractor came in and marked the area that had been completed with red ink.

Chapter
10

VIETNAM
AND ITS IMPACT
UPON MEACHAM
PARK

The Vietnam War

Far away Vietnam had a dramatic and personal impact upon this small community.

In addition to being touched by the Korean conflict, Meacham Park made the "supreme sacrifice" again nearly two decades later in the Vietnam War. Of the 274,937 Blacks who served in the military between 1965 to 1974, 5,681 were killed in combat. Two of those 5,681 young men had been born and raised in Meacham Park.

Udell Chambers

Private 1st Class Udell Chambers served in the 1st Infantry Division of the U.S. Army as an assistant gunner in the howitzer section. On June 21, 1968, he was stationed at a fire support base ten kilometers north of Tan Uyen in War Zone D. At approximately 9:40 P.M. that night, his camp was subjected to an intense rocket and mortar attack, whereupon Chambers rushed to his position and began adjusting his howitzer for a counterattack. Suddenly, without warning, an enemy rocket came in and made a direct hit on Chambers' position, killing him instantly.

Among other medals, Chambers was awarded the Bronze Star for heroism because, "... His example of selfless courage and initiative inspired his comrades to continue fighting vigorously until the hostile attack was halted. Private First Class Chambers' outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty, and personal bravery is in keeping with the finest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself."

Udell Chambers was born February 22, 1948, to Mr. and Mrs. Chambers of 318 Chicago Street, Meacham Park. He attended Turner, Nipher, and Kirkwood High School and was an outstanding basketball and baseball player. In fact, while playing Community League baseball, he was scouted by the Atlanta Braves and sent to Sarasota, Florida. There he spent one season with the Farm team before being drafted by the Army in September, 1966.

Robert L. Rodgers

Robert Rodgers entered the military service in the Spring of 1968 and received infantry training in Texas. He was then stationed at Fort Gordon, Georgia, where he completed his high school education and was trained as a medic. Upon completing his medical training, he received a thirty-day leave, after which he was sent to Fort Lewis, Washington, to prepare for Vietnam service.

On December 27, 1968, SP5 Rodgers arrived in the Republic of Vietnam as part of the 3rd Battalion, 47th Infantry, 9th Inf. Division. During this time he was described by his commanding officers as a fine, devoted soldier, who possessed great ability and spirit.

While on reconnaissance operations in Kien Hoa Province on the afternoon of April 16, 1969, Rodgers was fatally struck by enemy small-arms gunfire that suddenly broke out without warning.

Robert L. Rodgers was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Theopolis Rodgers. He was born in Meacham Park on October 20, 1948, and attended Turner School, Nipher Junior High School, and Kirkwood High School.

Both of these young men had promising futures, but like many men their age during this period, their lives were interrupted and eventually cut short by the Vietnam War. Today, their names can be seen engraved on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C.

Chapter
11

MODERNIZATION ARRIVES
THE 1970s AND BEYOND

Progress Becomes Reality

The 1970s saw progress slowly inch its way into Meacham Park. It would become the decade in which residents would finally see some improvements in their community.

As 84-year-old resident Grady Woods commented to a St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter, "No longer do residents carry two pairs of shoes — one for traversing rutted, muddy streets and another for walking on solid ground."

Modernization arrived in other forms as well. The final link in the sewer trunk lines was completed in April, 1971. Then construction began on lateral sewer lines to individual homes, although some lateral line-work had been done as early as September, 1970.

Once the cost and work of the artery (trunk) liners were completed, the actual hooking up of individual homes (lateral lines) to that system became a concern. In order to better facilitate that, the First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood, in cooperation with the Commerce Bank of Kirkwood, established a "Homeowners Assistance Plan" in early 1972.

In this "Plan," resident property owners who met reasonable requirements, qualified for a sewer installation loan at a very reasonable rate of interest from the Commerce Bank, as guaranteed by funds deposited by the church in that bank.

Over the years the First Presbyterian Church in Kirkwood has had a continual interest in the betterment and welfare of the Meacham Park community and has often acted out of that concern. This being no exception, it made it possible for all residents to be hooked up to the new system by the Fall of 1972.

Housing

The Meacham Park Development Corporation was formed and elected officers on January 19, 1970. Rev. George Sebree of the First Baptist Church of Meacham Park was elected Chairman of the Board, William J. Jones was elected President of the Corporation, Mrs. Willimena Cooper was elected as Secretary, and Archie Brinkley was elected Treasurer.

Under the guidance of James E. Hurt, president of Vangard Bond and Mortgage Company of St. Louis, the new not-for-profit Corporation began to help rebuild Meacham Park and improve the housing conditions.

Housing plans for the area became a reality with the approval of a 80-unit, 400 resident complex built under the Turnkey Housing Program. The Turnkey III project was a method by which low income families could secure a residence with the help of the local housing authority.

Construction of the complex, built on a seven-acre site bounded by Tolstoy, Chicago, Orleans, and Electric Streets, began on September 15, 1970, and was ready for occupancy by March, 1971. The complex consists of one, two, three, and four bedroom apartments, a small play area, parking, and a community-center building.

Plans were also approved for building thirty or more new one-family homes on lots at various locations throughout Meacham Park under the "235 Program." The "235 Program" is derived from Section 235 of the new housing laws under the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Under this program, H.U.D. would assist developers, investors, and prospective buyers, so that eligible people could buy a modest home with a small down payment.

The first "235" home built in Meacham Park was constructed by the E. L. Coleman Construction Company at 339 Electric Street. It was a split-level, three-bedroom home built for the Harry Ming family, completed around March of 1972.

Also during this time, the construction of sidewalks was taking place throughout the community.

Noted Civic Leaders

Back in 1910 to the 1920s, there was a nationally famous black stage actor named Bert Williams who was making \$6500.00 a week but wasn't allowed inside the local Press Club unless he was accompanied by a white person.

So, each evening that Williams desired a drink after his show, he had to wait outside the Press Club door until a white person came along who would agree to escort him inside.

About this, Williams once remarked, "Ya know, it's no disgrace being a black man, but it sure can be inconvenient."

And so it was in Meacham Park!

Each accomplishment and every modern convenience obtained for the community didn't come without a lot of hard work, determination, dedication, and struggling through mountains of governmental "red tape."

While some residents were inclined to give in and throw their hands up in frustration, there were several whose drive and determination made those dreams come true--people such as Rev. Larry Cannon, Rev. George Sebree, Lucille Kirby, Cleo Lewright, Ardel Allen, Annie Brown, Carolyn Fields, Charles Ellis, Mattie Berry, Emily Bell, and many, many more.

There are, however, two additional people special recognition. It was their devotion to and the amount of time and effort they invested that helped encourage others to become involved. to instill confidence in others that changes and were possible when everyone worked together.

As Napoleon once said, "A leader is a dealer in hope" --and it was hope that Dorothy Wallace and Bill Jones gave to this community.

Dorothy Wallace

Few white people can comprehend what it would be like to dream of sewers and roads for their community. In fact, few white people have ever had to set the obtaining of such things as their life-long goal. After all, historically for them, such things have come in time and are easily taken for granted --so it's hard to understand.

For Meacham Park, the time for the natural arrival of such things had come and passed. Resident Dorothy Wallace knew this, and while the world outside the community was flushing toilets, turning on faucets, and driving on streets that rain didn't turn to mud, she became determined to bring such necessities to her community. It wasn't the "future" she was demanding in Meacham Park, it was the "present!" So for her such things as sewers became her dream --her lifelong goal.

Dorothy was born in Meacham Park on January 10, 1922. She was raised in the community and educated in the area's schools. She later married Artie Wallace and by the 1960s began to emerge from within the community to lead in its struggle to survive.

The decade of the 1960s, many might remember, developed into some strange and turbulent times. It may well have been one of those "100-year-cycles" in history, for the 1860s, too, nearly tore this nation apart and in both instances civil rights and Black equality were at issue.

Although the 1960s didn't see an all-out war as in the 1860s, it did see many individual acts of violence all across the nation. A number of people, both black and white, who emerged to lead in the struggle for equality and justice, or simply for improvements, were quite often silenced by violent means.

Such was the case in many parts of Mississippi and Alabama, Dallas, New York, Los Angeles, and in Memphis.

So, it was in these times that Dorothy Wallace decided to take a stand and get needed changes for her community. Fortunately, nothing tragic occurred in this area, but Dorothy, and others who banded together to work for change in Meacham Park, had no such assurances when they began.

From 1960 on, Wallace campaigned for major changes such as a proper water system, a sanitary sewer system, and adequate housing, when others thought it was impossible to achieve them. Later, when others gave up in disgust, Dorothy refused to let it lie. When President Nixon sought to save money by cutting back on housing funds, Wallace came out fighting even harder for the issue and got results. She sacrificed much of her life toward improving her community by attending meetings, sitting on commissions, and contacting numerous political leaders. She became involved with the Clean-up program and was always interested and willing to work with any group whose interest was improving the community.

Slowly, over the years, she saw her dreams materialize. Through her efforts, and the efforts of others working with her, the community gained the modern water system, the

sanitary sewer system, the paved roads, the housing, the sidewalks, and many other improvements .

Very few people in this world are fortunate enough to be laid to rest after having realized their dreams and attaining their goals. Dorothy Wallace was one of these fortunate few. Her work done, she died on June 26, 1982.

In looking back, it's sad and unfortunate to think that while some people of this great nation can dream of wealth and opportunity and are able to financially succeed, others are left to dream and wish for the necessities of life.

Dorothy Wallace probably thought it was sad and unfortunate too, but instead of wallowing in sorrow, she dealt with it as a fact of life and met it head on.

As American journalist Murray Kempton once wrote, "It is a measure of the Negro's circumstance that, in America, the smallest things usually take him so very long, and that, by the time he wins them, they are no longer little things: they are miracles."

No one could know this better than Dorothy Wallace.

William J. (Bill) Jones

Another person who has become a part of Meacham Park's history and development is William J. Jones.

In addition to the boxing team, Jones' ability and gift of leadership has spilled out into the community in many other ways since his arrival here in 1945. In fact, he has been involved in one way or another with every major improvement that has ever been accomplished in the community, and he continues his work to this very day.

He married Alma, the daughter of D. M. Powell. Now it's possible that Jones was influenced to some extent by his father-in-law's dedication and interest in the community, but it could never be said that Bill Jones ever stood in his father-in-law's shadow. Jones cast the light of hope for this community in his own right. In fact, it might be that Alma was originally drawn to Bill Jones because she saw the same qualities in him that she recognized in her father!

Jones has made many sacrifices. Similar to Powell, Bill Jones has given his time and of himself for the benefit of the community and the people he cares for. His energy, too, has never been for personal gain, but for the community.

Nearly everything said about Dorothy Wallace could be said about Bill Jones, except that Jones is still fighting.

He worked closely with Wallace in obtaining the community's goals. He spent many of his evenings attending meetings, sitting on commissions, and meeting with politicians and community leaders.

Jones has been dedicated to this community since the day he arrived. While operating the grocery and meat business at 200 Meacham Street, he employed area youngsters and taught them checkout procedures, meat cutting, and display.

By the early 1950s he was totally involved with the community. He organized the first young men's club in the Meacham Park area. The club, called the "Paysans," gave the first, largest organized dance to feature a black D.J. in the St. Louis area.

Around 1953 he became a full-time postman with the U.S. Post Office but he still put every non-working moment into his community. In 1955 he organized the Meacham Park Golden Gloves Boxing Team and coached that program for five years.

By the 1960s his involvement in the community accelerated. He became Chairman of the first Meacham Park Advisory Council in 1963 and remained in that position until he resigned in 1966. During his term, many programs came to the community such as Head Start, an array of summer recreational programs, and a camera club with its own dark room facilities.

Jones was also a member of the advisory board of the Community school and helped initiate its beginning. He was an elective member of Metroplex, a county governing board of the poverty program, President of the Meacham Park Development Corp., the organization that brought new housing to the Meacham Park area, and was an appointee to the St. Louis County Supervisor's Participation Committee in 1970.

Jones was also co-founder of the Sponsors Organization (SPROG) and has since been elected its Chairman, the founder of the Meacham Park community newspaper *In Our Opinion*, and the main driving force behind collecting and publishing the history of Meacham Park.

As if this wasn't enough, since his retirement from the Postal Service, he has done volunteer work at the St. Louis County Juvenile Division.

It would seem that Jones is blessed with an incredible amount of energy. He has been able to draw from deep within himself all of the strength and drive that was necessary to accomplish his community's needs. The stamina he portrayed has been beyond belief. During the 1960s to the 1970s, Jones became involved to the point that if he wasn't in a meeting -he'd just returned from one; if he wasn't beginning a major project -- he had just finished one or maybe was in the middle of one!

Jones saw what had to be done and he did it.

However, in the beginning some people ridiculed him. They thought he was foolish to "knock himself out" to seek changes that would never come; to meet with white political leaders who would never help; or try to save a community that was "destined to decay."

Those who weren't amused were angry. They called him, as well as Dorothy Wallace, "Uncle Toms" for trying to work for changes through the white power structure.

At the same time, politicians were angry at him, or feared him, because of the pressure he applied to get things done. There were probably times when Jones wondered if he wasn't out there all alone. Except for a handful of people in the beginning, there were probably times that he was.

As Cleo Lewright once wrote: "This is a man who only wants for himself and the people of Meacham, young and old, a place in the mainstream of American society."

Bill Jones, with the help of others, was able to bring that to his community in his own lifetime. As the changes in the community slowly came about, he probably realized that the anguish, frustration, anxiety, and disillusionment he had gone through was well worth the effort.

Although Edgar Guest's poem, *It Couldn't Be Done*, oversimplifies the time and work that Jones put into his community, its spirit still applies:

Somebody said that it couldn't be done ,
But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so 'till he'd tried.

So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

Alma, Bill Jones' wife, helped out in many of these projects over the years. In addition to working the grocery business together, they also had the distinction of being the proprietors of one of the first Black-owned motels in the St. Louis area. Named Fox Creek, the motel was located along old Highway 50 at Fox Creek, just west of where Six Flags is today. It had twelve units, a restaurant, a swimming pool, and a picnic area.

Bill and Alma Jones have two children, Bill Jones, Jr. and Gaynelle Jones Evans.

Gaynelle, incidentally, is a reporter for the national news-paper USA Today and was chosen to participate in that publication's Buscapade tour of the United States and, most recently, its Jetcapade tour of the world. Both assignments resulted in not only special reports for the newspaper but contributions to their books about the tours as well.

Bill Jones was finally recognized for his dedication and service to his community in 1973. That year he was named "Citizen of the Year" by the Human Development Corporation. The Missouri House of Representatives, in turn, recognized the honor by issuing a resolution on December 18, 1973, and presented Jones with a copy.

In looking back, though, if Jones is to be recognized for his service to the community, he should have received an award each year since 1945!

Slowly Moving Forward

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This culminated several years of efforts by the residents. In fact, Dorothy Wallace, a long-time community leader, and all of the community's civic clubs, had been campaigning for a proper sewer system since 1960.

The water main was first completed to Spears Street around March, 1969. The first resident to complete a contract to have run the water line from the main to her house was Mrs. Dixie Chapple.

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Meanwhile, the Metro Sewer District began laying trunk lines. As time went on a map of the area was displayed at the Gateway Center office to keep residents informed of the progress of the sewer system. Twice a week the contractor came in and marked the area that had been completed with red ink.

Chapter
12

EPILOGUE

This is but a brief account of the history of Meacham Park. As one can see, it is full of men and women who have worked hard to succeed, sometimes having to overcome unbelievable odds.

To quote the St. Louis Post-Dispatch of 12-14-88: "Some images in Meacham Park call to mind a black version of Main Street, U.S.A. There are the happy schoolchildren who run along Electric, Chicago, Attucks, and New York Streets -- along blocks lined with suburban-style frame homes. . . . Many residents greet visitors with a wave and a smile . . . The small-town way of life in Meacham Park has existed for generations. Many residents -- population estimated at 980, today -- know each other well, in part because their families have lived here for decades."

There are many individuals in Meacham Park who have led interesting lives, have interesting stories, or possess many years of experience and knowledge. In addition, this community has been the home of several who have enjoyed unusual longevity. Today, the distinction of being the oldest resident in Meacham Park belongs to Mrs. Sarah Johnson. In her eighties, Sarah's parents moved here in 1905 when she was five years old.

But other residents, like Joe Ellis and Artie Wallace, just to name two, are also in their eighties and there are many other four-score residents who live in the area. Meacham Park, in fact, was once the home of the oldest resident in the entire Kirkwood School district area -- a Centenarian!

His name was Pearce A. Dupree. Mr. Dupree's lifetime spanned the years from the assassination of Abraham Lincoln to the assassination of John F. Kennedy; from the Emancipation Proclamation to the Civil Rights movements.

Dupree came to Meacham Park in 1930, at the age of 67, and in later years moved across the road onto Reardon Street in Kirkwood. But even then he was frequently seen back on the other side.

Dupree was born in the midst of the Civil War, on August 18, 1863, in St. Andrea Parish, Louisiana. He remembered as a child playing in the rubble remains of the Confederate South. His most valuable "toy," in fact, was found among the rubble -- a pair of army field glasses that once belonged to a Confederate officer.

Dupree could also remember slavery and how a plantation owner had held his mother, grandmother, an uncle and a niece in abject poverty until long after the Civil War.

In the prime of his life, Dupree stood 6' 4" and weighed 225 lbs. In his mid-twenties he could lift a 500-pound bell that was a landmark which sat in front of an old New Orleans firehouse. At one time, \$28,000. was put up by the plantation owners in and around New Orleans to send Dupree to England to fight the well-known prize fighter Peter Jackson, but the trip never materialized.

Throughout his long life Dupree had eeked out a living picking cotton, worked as a sawmill hand for \$1.50 a day when his board at the time was \$.65 a day, and also worked as a drayman and a timber-floater.

He was picking ten bales of cotton a day on a sharecropper's farm near Watson, Arkansas, before he moved to the Meacham Park to live with his daughter, Mrs. Leatha Jackson. During the Kirkwood Centennial celebration of 1965, Dupree received an award as the oldest citizen in the Kirkwood School District, and an article about him appeared in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat of August 4, 1965, just before his 102nd birthday.

Although Mr. Dupree is no longer with us today, there are many residents of this community whose life-stories are worth preserving. It is the hopes of the authors of this work that others, either as a school project or simply for personal enlightenment, will be inspired to do additional research into the lives of those mentioned in the text, or others in the community who have played such a vital role in Meacham Park's history .

As any historian will tell you, it is only by knowing our past that we are able to properly plan our future.

The following narrative was recorded by Garnet A. Thies, at Orchard House in Webster Groves on January 23, 1999. The narrator is William Speckert. Also present was Gene Speckert, whose husband was Mr. Speckert's nephew. Because the "History of Meacham Park" covers black families living in the Park, we feel it important to state that Mr. Speckert was white.

"What was it like to live in Meacham Park? I, Wm. Speckert was born in the Park June 7, 1905, and was raised there, stayed there till May 27, 1923. It was a good place, but we were primitive, no water, electric, burned coal for heat and coal range for cooking and baking. Mud streets till later, then county brought in cinders from boiler factories and green houses, anybody who burned coal, they would bring it by the carload and put it on the side tracks at the Frisco Station.

"Now there was a man who lived across the track, who at one time was mayor of Kirkwood, whose name was Mr. Kinyon (sp?). He was mayor for years. And along that road he had where they would set a carload or two of coal, and a man would take your order and they would deliver with big horses, everything was done by horse. In the Fall of every year you had the coal shed filled up otherwise you wouldn't have any fuel. Everyone had a coal shed. Mr. Kinyon took care of that, he also sold ice. And at times they had carloads of manure, sheep manure. And that was used by Mr. Rowe, he had 21 greenhouses. In those days when you wanted flowers for a wedding or a death, there were no exotic flowers, you went to the greenhouses. Each greenhouse was 300 feet long and each had 4 or 5 beds of flowers, carnations and mums. After the planes came in, the greenhouses disappeared, because they could buy flowers from the islands, California and Florida, all over. I had a friend who worked for the St. Louis Flower Association, and every day he would go down to the airport.

"We had outside privies, two holes, some had three holes, we used to call them chick sales. Some had a moon on the door, some had a star. After a time we would have to put lime on them. After a time we would have to clean them out. Now you can't put human waste in one pile because it will never disintegrate, because we are meat eaters, it is full of bacteria and gets full of maggots and things. We could put it in a big barrel, put water in that and liquefy it and put it on the garden. Now we had the paper to contend with, catalogs like A.J. Childs, Sears and Sawbuck (Sears and Roebuck). I remember the girls, we were so far away from everything. at night my sister, Anna, and sister Louise had to do the dishes. Seemed to me Anna would do the washing and Louise would do the drying, but just about time she would get a big pile to dry she would have to go to the rest room, and I would hear Anna calling "Momma, she's out there in the toilet and won't come in". Louise would be out in the toilet looking through all the catalogs. In the winter we had a commode inside, summertime we went outside to the outhouse.

"Everyone raised chickens, geese, ducks, some raised hogs and made their own sausage. Many had cows and sold milk and butter, everyone had a large vegetable garden. Sometimes we put up as much as 100 jars of beans and tomatoes.

Most people had a cistern or a well for their water. Everything came in a barrel, apples came in a barrel, not so much peaches, but we used a lot of dried fruits, prunes, apricots, apples, which we would store in tins. And every Fall we would get 100 lbs. of flour and 100 lbs. sugar and we would put that in tins. During the winter men would be out of work, because most of the work was out in the open. Those who had factory jobs downtown were fortunate. We had one factory that made furniture. It was right as you come south off the railroad tracks in Kirkwood. They did their own staining and all that sort of stuff. It was a big place. One night it caught fire and was completely demolished, from all that inflammable stuff.

Now Mr. Brown, he owned from Big Bend Road south to Vianney High School. A brick mansion back there was Mr. Brown's. He hired a lot of people and he would say people would stay there until they died. One of them was Mr. Bopp, and Mr. Krautmann (sp?) and all the kids went to school. They took care of the estate. He raised deer and many things, and he and Mr. Shaw were good friends and they used to visit each other in buggies and high-spirited horses. Of course, we never got into that, they were on one side of the road and we were on the other. We lived about half a block off of Lindbergh which was then Denny Road. It ran from the airport which was just a trickle of a road all the way to Gravois. Now that was the road that was paved with quarry rock, and they put oil on that. And after it dried it became a hard road like our roads here, but very slick. That was the only hard road we had through there.

We lived south of Big Bend on a street called Alsobrook. There was a creek running through there. It was an off run from Mr. Brown's woods. It was a nice creek. Had a big place in it about as large as this room, we kids used to catch crawdads. We'd go up to the butcher man, Mr. Loucks, and ask him for some liver or something and we'd tie that to a string and catch crawdads. We had little buckets and we'd build a big fire and boil the crawdads and eat them. It was a lot of fun, just kids.

And of course in those days we didn't have a lot of playthings as they do today. We made our own games, we made our own ball diamonds, we were half black and half white. They were good Blacks, they worked in different places, they were kind of red-skinned blacks, they worked for Scullins Steel, most of them worked in construction, they were hod carriers for bricklayers, hod carriers for plasterers and they worked on construction work. And when anybody was out these people would take care of you. My sister, Minnie, would get off at midnight and get off at Woodbine and Kirkwood Road (Denny) about the time the Blacks would get off from Scullins Steel. They would always see that she got home. She knew them, they knew her. They were nice people. And then of course we kids would get up there and play ball, and we'd have some arguments, we never had any fist fights, but we'd play football or play baseball. We'd make some kind of ball, wrap some tape around something, and get some kind of a bat, maybe somebody had gotten one for Christmas. And we all carried pocketknives, Keen Cutters, you got one for Christmas. And you could cut up sticks and whatnot and make different things.

We would play a game called Tippy. It had a round ring and it had a piece of wood marked off in 6 comers, had Roman numerals I to VI. And on the edge it would stick out, and you would get yourself some-kind of a paddle, a barrel stave, or whatever you could get, and you had a rake. So you would throw this piece of wood out there and whatever number comes up you got that many cracks at it. You would hit that edge and it would fly up and you would hit it. And after you hit it you would have to measure it and you would have to say well I can make that in four jumps, a hop and a step. And the others would be there with their paddles and if you didn't make it you got paddled all the way back to the ring. And then we played a lot of marbles. We'd take our marbles to school. Now Kirkwood was a wealthy place. They had some wonderfull people, college people, doctors, lawyers - merchants and thieves I called them. They bought their kids some fancy marbles. We kids were some fancy marble shooters and we'd slick those kids out of some of those fancy marbles. And then we had a game we used to call marble peg. You'd take your knife in your hand and you'd throw it up. Well, first, you'd get in line to see who was first and then you'd take your knife by the blade and you'd throw it, and whoever made it stick he was one of the first ones. So we played this game and we'd all be around and each one got his turn. You'd pick up the knife and make it flip and you'd put it on the back of your hand and make it flip and you'd put it between your fingers and flip it and you had to do it three times. And the guys w'io couldn't do it would have to do what we called "root the pig". Someone would put a little stick in the ground like a toothpick and you would have to root that out with your mouth. You'd get a mouthful of dirt. And we dug holes and shot our marbles in there. Outside of getting the crawdads and going through the woods, there were so many beautiful trees. They had these two trees, they used to call them stepladder trees. I don't think we had many hardwood trees, we had a lot of oaks. But on one of these lots that Mr Brown owned, there was a big elm tree. It took four men together to put their arms around that tree, it was a monster. And sometimes in the summer people would gather and maybe bring a guitar, and play a little music, and some of them sang.

Garnet - "How many families lived in that area?" Mr. Speckert - "Well, let me name them for you". On the left side, that's where Mr. Brown's estate was, was a tavern, they called it a saloon. Then there was a great big wooded place on up the hill, there was all woods back in there. And then across the road was a big mansion, a southern home, that belonged to Mr. Brown and housed some of his caretakers. He lived on up near Vianney. Now I don't know if Mr. Brown's home was in Meacham Park or not, but he was an awful nice man. So we start South. There were some vacant lots, a lot of vacant places around there. Places where people would drive in with their horses and stop. There was the Kuhn family, they were plasterers, painters and builders. They built 4 bungalows between Big Bend and the railroad tracks. And on the corner there was a man by the name of Schmidt, who was also mixed in with Kuhns, that was South of Big Bend. Schmidt had a store and there was also a barbershop, on Big Bend and Kirkwood (Denny) Road. They're all gone now. And then it went down to Oakhill Cemetery, took in Oakhill.

We're crossing Big Bend now. On the corner there was a tavern run by a man named Tommy Fuchs. During my time they voted in the Volstead Act which prohibited the use of intoxicating liquors. There was quite a few little bootleggers would crop up there. There was one little saloon down there, Singenger, I think was his name. Between him and Frank Weiss, the sheriff, and a few other law-toting folks had little bootleg gangs. You belonged to the cartel or you would be in jail. That's the way the ball bounced. Well I never paid much attention to that because later on one of my best buddies who happened to be a Schmidt and belonged to the Kuhn family, he was running a saloon for one of his oldest brothers and I know every once in a while he would get thrown in the pokey.

So then we go on up the street where there was people by the name of Engel. Mr. Engel worked over at the Clayton Courthouse. He would go around and tell everybody their taxes were due and they had better get them paid up or their property would be sold on the courthouse steps. And everybody would be mad at him because they'd say they just paid them. Nobody kept any records. Of course Mr. Engel kept this on court records. Well, they'd give Mr. Engel the money and he'd pay the taxes for them, or else they'd go over and pay it themselves. Whether he got a little compensation I don't know.

And then as you cross the street there was a man by the name of Mr. Schwentker, who owned a grocery store, big store. He delivered your sugar, your flour, all the other big commodities. And we used to have to help the kids get in the 100 lb. sacks. All that had to be put in tins to keep the weevils and all the other bad things out, sugar, flour, sometimes rice. He was the god saver of the people in Meacham Park. He saved many a family from starving to death. I'd often heard it said that Mr. Schwentker was owed \$200 and \$300 from every family during the wintertime. They would pay him off in the summer when the work opened up. He had a lovely home next to his business. He had a daughter and a son. Mr. Schwenker also sold shoes, tobacco, coal oil, whatever a general grocery store sold. You name it, he had it. But then when the big store, like Kroger, came in to Kirkwood, Mr. Schwentker's business dwindled. I don't know how long he lived, but he was a wonderfull man.

We picked our own hickory nuts and walnuts in the Fall of the year for cooking.

Now at the end of his property you go up another street, and on one side there was the people by the name of Steutzel, and Mr. Aselman. Mr. Aselman ran a blacksmith shop on the corner of Saratoga and when we came home from school and during the summer time when he had the door open we'd gather around him with his leather apron and he would be shoeing horses. The farmers from all over the area brought their horses there. These horseshoes would be red hot, and he had a blowing thing, and we thought that was just great. He'd stick them in the water and the steam would come out. Sometimes for half an hour we'd sit there and watch Mr. Aselman. He had two boys, one was called Mushie, they went to the

Lutheran School. They were nice people. I don't remember who else lived there.

Near Mr. Aselman's shop there lived a man by the name of Mr. Hoytel. He was in the concrete business. He and his wife had a daughter. The wife and daughter both worked. They had a big lot where he raised all of their vegetables for the winter. They never bought anything outside of flour and a few commodities. They had a Rio touring car. He wouldn't buy any license in the winter because he said he couldn't use the car because it would freeze up. Cars were just coming out and everything was new. He'd wait until further into the year and get it for half price. That's when licenses went into effect for automobiles. He would go out to get it started and put the hood up, and we'd walk around and admire the car. Sometimes you'd have to push the car to get it started. The Schmidt and Kuhn family, they had cars. We'd push them down Saratoga Avenue through the gully and up the hill to try to get them started. You'd have 14 kids pushing a Model T Ford trying to get it started. It was great sport.

Near where Mr. Aselman had his blacksmith shop they had a building which they used to call the "meeting building", and a man came along and opened a pool hall. They had one table and a barbershop. Them years you could do that.

On the south side of Saratoga. old man Kuhn, he had all these kids, two story house, and he had a big paint shop. He did all the work for the Griesediecks; they lived out there, and out to Fenton where there were big homes.

And down a little bit further there was the Black neighborhood. And now we're back to 1900 and that's a long ways back. On the corner, a Mrs. Calvert, she had a store, a Mom and Pop store. They also had a bakery. They baked every day, coffeecake, doughnuts, and what not. My mother decided I could be a baker so she went to Will Calvert, Mrs. Calvert's brother-in-law. Mr. Calvert worked downtown, Will's father had died, and he had a bunch of kids living in Wellston, some of them lived with the Calvert's. They had a large place; they had a horse and a wagon, and that's how they delivered bakery goods, sometimes I got to drive. My time in the bakery business was short-lived. One of the things I had to do was cut up a half a load of hard wood, oak, for the furnace in the bakery. Well, I didn't think that was being in the bakery business. The dough had to be kneaded for the bread, the doughnuts and the coffeecake. And then I got to knead the bread. That just about wore me out, I didn't like that too much. Well, then Will said "you can see how the doughnuts are getting along." So we'd roll these doughnuts out and we'd have a cutter to cut them, and we'd put them on a stick and we'd have a big round kettle that was full of grease that was very hot. And I'd ask if the grease was hot enough for the doughnuts. He chewed tobacco, and he'd spit into the grease, and that would pop out, and he'd say "Well, anytime you drop water in and it spits out, it's ready to go." People weren't as particular in those days, but they were good doughnuts. Then I'd put the stick in with the doughnuts and when brown I'd turn them over and then take them out and lay them in sugar, then lay them real fancy on the tray and take them into the bakery and they sold like hotcakes. And they had lots of rats,

because rats will come anywhere, but they had lots of food around there. So we'd set traps, and Mrs. Calvert had a rat terrier dog. They had a place between the bakery shop and a store that was going to be a dry goods store, but it never materialized. They mostly used it for storage. They'd have the rat in a cage and on Sunday afternoons, men, most of them chewed tobacco, white and colored men, they'd block every hole in that store and then they'd turn the rat loose and let the dog get him. It was a gruesome mess. I didn't care much for that kind of sport.

But I soon got tired of cutting wood for the baker. But I did like delivering bakery goods with the little horse she had. Over the weekend sometimes when they didn't use the horse for deliveries, she would ask me to ride the horse to give him some exercise. I'd ride the horse around. There were no automobiles to worry about and I'd talk to everybody.

Well, on the South side of Saratoga, Willard Fuchs lived there. And there were some people by the name of McNamara or McDonald. They raised bees, they had hives and hives of bees. They had a son, and he was a college man. He was a smart boy. He never did anything with college, he raised bees. I don't know where the Mc's got their money from. Later on he and I worked together doing painting. In the Spring of the year these bees would leave the hive, the queen would fly out and there would be a big cloud of bees. And everybody would cry out "the bees, the bees" and get tin pans and bang on them. Finally they would get the queen settled down and Mrs. Mc would come out. She had a thing over her head, to see where the queen bee was lying on a branch. Now the queen bee would be about as big as your thumb, and she'd hit that branch with a stick, boom, and she had a regular little house and as soon as the queen bee fell in there they'd go around and spray sugar water and all the bees would go in the little holes. Sometimes we got stung, but bees will not sting you unless you molest them. And bees don't like anybody who has perfume, or tobacco; they'll get you every time. That was their occupation.

Now there was some people by the name of Schuttler lived there. Mr. Schuttler (sp?) worked for a seed company. He would always bring out a lot of seeds in the Fall of the year-- beans and things. He was a nice man, but he had to do the washing every Sunday, because his wife had a bad back. She'd also lay around and gossip.

And as we go down further, George Dole lived there. He chewed tobacco, him and his wife, had a bunch of hound dogs. Had a picket fence around his house. I don't remember who else lived there. Blacks were starting to move in.

Then we come down to Alsobrook, that's where the crik comes through. Mrs. Calvert would always have ducks or geese. She was great on animals, had a large place. And the ducks and geese would like to come down to that area and swim. She had some beautiful geese. Every time you would come by the old gander would hiss, hiss at you, with his head stuck out, and if you didn't watch out he would nail you. I threw a rock at one one time and accidentally killed him. I used

to take off my shoes and socks and take my basket and walk through the crik and pick up their eggs. Did you every see a goose egg? They're 3 times bigger than a chicken egg. I'd bring them to my mother and she used to use them for baking.

Between that, and my dog, and the crawdads, it was a pretty decent life. It was a wholesome life.

After we went on down our place there was a lady by the name of Grisham (sp?), who lived in a little house. Coming further up there was a two-story house which my brother, Charlie, lived in for a while when he first got married to Jenny. I have to take that back, I think at first they rented Mrs. Fuchs' house after she moved from there. And Charlie always had to have hunting dogs, everybody had hunting dogs. Charlie and Jenny had a baby that died in infancy. Then they moved up on our street into the two-story house. My brother, Charlie, was a sheet metal worker; he worked for Mr. Welch. He would have to go down at 2 o'clock in the morning to work. He worked hard—he lived up into his 80's.

Then you come to our place. As we go further down to the next street, we owned, I don't remember the name of the street, the crik ran down there and went underneath the culvert, and there were people there. They had two girls. The wife worked for Mrs. Calvin (sp?) and she got pneumonia. She sold soda water, they kept it in ice water, and when you bought a soda she would have to reach into the cold water, and, she got pneumonia and died. She left the two girls.

There was a man by the name of Mr. Loucks, his son ran the butcher shop. They had a big place. They had a horse and a cow and raised a lot of vegetables. He had a scoop that was used to scoop out ground for making a basement for a house. He'd cut out a big area, put in gravel, then wheat straw, lots of wheat straw, then when vegetables would come in he would lay them in there, rutabagas, cabbage, potatoes, then cover them with dirt, and then in the winter take a pick ax and dig them out. He had a cow and every evening my sister, Min, and I had a little pail and we would go to get milk, walking barefoot on the dusty road, wearing shoes in the winter time. They had dogs and they would come to meet us, barking. Mrs. Loucks was a portly woman, weighed closer to 300#. We would walk through the meadow and get Bessie (the cow). Sometimes she would come and sometimes she wouldn't. One day a colored gentleman came along and asked what we were doing. We told him we were trying to get Bessie up to the barn so Mrs. Loucks could milk her; sometimes I would milk her. He said, "Willie, you go up to the barn and there is a barrel up there full of bran and there's a cup there, so you get the bran and when you get to Bessie you let her lick the bran." So we did that and Bessie would follow right along. So one time we got to Mrs. Loucks and she had us get two buckets, one for milk and one with water so we could wash her udder, and she said, "Willie, would you milk Bessie tonight?" They had a three legged chair and you would sit on that and put your head up against the cow and milk her. One day Mrs. Loucks broke a leg on the chair when she sat down, and she rolled down the hill and she couldn't get up. We got Mr. Bailey, a colored man, and some other men, and they

had a time getting her back on her feet. It wasn't too long after that Mrs. Loucks passed on. It took eight men to carry her.

Of course, they were all great eaters. They raised hogs, made pork sausage, mettwurst, all the goodies you can think of, sauerkraut; they ate well. They were all big, but Mr. Loucks was tall and thin, he never seemed to get fat. He had two boys, Bill and Frank. Frank ran the butcher shop and Bill went into the service, World War I. I'd see Mrs. Loucks crying and would ask why she was crying and she would say poor Joe, he's gotta go fight them Germans, and he's gotta cross that ocean, and he can't swim.

We had paths we walked through, tall weeds, sometimes kids walked along and you couldn't see them. One morning along came Joe, he drove a truck for the International Shoe Co., Washington, Mo. When I asked him how he was doing he told me he was going over to fight those Huns. He asked me to go to the station with him as he had nobody to go with him. So we walked down to the troop train and they all got on the troop train, full of hundreds of boys. And these boys would toss envelopes out of the window and ask us to mail them. When we said we had no money they would toss nickels and dimes to us and we would spend maybe half an hour picking up the money. We would take the money and envelopes to the Kirkwood Post Office and the man would see that each envelope had a stamp on it. We always did that when the troop trains came in. You know, we never kept a penny of that money. We were patriotic.

Well, the war was over and Bill (Joe) came back. He got to driving this International Truck and sometimes he would keep it in Mr. Aselman's place, which was a garage. He had Pete Conrad who was one of the best automobile mechanics. I'd go to this garage and there was the truck with a canvas, they didn't have closed trucks in those days. And I'd get in the truck and Pete would tell me to put my foot on the accelerator and when she starts just kind of jiggle it a little and he would have to crank it up. And they carried chains for the wheels in case they got stuck some place. I asked him how long it would take to get to Washington and he said about a day and a half if he didn't get stuck. Don't ask me why they didn't use the railroad.

So time went on. I didn't get to go to school much, because there were eleven in the family and I was second to the last. My sister, Anna, got married, had a kid, Charlotte. They moved downtown, she had married a man who worked in a shoe factory. She got sick and she needed somebody to take care of her and my mother elected me to go down there and take care of Anna and that was the end of my school. So when I came back from her I got a job at W. A. Rowe, for the grand sum of 13-1/2 cents an hour.

But before I went into that I used to caddie at Sunset Hills. That was a better paying job because you had your regulars. I used to caddie for Mr. Busch, Mr. Anheuser, Carlton, Blumeyer, big, important people. I got to know a lot of

wonderful people. And then the women took up golf. The men didn't like it, but they gave in and let the women play golf on a Monday morning, until 11 o'clock. So here come all those big, fat society women, now they belonged to the 400 in St. Louis, and they wore bloomers. Now if you wanted to see a sight on earth, that was it. My buddies and I used to get behind them and laugh. And they all came out after World War I and got modern; they smoked. Some of them used cigarette holders, and cursed. I thought I knew quite a few curse words, but they put me to shame. My buddies used to say, they're supposed to be college people, where did they learn that stuff? And I tell you, the Number 2 hole was a pond, and a lot of people just couldn't get that ball across there.

Well, I've always caddied for Mrs. Anheuser. She had an electric car, looked like a buggy, had glass all around it. She used to pick me up on Big Bend, or somewhere around there. The car ran like a sewing machine, you could hardly hear it. It had solid tires. She'd pick me up and off we'd go to Sunset Hills to the golf course. We got a tournament going and between our caddies and their caddies you never heard so much cheating in your life. Anyway, Mrs. Anheuser won the tournament. And she was so excited. We used to get our paychecks, they had a stop watch, and they would bring it into the club house and that's how we got paid. It was 30 cents a round, about 4 rounds, \$1.20. If you didn't get a tip you wouldn't want anything to do with those people after that-at least get a quarter a trip.

We won this tournament and you never heard so much excitement. Well, Mrs. Anheuser forgot to sign the ticket, so the next day after the dust settled she came back again and I told her "you forgot to sign my ticket". She said "I'm so sorry" and she wrote on there a \$25. tip. I tell you I was a rich man, me and Rockefeller. I'd never seen so much money, my mother was elated.

My godfather worked on the railroad and they lived down on Second Street and he used to walk all the way to our house, once a year, wouldn't take a streetcar, Mr. Winters. So he said to my mother one day, "where does that young fellow work?" And my mother said "he caddies out at Sunset Hills". "And what does a caddie do?", he asked. She replied "he carries golf sticks". Well, Mr. Winters was from Germany and he didn't know nothing about golf sticks. He was what was called a gandy dancer, he worked on the tracks. "Well," he said, "does he make any money?" My mother told him sometimes he comes in with a dollar, sometimes with a dollar and a half. Sometimes he works 2 rounds, -sometimes 3 rounds. And Mr. Winters said "Now, Wilma, don't you lie to me, there's no kid makes that kind of money". In those days people like him were only paid two dollars or two and a half dollars a day. He wouldn't believe my mother, said again "don't you lie to me". Well, we dropped that. I'll never forget that.

On the next street there were some people named Kostedt. And there were some people by the name of Wachter(sp?). They had a boy, a Down Syndrome boy. On the next street were some more people, Mr. Crum. He worked at the greenhouse for Mr. Brown, he was all crippled up. They said he had rheumatoid arthritis. They

said it was from the tobacco he had to blow on the orchards. That was the story, but I don't believe that. His family had big lots and had what was called flatbeds. They had cabbage, tomatoes, kohlrabi, anything in plants which they sold in the Spring. They also had a big strawberry patch. Next to them were the Stringers. They were nice people, I don't know where they worked, but they went downtown. They had a girl they called "Toots". Then they had a dog and they called him Toots" too. This made Mrs. Springer awful mad. And a little bit farther down were some people named Quarnheim. There was Elmer, he went to the World War, and Frank, he didn't go. I don't remember Mr. Quarnheim. And from then I lost track of that side of the street. Some people came from Holland and they had a large place, and they also had cows, a horse, and they all wore wood shoes. And she would walk around that horse and stable in wood shoes. She'd come to the house in wool slacks.

Mr. Neinhaber was a small man, and he worked for Anheuser-Busch. Now how Mr. Neinhaber got to work, I don't know, but he had more beer tops than I ever saw in my life. He sat on the steps in the summer time and drank beer, but I never saw any bottles around there. Mrs. Neinhaber had a girl, pretty girl, and they used to deliver milk. Mrs. Neinhaber had a yolk and so did Nellie, which they would put on their shoulders with buckets hung on either end with milk in them, and take to their customers in the neighborhood. So, one day Nellie didn't show up. So Mrs. Neinhaber delivered the milk and we said "Where's Nellie". Well, you know how these foreign people are, they speak foreign and what not. Nobody knew anything about their business, they were afraid. Well, next day she said Nellie's not feeling so good today, and the third day, no Nellie, and by that time people started to get alarmed, they went to see them and there was no Nellie. So they went to talk to Mr. Neinhaber and ask where Nellie's at. She just disappeared. So they thought that — at Mr. Brown's property, right after you come off of Memphis Street, and up from the pond, there was a little road in there and some people seen some people changing a tire in there. And somebody said Nellie went in there to see what they were doing. And she disappeared. And they swore up and down a man by the name of Hoss Davis killed her. Now they all got a hold of Mr. Davis, he was a nice old man, had a horse and a rickety old wagon, he'd plow up your garden in the summer. And they went under this old elm tree and had a rope around his neck and had him on a wagon—and they said well he killed Nellie Neinhaber, you know these damn niggers, yah, yah, yah, you know how it is, we're gonna hang him. Well, they didn't know whether he killed Nellie or not. Well, they were about to kill him when someone came up and said, "Wait a minute you're not gonna hang that nigger," and somebody said, "Who says we're not?" And he said "I am", and he pulled a shotgun and said, "Put him down, or I'll blast you guys out of here." So they cut him down and cut him loose. He wouldn't kill a fly, he was a fine, old man.

And there was a man named Mr. Mason. He was also colored and he always had one leg wrapped up, I don't know what was wrong with him. He smoked cigarettes and he could hardly talk. And he said Hoss wouldn't kill a fly. Well I think you can go to the library and some woman wrote a book about that. Well that

took care of Nellie, nobody knew anything about Nellie any more. A closed chapter.

So then in 1923 I was working for Mr. Rowe, and he also had a greenhouse in Kirkwood on Woodbine and Harrison. We raised smileax. Don't know if you know what they are, long green things. We had a lot of variety of flowers we raised. Mr. Krueger and I worked there. We fired the boilers, Johnny was the foreman, Johnny Winters. Took care of the needs of the flowers. We used to have smileaxes in the square. We'd have poles in the ground, make squares, put a wire down there and he would be on one side of the bed and me on the other until we have the whole place squared. The flowers grow up until they were as high as the greenhouse. Then at some point we had to cut them off and put them in the long box. And Mr. Meyer who drove the truck would take them down to the flower house.

So one day I come home, my Uncle George was there, he was sitting there talking to my mother, and my mother says to me, "How would you like to go to Oklahoma with George?" Well, being sixteen and working ten hours a day in the greenhouse and they took all your money and gave you 25 cents for Saturday night, you'd be so tired you'd go to bed and not come out of there until Monday, you'd have to go back to work at 6 o'clock again. Anything to get out of the mud, sure I'll go anywhere. So I went to Tulsa with Uncle George, learned the painting trade. We had a big business, 18, sometimes 20 men. Tulsa was an oil town. A lot of people, New York bankers, they built homes, 100 at a time, they were sold as fast as they could build them. And they were fairly decent homes, bungalow types, all wood, everything was wood, roofs and all. Finally fire code came in and they couldn't use wood roofs anymore, to keep them from burning down.

Garnet - "Do you remember who your family bought your property from? Was it called Meacham Park when you lived there?"

"Well, it happened I had a sister, Min, and she married a man by the name of Haley. They had 2 children. Then Pop got sick, right in the depression in the 30's. Nobody working, so my sister, Minnie, she had no place to go, so we made a deal, Minnie and her husband take the house, we moved out. They were supposed to take care of Pop and Mom. Pop died in the 30's he was 70 odd years old. He died at the St. Louis County Hospital. We were so poor, everybody was so poor. Thousands and thousands, 13,000,000 people out of work. It wasn't funny.

Garnet - "Do you have any idea who your mother and father bought the property from?" "No, when I was born, my Uncle George told me when they were out at the cemetery burying my Uncle Bill, on June 7 that they had to get a horse and buggy to take Mom back to Meacham Park, because Uncle Bill was buried at St. Lucas Cemetery on Denny Rd. I think there was a Reverend Kruse there at that time. They had to get back so I could get borned and that's why I was named after Uncle Bill, born on June 7. I was there, but I have no memory."

I grew up with Aunt Hilda's kid, Johnny Norton, we were like brothers.

So they sold the property to the Haleys. He was the kind of guy who would tear something down and never rebuild it, typical Irishman. Bill Haley sold it to some colored people. I saw the old homestead about 7 or 8 years ago, I had just moved here (Orchard House) and my son came to pick me up and took me to my daughter's house for Christmas. So I said "Jim, do me a favor, let's go by to see what the old house looks like." And I was so unhappy and so sorrowful that it just spoiled my day. The house was in tatters, debris all around, front porch almost gone. And I said "Such a beautiful home that we had, it wasn't a mansion, but it was a home, it was clean, picket fence around it." I could have sat down and cried. I wish I had never got the idea (to go back) it hurt me so bad. Of all the wonderful days I had in Meacham Park are some of the best thoughts in life. Course the Browns, all the other kids I played with, some of them went to war, it as a wonderful life.

Course you must realize we had no water, we had no gas, we had no streets, but we could go down to the Meramec River and fish, or we'd find a crik someplace and go for a skinny dip. We always found a pond, or we always found an apple orchard, I guarantee you that, or a peach orchard, and we helped the farmers pick strawberries. We had everything we needed, but we worked for it. We had to get the coal in every night for heating. We had a big beautiful coal stove. We had to shine that all up, take the ashes out and have enough coal for Mom for the day for the kitchen range. We had the outhouse, but in the winter we had the commode, but in the morning you had to empty the commode. We always wore long underwear in the winter and we probably got one or two baths a month. In the summer we had these big #10 wash tubs and set those outside to take a bath. My father and mother both were concerned about being clean, being from Germany. Wonderful life.

At this point I must express my gratitude to my friend, Gene Speckert, whose husband was Mr. Speckert's nephew, for arranging to have me meet and record the recollections of this delightful man. It was while Gene was generously using her computer skills to put the History of Meacham Park in its present form that she remembered that Mr. Speckert had lived in that area in his early years. When she spoke with him about recalling memories of his younger days, he expressed an eager willingness to talk with me because, as he said, "It was a wonderful life."

Garnet A. Thies
1554 E. Swan Circle
Brentwood, MO 63144

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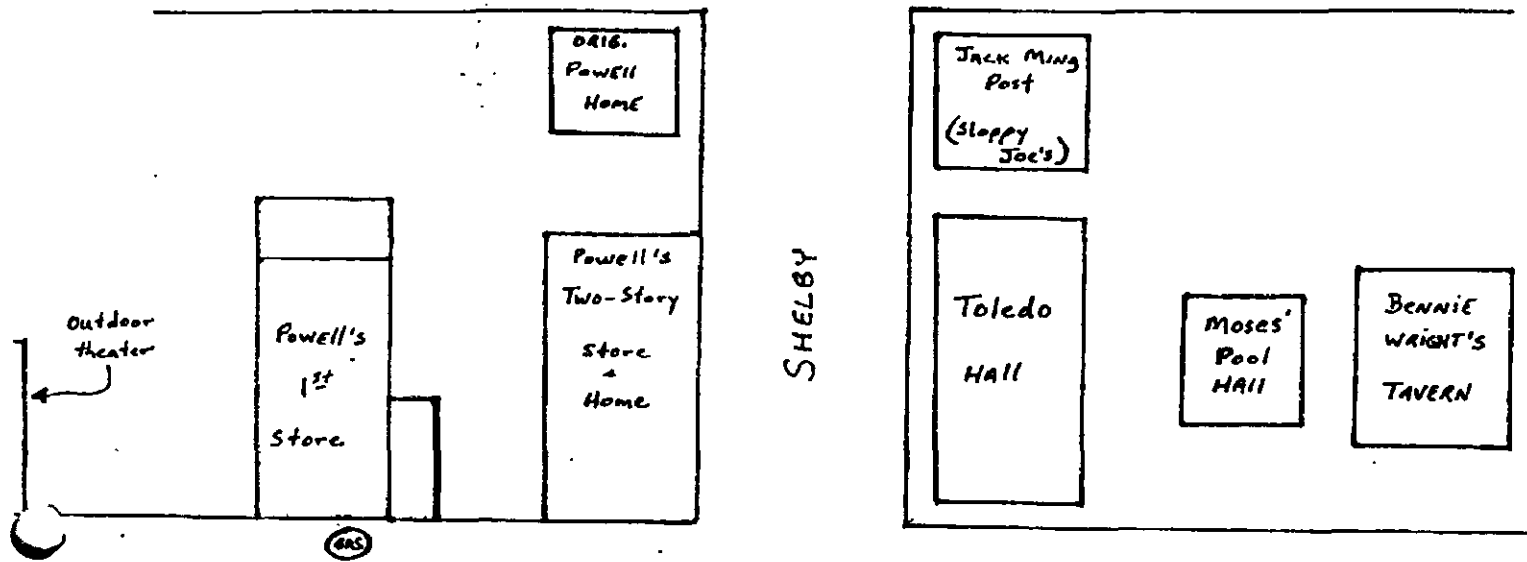
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Privately published booklet by George F. Heege (unknown year)

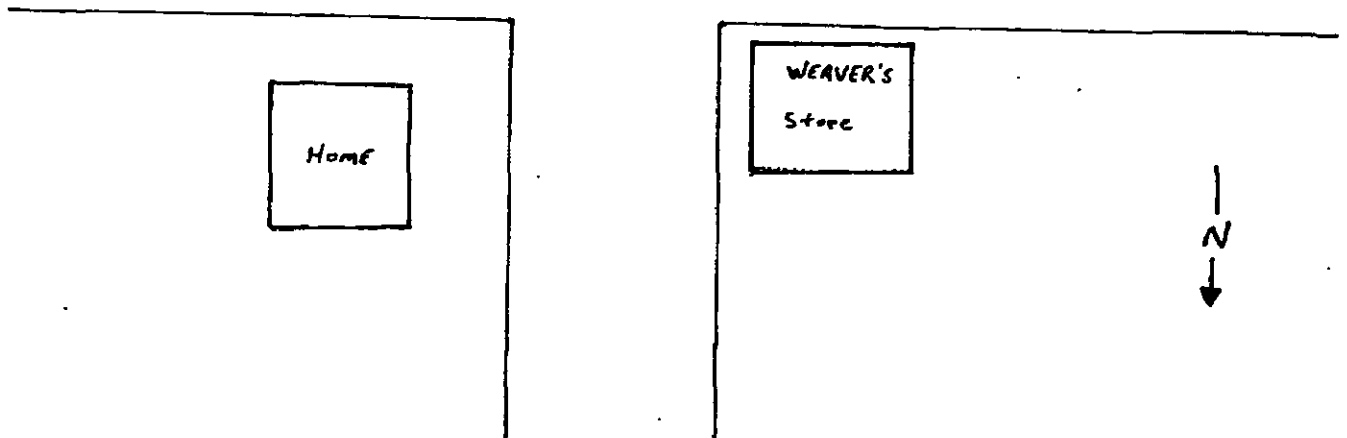
Comprised of articles he wrote for the Kirkwood Messenger newspaper during the
1950's dealing with Kirkwood area history

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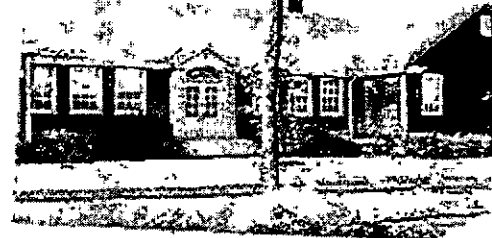
SARATOGA



MEACHAM

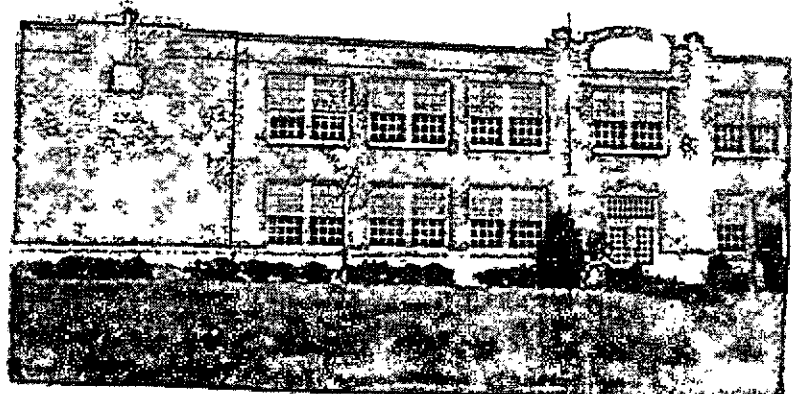


The First
J. Milton Turner School



Meacham Park School
Student Body, Late 20s
Clotilde Alexander Bass, Teacher

J. MILTON TURNER SCHOOL



POWELL GROC. CO. MEACHAM PARK



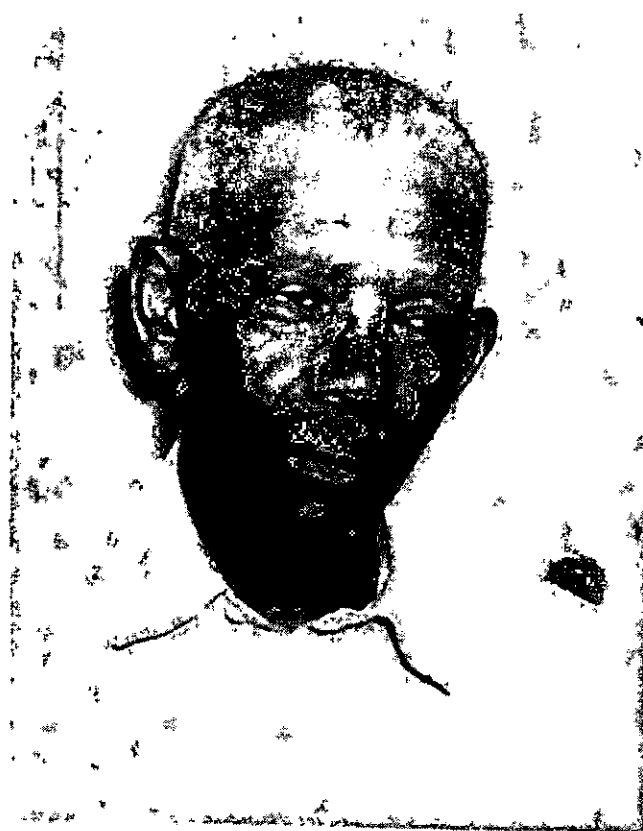
Meacham Park Baseball Team
Under Powell's Grocery Co.
Early 1930s





The "Heart" of the
Meacham Park Business District
Circa 1920s to 1930s

Mr. D. M. Powell
Community Leader
Baseball — Movies — Dance Hall
Tavern — Grocery Store



Luther E. Goach



SOME CHARTER MEMBERS OF
JACK MING LEGION POST 269

Mr. Damon Powell



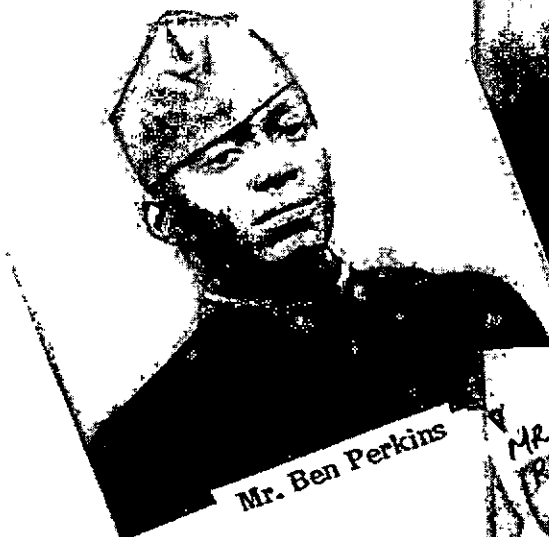
Mr. Levi Brady



Mr. Anderson Silvers



Mr. Ben Perkins



MR LESLIE
ROBBETT



Mr. Jackson Williams



Mr. Eldridge Benard

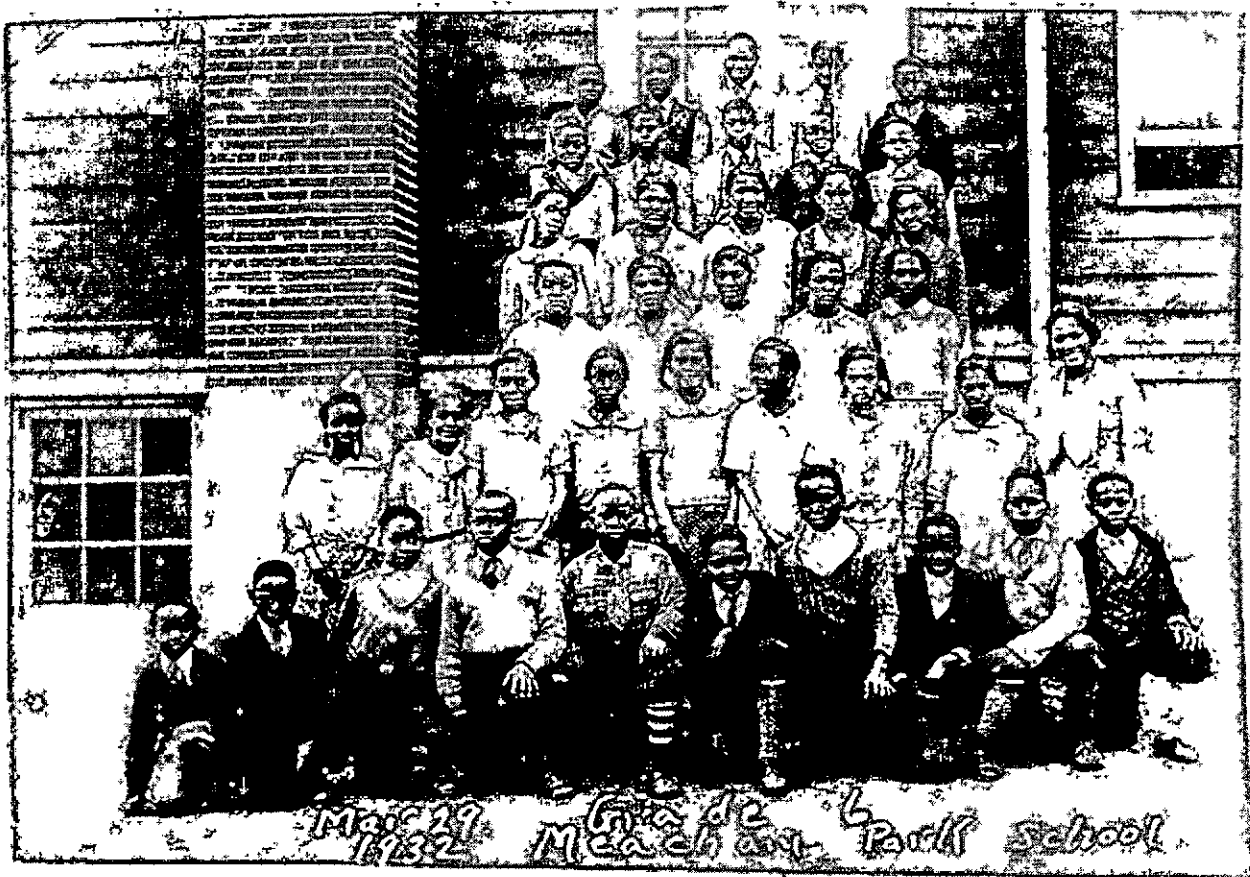




Gathering at Powell's Tavern of
Meacham Park Residents
Early 1940s



Miss Edith Nichols
Edith's Tavern



J. Milton Turner School
Graduating Class of 1934

COMMUNITY SCHOOL
Located in J. Milton Turner School



Mr. Wallace
Basic Education Class



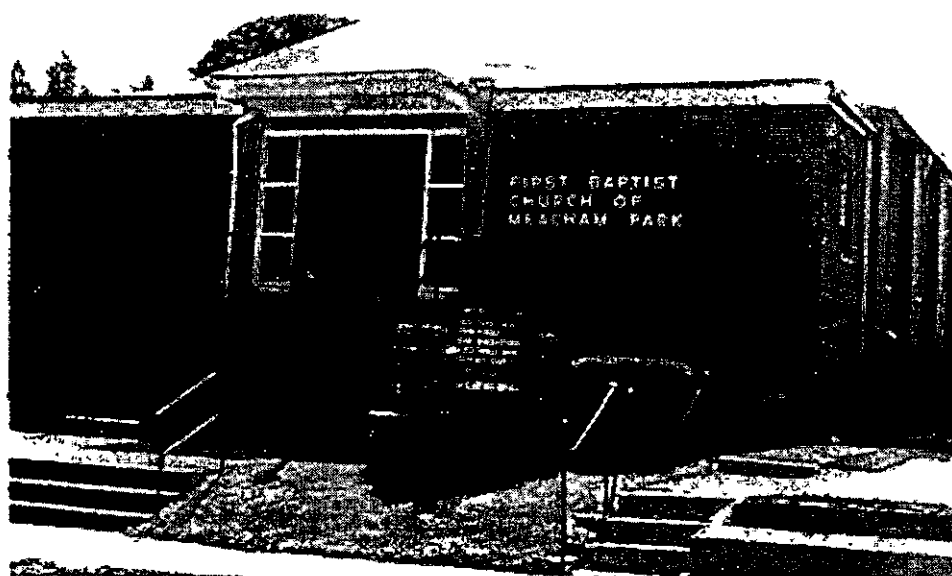
Mrs. Gladys Burton
Sewing Class



Mr. John Carter
Small Appliance Repair



Choir
First Baptist Church of Meacham Park
Rev. Buckner, Pastor
Early 1940s



First Baptist Church of Meacham Park
1990

**MEACHAM PARK
GOLDEN GLOVE BOXING TEAM
1950s**

EXPERT GLOVES PILOTS MOLDING MEACHAM PARK

If two heads are better than one, as claimed, then the Meacham Park YMCA should turn out a superlative Golden Gloves team. Because, its comparatively small squad is headed by three expert coaches—one former pro boxer and two former college champions.

The pro is head coach Les Tatum, who compiled a good record a few years back campaigning in the lightweight division. And his assistants are Bill Jones, one-time CIAA middleweight champ at West Virginia State College, and William Hayden, a former college boxing star who doubles as coach and program director of the "Y."

HALF TO SEE ACTION

About 20 Gloves hopefuls are working out at the "Y," and at the J. Milton Turner School, which serves as an extra training site on nights when the "Y" has other functions.

"We'll only enter about half of the boys in the Gloves tourney," said assistant coach Jones, "just the ones that we feel are really ready."

"Some of the best of those are Lloyd Bibbs and John Cutts, a couple of featherweights; Clarence Mitchell, who was runner-up in the 95-pound sub-novice division; Windy Bibbs, a 118-pounder, and Jimmy Abrams, a 135-pounder."

Although the rounds in Golden Gloves are one or two minutes long, depending on the division, the Meacham Park Glovers are trained to work three-minute rounds.

"We find that most young boxers need endurance more than anything else," said Jones, "and we think this gives them that little extra bit it takes to win."

PART OF BIG SHOW

Meacham Park's Glovers are a part of an army of amateur boxers who will battle in the Globe-Democrat regional Golden Gloves tourney.

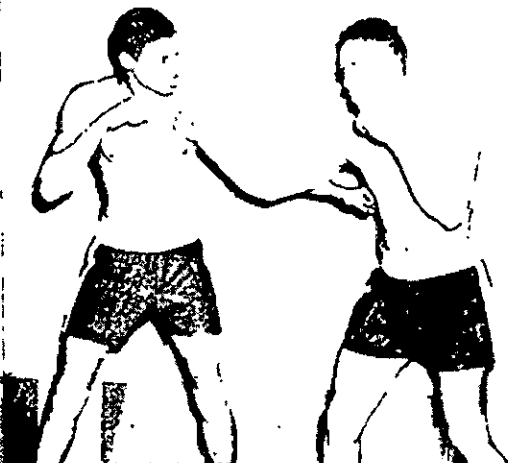
Preliminary and semi-final matches will be held at Kiel Auditorium, Feb. 3, 4, 5 with three rings in action all the time. The championships will be fought at the Arena on Feb. 13, in one ring.

Tickets are now on sale, and complete ticket information is contained in the accompanying box.



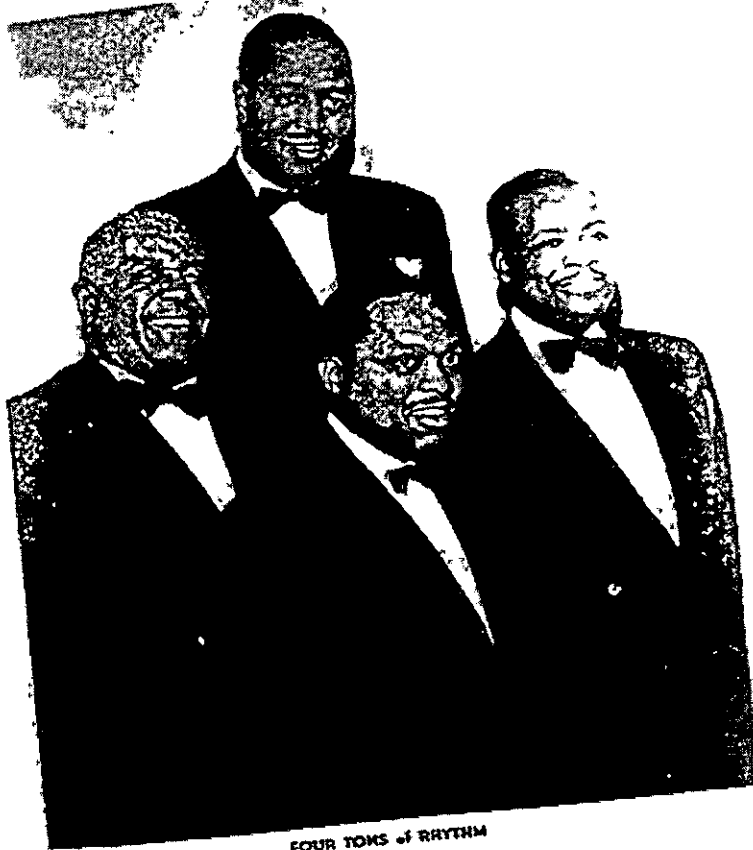
**Mr. Lloyd Bibbs, 140 lbs., &
Mr. Elroy Stanford, 160 lbs.**

**Some of the
Golden Glove Boxing Coaches
1950s**



THE REST OF THOSE PRESENT AT THE GLOVES coaches' meeting include, from left, back row: Recreation Supervisor Branch Russell, Bud Cronk, Ed Dziallik, Les Tatum, Pete Giambalvo, Ted "Pop" Myles. Center row: Larry Douglas, General Recreation Supervisor Bob Reed, Leo Forester, M-Sgt. James R. Kimber, Bill Jones, Jim Whiteside. Front row: Nelson Minter, Albritton Scott, Sam Westbrooks, Glenon Newman, Tony Anderson and Frank Megel. In all but a few cases, each of the coaches in the two pictures heads a separate local training center for Gloves boxers. There are also many outstate centers in operation

—Globe-Democrat Photo

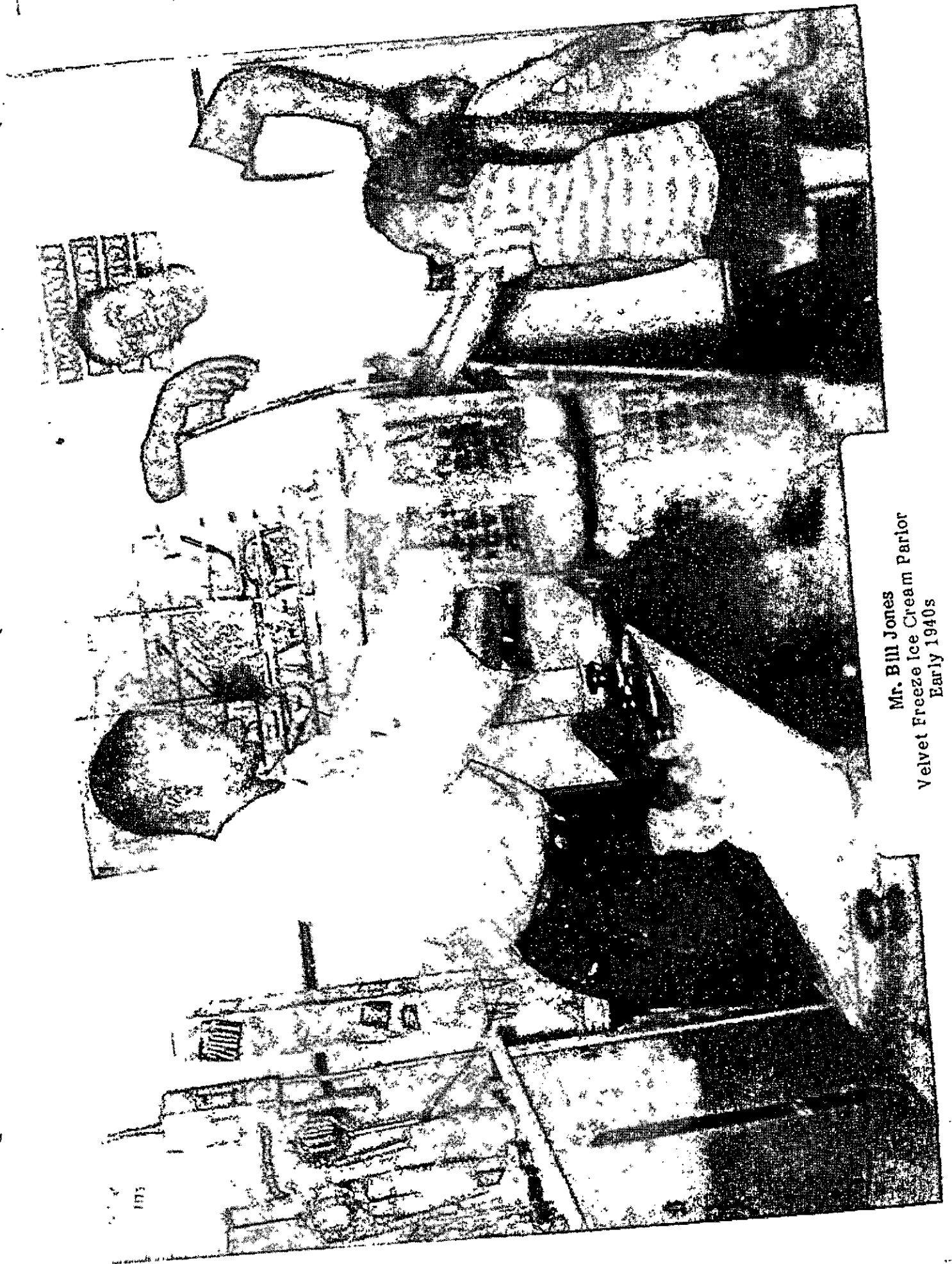


FOUR TONS of RHYTHM

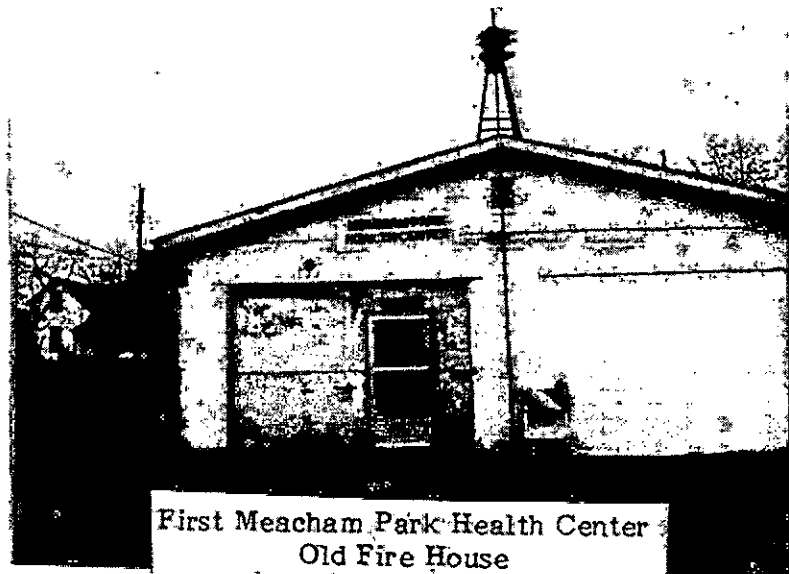
MR. LEROY HARRIS
SINGER, SAXAPHONE
PLAYER. PLAYED AND
SANG WITH BIG BANDS
OF THE 40'S & 50'S



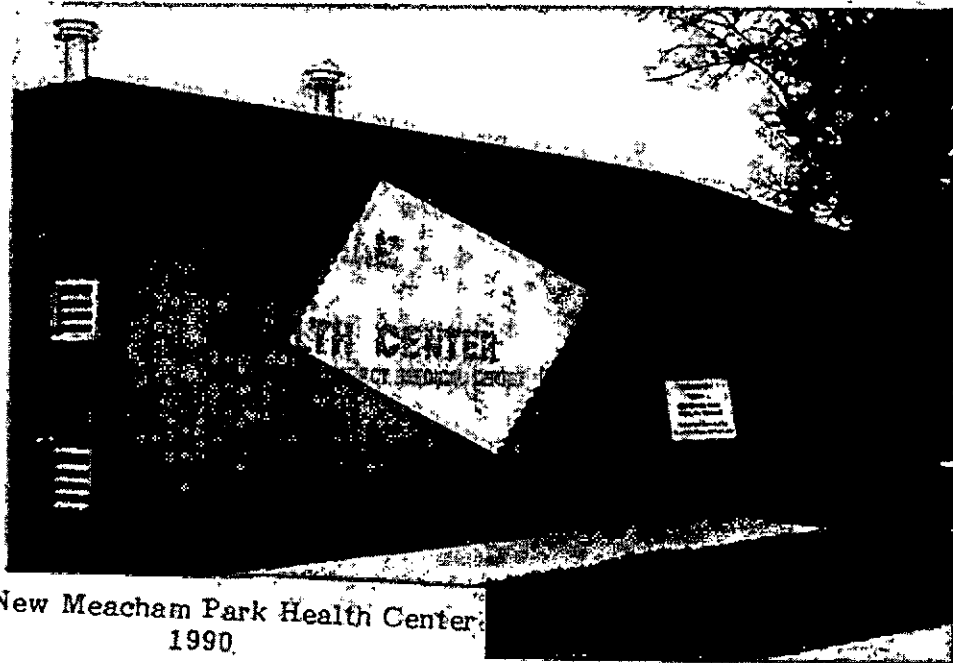
MR. LEROY HARRIS
EMPLOYMENT COUNSELOR
FOR YOUNGSTERS IN
THE POVERTY PROGRAM
OF H. D. C. 1970'S



Mr. Bill Jones
Velvet Freeze Ice Cream Parlor
Early 1940s



First Meacham Park Health Center
Old Fire House



The New Meacham Park Health Center
1990.



Jack Ming American Legion Post



Mr. Ben Davis
First Principal of Turner School
(or Meacham Park School)

PRINCIPALS, J. MILTON TURNER SCHOOL



Mrs. Winfred Brown
Third Principal of Turner School



Mr. William Young
Second Principal of Turner School



Mr. Ollie Mack
Fifth Principal of Turner School



Mr. William L. Wynn
Fourth Principal of Turner School



Miss Araminta Lavelle Smith
Assoc. Professor, School of Social Work
University of Missouri



Atkins W. Warren
Lt. Col. St. Louis Police Department
Chief of Police, Gainesville, Florida
U.S. Department of Justice



Ms. Gaynelle Evans
Journalist USA Today
Producer-World Monitor TV



MR. DAVID L. THORNTON
LAWYER 1989



Mr. Andrew Greer
Artist

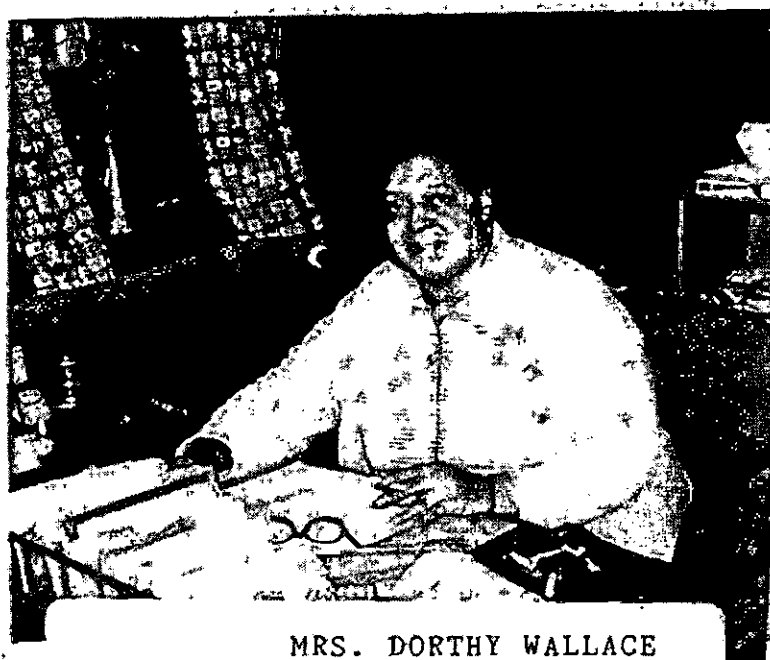


Dr. James Edward McIntosh
Director of Dental Program
Harlem Hospital. New York

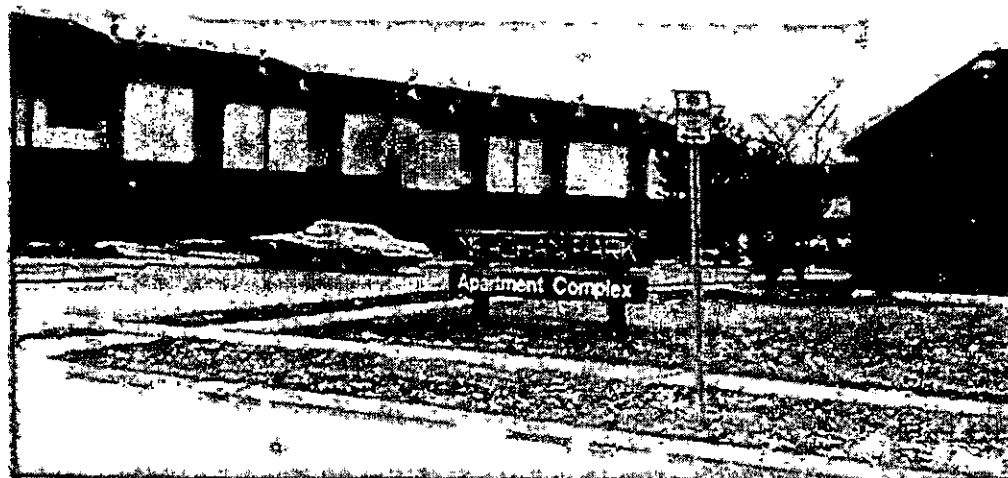


Mr. Dexter Silvers
Artist

Mrs. Lola Wallace Harris
Gives a Seminar to Young Teenagers —
Hairstyling and Charm



MRS. DORTHY WALLACE
COMMUNITY & CIVIC..
WORKER. SEWERS AND
PUBLIC HOUSING



MEACHAM PARK, BEFORE 1970



Community Water Faucet



Raw Sewage

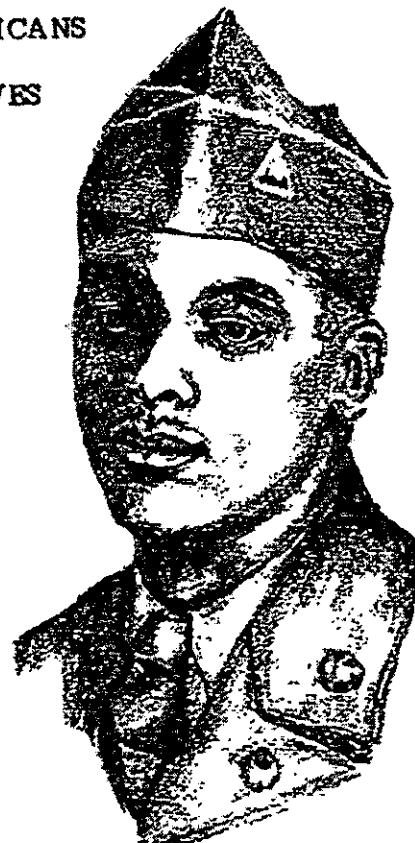


Outside Toilets,

MEACHAM PARK AMERICANS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES



P.F.C. Udell Chambers
1948-1968
Republic of Vietnam



P.F.C. Hubert Francis Cochran
1927-1951
Republic of Korea



SP-5 Robert L. Rodgers
1948-1969
Republic of Vietnam