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**The Emerging Evanston Black Community Circa 1850 – 1930**

By Morris (Dino) E. Robinson, Jr.

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By Morris (Dino) E. Robinson, Jr.

SHOREFRONT  
Evanston, Illinois

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SHOREFRONT collects, preserves and  
educates people about Black history  
on Chicago's north Shore



House on Ayars (1924)

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## INTRODUCTION

When I was first approached to write on the history of Blacks in Evanston, I assumed that at least one finished book exists for public access and researching it would be relatively easy. However, the opposite was the case.

Not being aware of local history, I assumed that the first signs of Blacks in Evanston was, more or less, during the 1930s. I was surprised and excited to find that I was off more than 70 years.

Of the many published materials on the history of Evanston, only a brief mention of the more prominent members of the Black community were mentioned, i.e.: William H. Twiggs, Butler Livery and Community Hospital. Although significant, it left a vague idea of what life was like in Evanston among the Black population. Other sources specifically relating to Blacks in Evanston often had been researched as to the "problem of the Black community".

Most of my time on weekends and after hours on weekdays, were spent gathering and identifying as many sources as possible relating to Black history in Evanston. When I found enough related material on a specific subject, an article was written and published in the Evanston Clarion summarizing much of what I researched. On many occasions, I found conflicting or incomplete information which may still need clarification.

I sincerely hope that this first effort will answer many questions, generate new questions and encourage further research for future generations to pursue. I strongly urge families to dig out your photo albums, locate old papers and souvenirs and share them with family members and the community. With such an effort, many gaps in this history could be filled and documented for all to share.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Tony Kelly and the staff of the Evanston Clarion for first urging me to pursue this research and for printing them in his paper. Kevin Leonard for digging out related information and studies in Northwestern library and archives. Anne O. Earle, Marry McWilliams and Pauline Williams for your guidance, comments and experience that you were so willing to share – all three of you have taught me much. Mark Burnette, thank you ever so much for your seemingly unlimited supply of information and leads to my hundreds of questions every Saturday throughout 1996 at the Evanston Historical Society. Genie and Steve at Evanston Photographic Studios for digging out related photographs of the Black community.

Special thanks are due to School District 202 and William Branch, Chairman, Department of History and Social Science, for taking a deep interest in this book. Your time, contribution, and effort proved effective in the publication of this book. I look forward to sharing my findings with your students. The PITCH committee for additional guidance while participating in the process of historical documentation as it relates to preservation. Rose Jourdain for encouragement, ideas and motivation for this book.

Thank you Kozetta Henderson, Delores A. Holmes, William B. Branch, Theodore Downing, V. Elaine Stevens, Hecky Powell and The J.B. Pritzker Foundation. Your generous contributions toward the production of this book will not go unnoticed.

I would also like to thank the many residents who called, met with me and shared their personal experience in Evanston which painted a lively picture of every day life. Cold dates, places and names could never alone create an inspiring community.

Thanks especially to my parents, Morris and Margo Robinson, Sr., who instilled in me at an early age the importance of history and further, the importance of documenting history. Thank you both for your love and support. Warren Robinson for being more than just a brother to me, you are also my best friend. Thanks to my wife Claudette M. Edmondson for your attentive support listening to stories, ideas and concerns any time of the day and night. To my grandparents who always wanted copies sent for them to read. Thank you all for your love, support and encouragement.

Much of the information provided in this book has come from other available published and un-published sources. A listing of all sources utilized are found in the back of this book. I thank those authors that provided information, past and present, which is so difficult to come by today.

## FOREWORD

This book is a compilation of my articles which were printed in the *Evanston Clarion* between January 1996 and December 1996. Most of the original articles were printed unchanged. In many cases, the opportunity to update and correct errors in existing information presented itself while preparing this publication.

This book should be utilized as a resource because it is an attempt to consolidate many existing published and unpublished subjects under one cover. If specific or more detailed information is needed, I urge the reader to refer to the bibliography for original sources.

## CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Throughout the decades, the following terms have been used to describe, label and classify a specific ethnic group of people of color throughout U.S. history. The order appears to be as follows; Niggra, Negro, colored, Colored, Afro-American, Negro (regarding ethnic background) or Colored (as to an individual), Nigger (during 1950s, and 1960s hate and animosity campaigns) , and Black. The current term, African-American, began its popular use in the mid-1980s.

Debate among the African-American political, social and organizational communities continues to deal with the issue of an accurate and acceptable term in which to describe an ethnic race of people of color.

For the purpose of this work, the terminology used to describe people of color in the United States will be "Black" unless a specific group name, organization or periodical uses another term. This research does not attempt to explore the arguments or explanations of "proper terms" to be used.

This book is dedicated to the entire Evanston community, but especially to the African-Americans, who's struggle, determination and contributions have helped to make the City of Evanston a wonderful place to live.



Hoveland Court "Urban Pionering" (1924)



A  
place  
we can call  
Our  
Home



"C" House at 2100 Emerson  
(1924)





1800 Grey Ave. (1924)

## THE BEGINNING

By the end of the 1920s, a well defined Black Community had developed primarily in the northern west side presently the fifth ward of Evanston now known as the fifth ward.

Having survived racial segregation and exclusion, the First World War and the depression era, this community established Black businesses, churches and organizations that were instrumental in the development of Evanstons' Black community. They helped to attract southern and Chicago Black migrants to Evanston increasing its population at a steady pace. The promise of employment in a service capacity was a major factor which

solidified a permanent and growing Black community in Evanston.

During the years from 1930 to the present, Evanston's Black community has continued to make many significant contributions, advances and produced several history-making events. At the same time there have been ongoing city and independent studies of the "problem" of the Black community.

Among the earliest settlers, these people were not necessarily searching for Evanston as a final destination, but rather brought here as part of the household family as servants.

Maria Murray, newly emancipated from

**"At least two characteristics of Evanston during the first decades after the Civil War made the city attractive to migrating blacks ... Evanston accorded blacks a degree of hospitality that was unusual ... Additionally, Evanston provided a new home for prospering Chicago whites who had left that city after the terrible fire of 1871"**

*(Kevin Leonard, 1982 "Paternalism And The Rise Of A Black Community In Evanston, Illinois: 1870-1930")*



W. Railroad and Prairie Avenue  
(1924)

slavery, was the first Black resident in Evanston, though not by choice. She was brought to Evanston as a live-in domestic with the Allen Vane Family in 1855, residing on Davis Street near the lake. Maria Murray later married George Robinson in 1868.

George Robinson was brought into Evanston employed as a house man of Major Ludlam residing in a house that was located on Grove Street and Chicago Avenue after the Civil War.

|           | Growth By %  |              | Growth By #  |              |
|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|           | <u>White</u> | <u>Black</u> | <u>White</u> | <u>Black</u> |
| 1880-1990 | 332.55       | 514.17       | 18,513       | 737          |
| 1900-1910 | 27.35        | 57.39        | 23,777       | 1,160        |
| 1910-1920 | 45.80        | 117.41       | 34,676       | 2,522        |
| 1920-1930 | 68.23        | 95.79        | 58,338       | 4,940        |

He later was one of the founders of Second Baptist Church.

Daniel Garnett and his family moved to Evanston in

1864 becoming the first Black family to reside in Evanston. Mr. Garnett, an independent shoemaker, probable freelanced in several other shoe shops in Evanston and on his own. He and his wife later became one of the founding members of Second Baptist Church.

After his honorable discharge from the 65th U.S. infantry, Corporal Andrew Scott and his wife Susan settled in Evanston in 1867 at 822



2100 Wesley Avenue "common"  
housing (1924)

Crain Street finding employment as a gardener. Andrew Scott was one of the founding members of Second Baptist Church as well as Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Though small in number, by the end of 1870, Evanston's Black population reached 43. Most of these new residence were most likely live-in domestics. However, a few were enterprising entrepreneurs such as Benjamin Butler who ran an express business. Madame H. M. Taylor operated a hair dressing salon and later, a catering service. Madame H. M. Taylor was also a founding member of Ebenezer A.M.E. Church.

## EMERGENCE OF A BLACK COMMUNITY

According to the handwritten Population and Social Statistics of 1850, Volume 1, of the 9th Census of the U.S., page 110, the first possible minority Evanston residents (then Rigeville) were

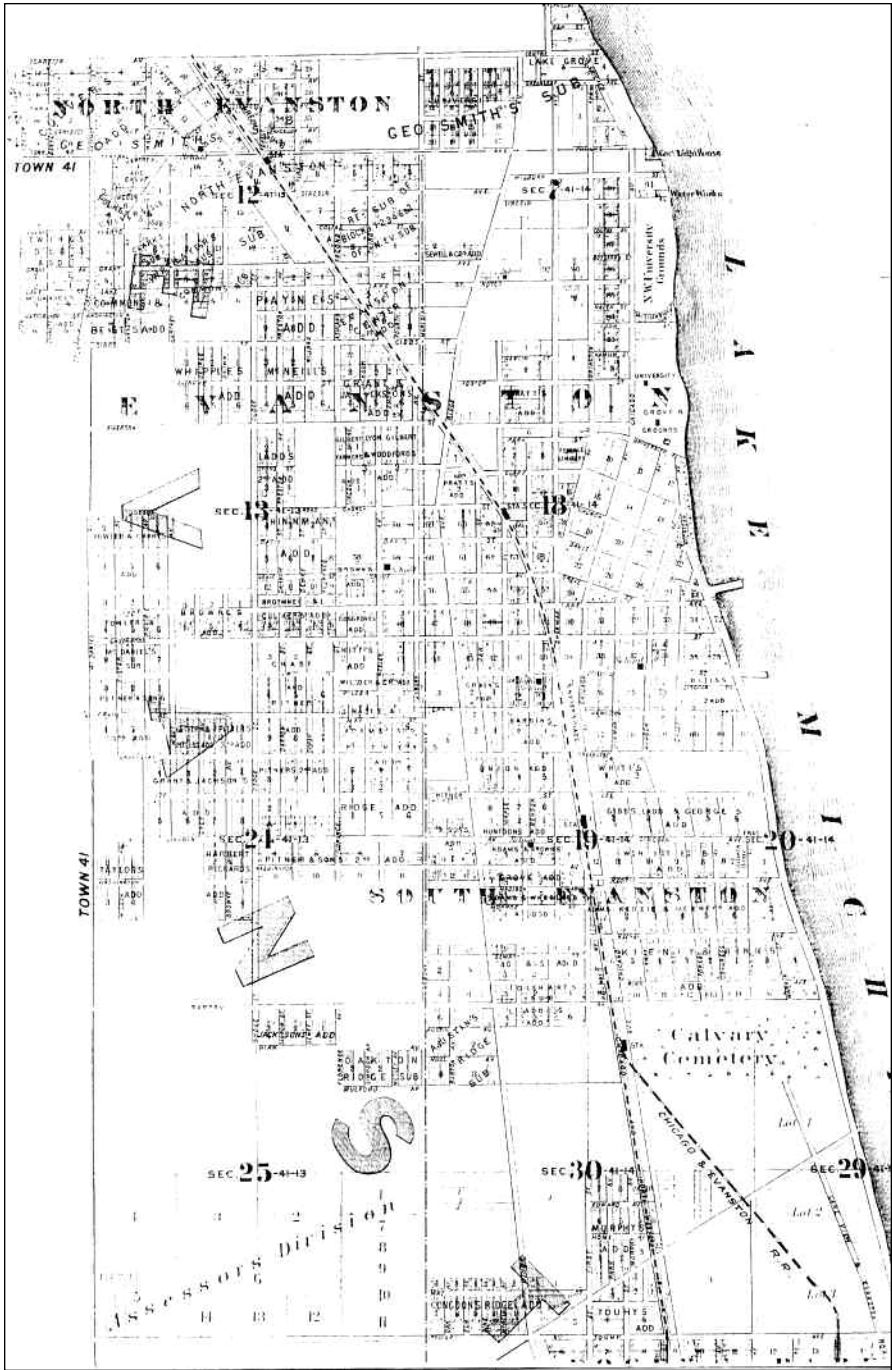


Corporal Andrew Scott posed for this photo in the 1860s in Louisiana. Move to Evanston in 1867.

five mulattos. One each from Scotland and England and three from Ireland.

Not much is known as to whether these people were enslaved, servants or unbound. According to the 1860 census, no such reference to them was made again, suggesting that they had possibly left the township area. Special attention should

be taken in reading the handwritten census data. It was only as accurate as the recorder wanted to be. In many cases, residents were marked



1883 Map of the Evanston Township.  
 Property covered as far as Devon Avenue in Chicago

white if no one was home at the time when the recorder visited. In this instance, some markings under "Race" were labeled with "M" which may have stood for mulatto.

Prior to 1860, institution of slavery in the United States largely restricted the migration of enslaved Blacks throughout the country. Other restrictions included the freedom to congregate, vote, recognition as a citizen and as a "full" human. Following the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War, the new freedom to migrate offered former slaves the opportunity to move from the hostile south and settle north. Early Evanston was one such place. Several reasons may have contributed to the attractiveness of Evanston.

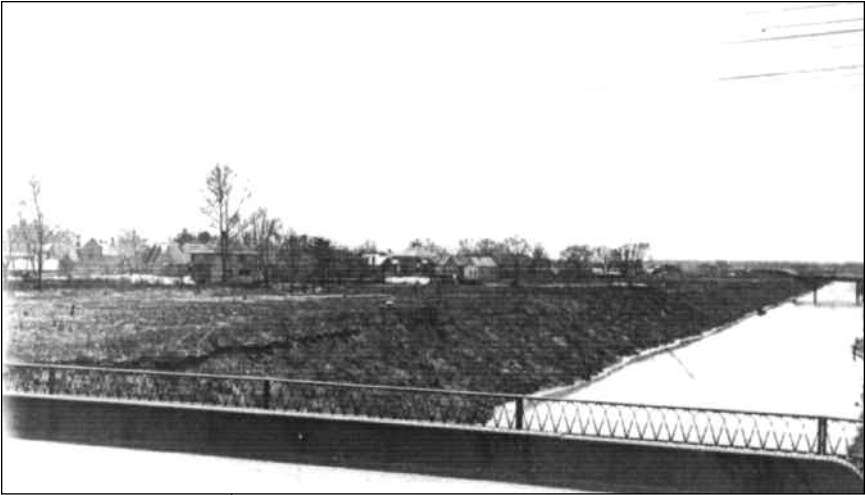
Evanston was home to many Methodist abolitionists who opposed enslavement. Through missionaries in certain areas of the south, Evanston may have been promoted with the prospects of "a better life". It is also possible that Evanston may have been a through way for the "underground railroad" for escaping enslaved

Blacks fleeing to northern states. It is possible that they passed through Evanston and on up to the home of Wealthy Buell (Mother Rudd) in Gurnee, Illinois, who was known to hide fugitive slaves fleeing northward as far as to Canada. Some of these runaways eventually came back to Evanston after the end of the Civil War, remembering the opportunities that Evanston appeared to offer.

With the growth of the northern suburbs and their affluent white residents after the Chicago fire, job opportunities opened up for early Blacks primarily as domestics, coachmen, servants or laborers. These types of jobs seemed to attract a younger group of Black residents which resulted in very few over the age of 40.

“At least two characteristics of Evanston during the first decades after the Civil War made the city attractive to migrating blacks ... Evanston accorded blacks a degree of hospitality that was unusual ... Additionally, Evanston provided a new home for prospering Chicago whites who had left that city after the terrible [Chicago] fire of 1871”(Kevin Leonard, 1982)

There have been arguments on the subject of Paternalism and its influence in a growing community. Paternalism may be described as a



Dewey, Payne, Simpson at Noyes  
(1924)

situation in which a certain community who possesses authority in influencing, regulating or controlling the needs of another group in matters affecting their life and how they choose to live it. How this may relate to Blacks in Evanston is that “permission” was needed to build churches and community centers, renting or purchasing property and how to conduct social activities from Evanstons White population.

Although, the ideal of Paternalism may have played a part in this growth, it is by far the least factor in the growth of Evanston’s stable Black community. Other factors lie within the cohesiveness of the Black family, the common goal of living



Evanston Post Office workers  
(1906)

in a safe environment and raising a family, the opportunities for employment and education. These factors are above all, the primary reasons for the existence of today's Black community, let alone, any community.

Evanston also experienced a rapid growth of Black migrants who were escaping the 1919 race riots in Chicago. Evanston, who's residents remained neutral to Chicago's social conditions, provided a safe haven for a large number of Black migrants. After the tension subsided, many decided to stay in Evanston.

**“A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individual whose presence will be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.”**

*(National Association of Real Estate Boards, Proceedings of General Sessions)*

Evanston, and the surrounding growing suburbs, were in need of domestics, servants and janitorial type services. Factories were also in need of laborers. With the growth of Black churches and opportunities for education from elementary to college, It wasn't unusual that a stable Black community developed and continued to attract many more. By 1930, Evanstons Black population comprised of 7.7% of Evanston's total population of 63,338.

Compared to today's standards, Evanston was not necessarily the "perfect" place for Black families to reside. As the times were, racial codes took precedent and as long as the Black population "knew its place", there was not a problem. Despite this, opportunities offered in Evanston were, for the most part, better than those offered in the south. Therefore, the possibility of making a better life for themselves and their children were much better.

Although service jobs were primarily the professions open to Blacks during the early part of Evanston's history, several public occupations after

the turn of the century were filled by Blacks which included two mailmen and a policeman. William H. Twiggs, then a printer, had also filled other capacities such as City Sealer, Permit Clerk and Clerk at the City Yards. There was also a grocery store, express company, a laundry, a roofing business and several restaurants that were Black owned and operated.

## HOUSING

Personal economic status was not a major factor in residential location. Most Blacks with diverse income, educational and occupational levels lived side by side. For today's standards, this is a sign of a stable community. With

the size of Evanston in early history, the Black community remained fairly dispersed, occupying land east, near the lake front, downtown and other points of the Evanston area. However, over the next 20 years after 1900, Evanston's housing practice began to change.



1000 Emerson the "Bee hive"  
(1924)



Hoveland Court Urban  
Pionering (1924)

By 1900, the majority of Blacks in Evanston lived in the area bounded by Orrington Avenue, Simpson Street, Dodge Avenue and Greenwood Street. Several may have also lived scattered in North and South Evanston. Blacks who were not considered non-live-in employees comprised approximately 75% of the total Black population in Evanston. Most lived in areas along Evanston's three railroad lines, then the least desirable areas in which to reside and in many occasions, were sold to Blacks well above actual market value.

Evanston's annexations of north and south Evanston increased its size and population. The development and use of streetcars made live-in domestics unnecessary. Thousands of middle

income whites moved to Evanston, and were in need of Black domestics, from Chicago resulting in rapid growth of a Black community.

By the mid twenties, several institutional restrictions limited Blacks' residential choices. Zoning boards restricted the number of apartment dwellings that could be built in Black areas. Undeveloped properties owned by Blacks by the lake were refused loans to build on their properties and were eventually forced to sell them. Inspectors often condemned Black-owned



1. Samuel W. Fisher  
2. Western Guinn  
3. William Terry

4. Clifford McCulloch  
5. James H. Hill  
6. John E. White

7. Rev. Carlyle F. Stewart  
8. John W. Denny

WWI Garnett Post,  
American Legion



1800 Ridge Avenue (1924)

buildings or island blocks that were located in the heart of white neighborhoods, and race restrictive clauses began appearing on the deeds of homes so that Black were systematically eliminated from certain areas in Evanston.

Furthermore, Evanston's banks generally refused financing any home for a Black resident unless possibly if it was on an "acceptable" block. Even then, the price was usually much higher than the average market value. Backed by the Real Estate Board's Code of Ethics, such as on adopted at the seventeenth convention in 1924, Black families were systematically moved west.

“A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individual whose presence will be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.” (National Association of Real Estate Boards, Proceedings of General Sessions)

By 1930, Evanston’s Black population reached 4,938 and district seven of the fifth ward was home to 79.8% of Black residents. These real estate clauses were the subject of protest and demonstrations during the 1960s in Evanston, which eventually led to the Open Housing policy.

## **GENERAL COMMUNITY**

Within the period between 1900 and 1930, Evanston experienced a rapid growth of African-Americans who generally became active in social activities. Since a large percentage of Blacks lived in one area of Evanston by 1920, it was easy for a viable cultural and social community to grow.

Foster School was a fast-growing predominately Black school offering vocational



North on Asbury at Emerson  
(1924)

studies. Although predominately White when Foster School first opened in 1905, by 1945 Foster School was 99% Black. It wasn't until the 1940 when a number of Black instructors were teaching at Foster. Around 1920, Evanston Township High School had around 100 Black students out of a total of 1,640 students. Twenty of the Black students were male. In general, the school systems in Evanston discouraged Black students – especially males – from attending. Although records were generally not kept of Black students at Northwestern University, many were enrolled especially in the music school.

Several clubs and organizations were active



North on West Railroad  
(Greenbay) at Emerson (1924)

in Evanston's Black community and played an important part in race relations with Whites. This may have provided opportunities where formal discussions and concerns among both races were discussed. Women's groups such as the Matilda Dunbar Club, Iroquois League and Julia Gaston Club were social and charitable organizations. Men's clubs included the Odd Fellows, Masons, Knights of Pythias and the Old Settlers Association. Ebenezer A.M.E. Church set up the first Black Boy Scout troop in the United States in 1912. The Emerson Street YMCA (a separate Y facility for Blacks that opened in 1914) provided room and board, activities, a place for meetings, entertainment and sports for

the community. The Emerson Street Y served as the Black community center. The three largest churches, Ebenezer A.M.E., Second Baptist and Mt. Zion, together had a total membership of roughly 2,000 members by the 1920s.

Since Evanston and St. Francis Hospitals did not admit Blacks except in special circumstances, two Black physicians, Dr. Isabella Garnett and Dr. Arthur Butler ran the Evanston Sanitarium at 1918 Asbury Avenue servicing the Black community and probably most of the North Shore area.

The largest employer of Blacks before 1930 was the American Steel and Tube Company, the only large industrial plant in Evanston at that time. African-American businesses included the Masons Restaurant near the Davis St. "L" station, Evanston Home Investment Co., a drug store (with a pool room in the basement), the Lee Fireproof Hotel on Asbury Avenue, three delicatessens, and several barber shops. There was also a laundry employing 20 to 30 people, and a taxi, trucking and express business employing more than 100 people. There were two Black police officers, two



Butler Cab (1915)

tailors, two undertakers and one printer. Professionals included three physicians, three dentists and one lawyer.

There were three newspapers circulating in Evanston's Black community prior to the 1930s. The *Evanston Weekly* and two Chicago newspapers, the *Defender* and the *Whip* kept Black Evanstonians abreast of the greater Black community in Chicago.

## BUSINESSES

Despite racial barriers, Evanston's early Black community proved resourceful in self employment. These early entrepreneurs not only carved out a niche for themselves providing services for Evanston's community, but also gave back to their own community.

Around 1880, Madame H. M. Taylor started a hairdressing salon on Davis Street in downtown Evanston, where she offered "hairdressing, wigs,

*MAD. H. M. TAYLOR,*  
**HAIR DRESSER,**  
And Manufacturer and Dealer in all Kinds of  
**HAIR GOODS.**  
Wigs, Waves, Switches, Curls, Coquettes, Frizettes, etc. Will  
Attend Ladies at their Residence.  
*SOUTH SIDE DAVIS STREET, West of Fountain, Up stairs.*

waves, switches, curls, coquettes, frizettes, etc." By 1895, she seemed to change her business to

food catering. Madame Taylor was also instrumental in acquiring finances and the first pastor of Ebenezer A.M.E. Church.

Henry Butler came to Evanston in 1882. After working as a coachman for nearly ten years, he started a Hansom Cab business from his home at 327 Dempster Street in 1891. By 1898, Mr. Butler moved his offices, livery and boarding stables to 1719 Maple Ave. By 1906, he had

two livery barns with about 70 teams, employed 40 men, office staff of four women, a blacksmith and a repair shop. At the height of his career, he owned more than two hundred vehicles and employed approximately 50 drivers.

William H. Twiggs opened a printing shop in 1895 at 1573 Sherman Avenue. A year later, he moved his business to 1619 Sherman Avenue. where he published the short-lived *Afro-American Budget*, Evanston's first Black periodical, in 1889. He later printed the *Reporter and Directory* in 1909, also short-lived. His print shop was one of the first buildings to be wired for electricity. Eventually he moved his shop to 1315 Emerson St. After several years of operation, his print shop burnt down and no copies of his periodicals survive today except for a couple of issues of the *Reporter and Directory*. His printing press and the few copies of the *Reporter* is now stored at the Evanston Historical Society. Mr. Twiggs was also one of the founders of Ebenezer church.

There were other business owners who may

have worked out of their homes or freelanced their service with other companies. Unfortunately, limited information restricts specifics. Some of these people include Mr. Daniel Garnett, who either operated a shoe repair shop or worked with other shoemakers in Evanston. Ms. Laura Owens was a local dressmaker.



Ebenezer A.M.E. Church  
Sunday School (1920)

## BLACK CHURCHES

Blacks and newly freed slave population in the United States could not legally congregate for religious purposes without a white pastor until after the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. Blacks who were allowed into White churches were limited to the balcony and had no voice in church business.

This too was the case in Evanston. However by 1870, with a growing population, Whites were less tolerant and the Evanston Black community had enough.

On October 30, 1882, Ebenezer A.M.E. Church became the first recognized Black church in Evanston. Reverend Hann was their first pastor, and with 12 members, they began holding formal meetings in Union Hall on Davis Street. In 1883, Ebenezer was built on Benson Avenue between Clark and (now) University Place and dedicated July 22, 1883.

Interestingly, Ebenezer fell victim to two fires. The first occurred some time around 1907. It is said that the remains of the building was dynamited by an unknown source. However, on March 22, 1909 Ebenezer was rebuilt at its present location at



Original Second Baptist Church



Second Baptist Church at  
1817 Benson (1924)

1109 Emerson Street. The second fire occurred in 1980 and the church was refurbished in 1982. Ebenezer A.M.E. church held an abundance of historical information of early Evanston. Unfortunately, both of these fires destroyed practically all of their existing documents.

The Black members of the First Baptist Church of Evanston, for many reasons, requested their letters of dismissal in November 8, 1882. Granted on November 15, The Second Baptist Church became the second established Black church in Evanston. Founded by ten Black residents, the church was located at 1717 Benson Avenue, where it remains today, and the first pastor was Richard DeBaptise. The original building was an old school, which had several later additions. This building was destroyed by fire. Rebuilt in 1912 at the same location, Second Baptist was rededicated in 1915 and has changed little since.

Mount Zion Baptist church was formed in 1894 and became the third Black church in



Mount Zion Baptist Church at  
1100 Clark St. (1924)

Evanston. Located at 1113 Clark Street, Mount Zion was founded by several members of the Second Baptist Church. These early members left Second Baptist because of First Baptist's alleged control or influence over Second Baptist. These members wanted a clean break from White churches. Early meetings were held in Liberty Hall on Davis Street until Mount Zion moved into their first building in 1904.

Although these dates were the official recognition of these congregations, for a time prior to the dates, these members met in homes, providing services and working out the details for official recognition.

Other churches established before 1930 included New Hope C.M.E. in 1913; St. Andrew's Episcopal in 1921; Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1926; and Church of God in Christ (on Hoveland Ct.) in 1926. Others included Church of God in Christ (on Ashland), Church of God, First Church Seventh Day Adventists, Sherman M.E. Church, Springfield Baptist Church and Tabernacle Baptist Church.

Currently, there are around 26 Black Churches that lie within the boundaries of the present day Fifth ward. All of these churches continue to make great strides in preserving history, strengthening bonds, creating new friendships, offering scholarships, and encouraging the development of social and fraternal organizations among all residents in Evanston today.



Emerson Street YMCA  
(1929)

## EMERSON STREET YMCA

Within a rapidly growing Black population, there was growing concern about the recreation for younger Black residents in the area. One of Evanston's "problem" addressed during the first half of the 1900s concerned some 700 under-supervised Black boys. This concern is exemplified in an early YMCA pamphlet.

"Already, these [Black] boys are contributing to 50% of Evanston's delinquency problem, and, out of all proportions to their numbers, to the problem of the Associated Charities. They are found to be somewhat troublesome in the schools, and the matter of their conduct on the streets is often a thing of which we are not proud."

**“Already, these boys are contributing to 50% to Evanston’s delinquency problem, and, out of all proportions to their numbers, to the problem of the Associated Charities. They are found to be somewhat troublesome in the schools, and the matter of their conduct on the streets is often a thing of which we are not proud.”**

There seemed to be a general consensus in Evanston’s community concerning the lack of a constructive place where young men could learn, become members of community organizations and grow to become productive members of society. However, this consensus only came to light after James R. Talley, a Hampton Institute graduate, came to Evanston c.1907 and asked to participate in YMCA activities. He was denied entry because he was Black. Undeterred, Talley, with other local community leaders, organized youth together for organized activities similar to the YMCA.

In 1909, Dr. D. J. Harris and Mr. J. E. Scott reengaged Mr. Talley and initiated a plan that would fill this need. Over the course of several years, committees were formed chaired by leading business and religious leaders in the Black community, laying the foundation of the YMCA. Talley became its first Executive Secretary with specific charge of overseeing the daily operation of a future segregated YMCA facility.

In 1912, the steering committee for the

Emerson Street YMCA, Dr. W. F. Garnett, A. P. Perry and D. W. Richardson, organized four teams headed by William. H. Twiggs, Jerry Reed, T. M. Norris and J. E. Priestly to raise funds to start building the Emerson Street YMCA. The building cost \$23,000 to complete and the doors opened at 1014 Emerson Street to the Black residents in July, 1914.

Finding that the institution was too small to service the entire Black community estimated then at 2,000, a campaign continued for the expansion of the Emerson Street YMCA which was completed in 1929. Several pieces of YMCA literature pushed that the Black population in Evanston reached 9,000 in the late 1920s. However, according to the 1930 census, just under 5,000 Blacks were documented as living in Evanston. It is possible that the Emerson Street YMCA serviced Evanston as well as the other black communities in the surrounding suburbs including what is now Rogers Park in Chicago.

The Emerson Street YMCA offered a wide variety of services. Black students from

Northwestern and Evanston Township High School used these facilities for physical education and sports since Blacks were prohibited from the schools their facilities. Clubs, societies and organizations held meetings and formal banquets there. Several Black Northwestern Students often roomed at the "Y" since Northwestern did not permit Blacks to live in campus dormitories. Other important services offered by the "Y" were counseling, classes and camping trips at Camp Wabash. The "Y" provided a safe place for boys between the ages of 12-17 to have fun, learn and socialize.

The Emerson Street YMCA continued to serve the Black community until 1969 when the Grove Street YMCA desegregated its facilities. Finding no need for two YMCA's in Evanston, the Emerson Street "Y" soon closed its doors. Several attempts were made to preserve the building, the last when it was leased out to the religious sect of the Hare Krishna. In 1980, the Emerson Street YMCA was demolished to make room for one of the now standing Evanston Research Park buildings on the corner of Maple and Emerson.



Foster Street School class  
photo (1914)

## FOSTER SCHOOL

Between 1905 and 1967, Foster School provided all younger Black generations with education and by the 1940s, was the only place where Black students were encouraged to attend and where Black teachers could find employment. This was a result of Evanston's planned segregated school system.

Before the consolidated primary School District 65, there were two districts. District 75 serviced the northern part of Evanston (north of Church Street) and District 76 serviced the southern part of Evanston. By 1930, District 75 included Haven upper, Noyes, Lower Haven

(Kingsley), Willard, Orrington, Lincolnwood, Dewey, College Hill, Miller and Foster. Foster was the only kindergarten through eight grade school in that area. District 76 included Central, Lincoln, Oakton, Washington and Nichols.

Evanston's plan to segregate the Black community resulted in, and conveniently made, a segregated school. By the end of 1930, most Black residents resided in the Fifth Ward of Evanston and Foster school was centrally located in that ward. To ensure that Black students and not White student attended Foster School, boundary lines which determined the school zone for Foster, were drawn down the middle of major streets and through alleys.

"... when a street on the border of a school district has noticeably changes in racial composition, a redistricting is made, presumably for the benefit of both races. If a street bounding the Foster district becomes solidly colored in population, it is placed entirely in the Foster district..." (Alice Orian Rood. "Negroes in School District 75, Evanston, Illinois", 1926)

The few White students who may have been caught within the boundary were allowed to attend other District 75 schools. Other Black students living outside the Fifth Ward and able to

attend closer schools, were often “persuaded” to attend Foster. Although the majority of the students who attended Foster before World War I were white, by 1928, 85% of the students were Black. By 1945, Foster had a 99% Black student body. A “testing-out” program provided some Black students to attend other schools in Evanston. The test-out program enabled Black students who scored above a certain percentage to attend other predominately White schools.

Believed to have been the first Black public school teacher (and the only Black teacher in either District 75 or 76) at Foster, Mr. Charles Bouyer was employed to help “keep Black students in line”. However, later he fulfilled the role as a physical education instructor during the 1930s.

As a response to much protest from the Black community, between 1930 and 1950, Black teachers were hired to teach at Foster School. These teachers included Grace Boyd, Willa Brown, Mary Lou Sullivan, Wendell Lanton, Dorothy Brown, Patsy Sloan, Jean Hunter, Alice Robinson, Vera Brownlee, Eddie Lee Sutton, Carolyn White Hunter,

**“... when a street on the border of a school district has noticeable changes in racial composition, a redistricting is made, presumably for the benefit of both races. If a street bounding the Foster district becomes solidly colored in population, it is placed entirely in the Foster district...”**  
*(Alice Orian Road. Negroes in School District 75, Evanston, Illinois, 1926)*

Lorraine Morton, Mabel Williams, Virginia Dews, Doris Williams and Joseph Hill.

Most of these teachers went on to higher positions. Mr. Hill later became the first Black Superintendent of School District 65 in 1960. Mrs. Lorraine Morton held several positions in different Evanston area schools including Principal of Haven Middle School. Mrs. Morton is the current Mayor of Evanston. Eddie Lee Sutton established the Jean-Del Publishing Company in 1969 in order to publish her own successful educational materials. She eventually closed that operation only to later reactivate it under a new name Sutton and Sutton Publisher, Inc.

On October 30, 1958, a serious fire destroyed most of Foster School with estimated damages at roughly \$500,000. The north wing of the building was usable after repair and a new south wing was built and dedicated in December, 1960. In 1967, when School District 65 was desegregated, Foster School became the location for an experimental laboratory school designed to draw students from all over the city. The school was renamed the



Isabella M. Garnett (Standing second from right) at Provident Hospital Nursing Class (1895)

Martin Luther King, Jr. Experimental Laboratory School. By 1979, the program was relocated to the former Skiles Middle School resulting in the closing of Foster School.

In 1985, after six years of vacancy, Family Focus/Our Place occupied Foster School where it still serves the Evanston community today. Several local clubs and organizations often use the facility as well for a variety of programs.

## **EVANSTON BLACK HOSPITALS**

Since Evanston and St. Francis Hospitals did not admit Blacks, The Evanston Sanitarium provided medical attention to the surrounding



Evanston Sanitarium at  
1914-16 Asbury Avenue

community for over 60 years. Eventually evolving to Community Hospital of Evanston, the Evanston Sanitarium provided health care for many Blacks along Chicago's North Shore from 1914 to 1980.

In 1914 Dr. Isabella Maude Garnett (1872-1948) and Dr. Arthur DeLyons Butler (1879-1924) opened the Evanston Sanitarium in a house located at 1918 Asbury Avenue. Dr. Butler was the staff surgeon and Dr. Garnett ran a general practice, delivering babies, and administering anesthesia. The Evanston Sanitarium and Training School was incorporated in 1918 and had a biracial board of directors. After Dr. Butler died in



1924, Dr. Garnett continued to operate the Evanston Sanitarium under the new name Butler Memorial Hospital.

Two years later, the biracial Booker T. Washington Hospital Association was formed to build a new hospital. In the associations by-laws in 1929, it stated that "No distinction shall be made on account of race, religion, or nationality, either as to officers, patients, attending physicians, interns, nurses, or other employees of the corporation." On December 8, 1930, Community Hospital of Evanston opened an 18-bed hospital in the building later called Penn House.

Dr. A. Rudolph Penn donated his house to Community Hospital known as The Penn House.



Community Hospital on Brown Avenue now named the Hill Arboretum Apartments

**“No distinction shall be made on account of race, religion, or nationality, either as to officers, patients, attending physicians, interns, nurses, or other employees of the corporation.”**  
*(1929 by-laws of the Booker T. Washington Hospital Association.)*

Elizabeth Webb Hill (1898-1978) organized the Woman’s Auxiliary in 1939. In 1943, Dr. Hill became the first African-American woman hospital chief of staff in Illinois. The same year, Community Hospital of Evanston received provisional accreditation pending construction of a new hospital building and Dr. Hill headed the fund-raising drive.

In 1950, Community Hospital of Evanston was awarded a matching grant under the Hill-Burton Act which saved the dream of opening a new larger hospital. Supporters of Community Hospital began to raise funds and lease land along the North Shore Channel next to the Penn House for the building of the new facility. The new 56-bed

hospital was dedicated on October 5, 1952. This proved to be an example that cooperation between people of different backgrounds can work. By 1954, Community Hospital of Evanston obtained full accreditation.

During that same year, Dr. Hill warned Community Hospital's board of directors that many Blacks were choosing Evanston's formerly white hospitals, which had begun to admit Black patients. In attempts to attract Black patients and retain Black physicians, the hospital upgraded its programs and facilities in the 1960s. However young Black physicians were unwilling to have their primary affiliation with a small hospital like Community and opted for larger affiliations such as Evanston and St. Francis. Black patients also preferred to reside at the larger hospitals.

In 1973, talks opened among Evanston Hospital, Northwestern University Medical School and Community Hospital of Evanston in an effort to insure the survival of Community Hospital. As a result, all the doctors at Community and Evanston hospitals received full staff exchange privileges.

However, because of internal problems, the tripartite agreement fell apart. After 1975, most doctors formerly associated with Community Hospital had left.

Evanston Hospital eventually bought the closed Community Hospital. In 1986, after local residents rejected various proposed uses for the facility, Over The Rainbow Association acquired the buildings. The one-story hospital building was converted to the Elizabeth W. Hill Arboretum Apartments, which provide integrated housing for the severely physically disabled. The Penn House, vacant for a decade, was demolished for a parking lot. In 1992 despite a campaign and protest to try to save the building.

**"Lifting As We Climb."**  
*(Iroquois League Motto)*



Mrs. Cora L. Watson

### **THE IROQUOIS LEAGUE, INC.**

Between 1900 and 1930, Evanston's growing affluent population had a demand for young working domestics. This opportunity offered many migrating Blacks ample opportunity to find work. After World War I, many young



Iroquois League home on  
Garnett

women came north looking for work in private homes. Many of them did not have a place to stay on their days off or on holidays. Realizing the need for a boarding home, a group of women began to lay the foundation of the Iroquois League.

Under the leadership of Mrs. Eva Rouse, a small group of women founded the Iroquois League in 1917 and it was incorporated in 1918. Mrs. Rouse held the position as the League's first President. The Iroquois League's main purpose was to provide a safe, supervised and economical home for Black working girls.

**“If I have a Legacy  
to leave my Club,  
it is my philosophy  
of living and serving.  
I have tried to do  
my best. I pray that  
my philosophy  
may be helpful to  
those who share  
my vision of a  
World of Peace,  
Progress,  
Brotherhood, and  
Love. The greatest  
is Love.”**  
*(Mrs. Cora L. Watson,  
President, Iroquois  
League, Inc., 1968)*

The League provided a place where these girls could relax and make friends. Generally to have some type of home life on their days off and over the weekends.

During World War I, The League spent most of the time involved in several volunteer related capacities to aid in the war. By 1921, The League purchased a building at 1125 Ayars (now Garnett Place) on the corner of Ridge Avenue. In 1924, the home was formally opened, dedicated to providing a home for fifteen girls away from home.

By 1926, the Iroquois League was at risk of losing the house. The League had a hard time meeting the mortgage payments and other debts as well as a need for a new furnace and other general property maintenance.

In 1926, Cora L. Watson was elected as the president. With the help of other prominent civic leaders in Evanston, she was able to raise enough funds to get a new furnace, upgrade the building, and pay past bills and payroll. The greatest accomplishment was paying the past mortgage in

full by 1929 thus insuring the continuance of the Iroquois League. And additional event that ensured the existence of the League was achieving a real estate tax exempt status in 1930. The Iroquois League was then renamed the North Shore Community House.

With a new lease on life, the home expanded its services by providing classes for children and adults. Religious services were also held as well as civic club meetings, parties, bible study school classes and other community activities.

In its continued growth, an annex to the home was made in 1956 enabling the League to provide room for a total of 17 young women.

In 1973, the house was bought by Ms. Anna Watson, Cora Watson's daughter, who operated it on a private basis. Mrs. Cora Watson passed away in 1982 at the age of 107. She held the position as president between 1926 to 1931 and again in 1951. One of the founding members of the Iroquois League, she helped to provided services for young women for over a century.

## ALDERMAN EDWIN B. JOURDAIN, JR.



Edwin B. Jourdain, Jr.

During the mid 1920s, Edwin B. Jourdain, Jr. came to Evanston from New Bedford, Massachusetts to continue his education at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism. During this time, he also worked as a reporter for the *Chicago Bee* and *Chicago Whip*. He later became the managing

editor of the *Chicago Defender* and by 1931 he started his own publication the *North Shore Guide*.

In 1929, Mr. Jourdain, Jr. organized and sponsored the first Black college football games between Tuskegee and Wilberforce College in Soldier Field. He was also the first Black manager of the Balaban and Katz Theaters as well as the Regal Theater in Chicago.

Overlapping his journalistic career, he ran for public office and won in 1931. With campaign help from civil rights leader Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and support from students and staff at Northwestern and from Evanston's Black population, he was

elected as the Fifth Ward Alderman, thus attaining the recognition as the first Black Alderman in Evanston.

Controversy surrounded his election with accusations of voter fraud. However, after a recount in 1932, he maintained his seat with a landslide victory. Mr. Jourdain, Jr. held this seat as Alderman until 1946. While in this position, he took an active role for the inclusion of the Fifth Wards voice.

Mr. Jourdain, Jr. served as a member of the city's Finance Committee, Public Buildings Committee and chairman of the Building Committee. His main platform was fighting segregation in Evanston. During the 1930s, he organized the first sit-ins in Evanston's theaters, restaurants and public beaches that refused to admit Blacks. He successfully fought desegregation of Northwestern University dorms. He also won the fight to have Black school teachers integrated into Evanston's school district.

In 1943, while he served as Illinois' first Black assistant superintendent for public education, Mr.

**“A number of our people in Evanston who are graduates of Chicago Normal College, Northwestern University and the University of Michigan are forced to find employment as unskilled workers. Colored people make up one-sixth of Evanston’s population and pay their share of taxes. If...qualified for the work, they should be extended the opportunity for following their chosen profession in the Evanston School system.”**

*(E.B. Jourdain's plea to the board in 1934)*

Jourdain, Jr. led the fight for desegregation and equal pay for Black teachers in state schools. Mr. Jourdain was also elected as state director for the NAACP chapter in Illinois in 1945.

In honor of Edwin B. Jourdain, Jr., the city of Evanston renamed Foster Community Center the Fleetwood-Jourdain Community Center in 1982. Mr. Homer Fleetwood was the former director of Foster Community Center and Mr. Edwin B. Jourdain, Jr., who was instrumental in the establishment of the recreation complex.

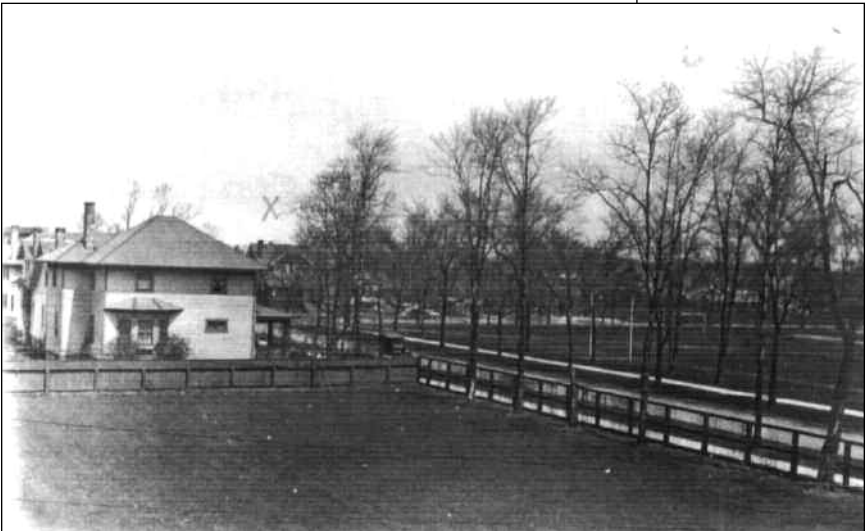
## **THE COLORED BOY SCOUTS**

During the latter part of 1911, Mr. H. A. Edmunds organized and trained a group of 30 interested Black youths in a variety of drilling activities similar to that of the Boy Scouts. Their unified efforts were all for the goal of becoming a member of the Boy Scouts of America.

Although there were other Evanston Troops at that time, none apparently accepted Blacks into their units. Probable explanations for this may be that the troops were formed through various

churches and that the standard practice then was to provide separate facilities and activities between the Black and White community.

An application was filed around January of 1912 to the executive council of Boy Scouts of America. By May 3, 1912, H. A. Edmunds and his group of young men were accepted into the organization, becoming the first Colored Boy Scout Troop in the United States. Tentatively known as Troop number three, their number was later changed to Troop number seven when the charter was signed on May 6, 1912, by President Taft, ex-President Roosevelt, Mr. E. T. Seton and Mr. James



N-E from Foster School (1924)



N-W from Foster School  
(1924)

E. West. Mr. H. A. Edmunds was appointed as Scout Master.

Troop seven engaged in several camping expeditions that summer, at least one of which involved a trip to Covinton's Grove, where they were joined by Chicago Troop 112 (Whether Troop 112 was Black or white is unknown).

Originally, Troop Seven had been associated with Ebenezer A.M.E. Church. However, the Ebenezer fire in 1980 destroyed all records of Troop sevens association with the church except for the mention in one of Ebenezer's souvenir program. According to a series of announcements in the 1912 Chicago Defenders, after the initial

charter was signed, a seemingly gradual lack of community support and encouragement met with some efforts from dedicated individuals and other Black churches to keep Troop Seven active. By August, 1912, no more mention of Troop Seven was made. The only other mention of a Black Boy Scout Troop was made in 1927 in a report made by the Evanston Bureau of Recreation stating "Boy Scouts (inactive)".

Other Black troops were formed in Evanston around the 1940s through Foster School and Foster Community Center. The Boy Scout Troops in Evanston were integrated during the later part of the 1940s.



Looking North east on Emerson and Asbury Avenue (1924)

## IN CLOSING

In this book, I have attempted to bring together from existing sources, proof of a established and productive Black community. Looking at tourism brochures from the past decades, brief mention of Evanston's Black community, much less any ethnic community, was ever made.

By 1930, Evanston's Black community has contributed and was involved in many aspects towards the growth and development of Evanston. Private practices to public offices, Black businesses and political leaders paved ways for future generations to follow. Social groups, religious institutions and established organizations continue to maintain the standards of social conduct and the adherence of family values.

Much more work is needed to uncover hard to find information that is stored in family albums, storage attics and in fond memories. I truly hope that this work brings discussion and new discoveries to help fill the many gaps of this almost forgotten history.



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p.15, Corporal Andrew Scott, circa 1860s.

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p.16, 1883 map of Evanston, John Culver Real Estate, 608 Davis St.

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p.34, Original Second Baptist Church building from souvenir program.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 1995, Morris (Dino) Robinson, Jr answered a challenge to write an article on Evanston's local African American community. This opportunity opened the door to what became his advocacy – the organization of Shorefront in 1999 and its formal establishment in 2002 as a nonprofit historical organization that collects, preserves, and educates people about Black history in Chicago's suburban North Shore. Dino, within Shorefront, has written three books, produces a 10-year-old quarterly journal, hosted dozens of lectures and has assembled several subject-specific exhibits on this important community.

Dino is the past Board President of the Evanston History Center, a founding member of Organization of Black Designers, Chicago chapter (now Osmosis) and served board posts within several Evanston, educational and civic organizations. He is the recipient of several awards including: Loyola Melon Award (1989), Blackbook Magazine "Leaders of Tomorrow Award" (1989), The Community Leadership Association "Distinguished Leadership Award" (2002), Sappi "Ideas that Matter" (2004) and the Mayors Award for the Arts (2008). He has appeared on WTTW Chicago Tonight, Channel 7, local Cable Access TV, Chicago Tribune Magazine, The Chicago Reader and various local North Shore Publications.