

An Introduction to Loudoun County's African American Communities

In the post-emancipation years, African Americans celebrated their freedom and worked hard to better their lives. They had few material possessions to start, but drew upon considerable spiritual, personal, and communal resources. Together, they created, in the words of an African American folk saying, "a way out of no way." They shared what they had and invested tremendous energy in family, home, work, education, worship, and fellowship. The Loudoun County landscape reflects their industry and achievement in the homes, churches, schools, fraternal lodges, and settlements they built, many of which survive today. For a century or more, these communities nurtured and sustained their members and helped them attain the better life they sought.

Family and Fellowship

Because of the odds they faced, African Americans particularly valued kinship and friendship. During slavery, family members often experienced the pain of separation. Some lived in different households, others were sold away. Free people of color, even those who acquired their own property, often had a spouse in slavery. If the mother was in bondage, so, legally, were her children. Whether enslaved or not, extended kin and friends gave support. After the Civil War and general emancipation in 1865, African Americans united their families and helped one another through the hardships and possibilities of change. The bonds of race and friendship were reinforced as people of color established formal institutions such as churches, schools, and mutual aid societies. Black Codes imposed during Reconstruction and Jim Crow laws enacted in the 1890s, which limited the opportunities and mobility of African Americans, reinforced black institutions by making them more necessary.

Church

Before emancipation, some people of color were members of denominational churches, but white prejudice relegated them to the balconies and barred them from official leadership positions. Laws banned them from meeting for worship on their own, though many gathered in secret for prayer and praise. After emancipation, African Americans vigorously established their own institutions; thirty-one in Loudoun prior to 1900. These churches were centers of community life, linked in a network that encompassed Loudoun and surrounding counties, and even the Nation. Often two or three churches formed a "circuit" or "charge;" the minister and some congregation members would alternate Sundays. The church nurtured personal and spiritual growth as well as social life. It usually sponsored choirs, quartets, youth groups, clubs, and community service. Ministers were important leaders and mentors.

Schools

Many of the black communities included schools, most of them one-room frame buildings. During Reconstruction, African Americans enthusiastically established several schools, with the help of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau) and northern philanthropy. Virginia then decided to establish free public schools for all children. African Americans lobbied hard but unsuccessfully for an integrated system. Initially, black and white public schools in Virginia were comparable—almost all were modest and poorly equipped—but over time, disparities grew. In the early twentieth century, white reformers effectively agitated for improved and consolidated white schools. Those same people established Jim Crow laws that formalized segregation. Black parents in Loudoun lobbied consistently for better schools and transportation, usually to no avail. Only after a County Wide League enlisted civil rights attorney Charles Houston and threatened legal action did the school board build an accredited high school for black children—Douglass—which opened in Leesburg in 1941. The segregated system was not completely dismantled until 1968-69, fourteen years after *Brown v. Board of Education* mandated integration. Although their staff was paid less than their white counterparts, the black schools enjoyed many exacting and caring educators who were dedicated role models and taught children to do the best they could with what they had.

Societies

African Americans established a wide variety of formal organizations in Loudoun that give

further testimony to a rich community life. During Reconstruction, they established the Colored Man's Aid Society in Leesburg to assist the neediest. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many men and women were involved in one or more fraternal or mutual aid societies such as the Galilean Fisherman, Free Masons, Household of Ruth, Odd Fellows, Good Samaritans, the Daughters of Samaria, and Elks. Most of these organizations had secret rituals and special ceremonies that bonded members together and lifted them from the routine of daily life. These institutions also offered opportunities for leadership and community service, and practical benefits such as life and disability insurance. When a member died, the others turned out in uniform to march in the funeral processions and provided comfort and aid to survivors.

Work

In freedom, African Americans made choices to improve their lives. A number preferred the security of working for a single employer, sometimes a former owner, because they valued the relational bond. Others wanted greater independence and worked as free agents by the day or the job. Quite a few enslaved and free blacks were skilled workers, the men in trades such as blacksmithing, stonemasonry, carpentry, and gardening; and the women in cooking, laundering, sewing, and midwifery. These skills helped them get ahead in the ensuing years. African Americans preferred to own or rent even a small farm rather than work as tenants or sharecroppers, although many performed day labor as needed on other farms. Horses became an important industry in early twentieth-century Loudoun, and African American men facilitated that rise, as grooms, jockeys, trainers, breeders, and riding instructors. Others were drivers who hauled passengers and freight. Large employers included, at various times, the tannery in Waterford, the marble quarry in central Loudoun, the horse-training track in St. Louis, and the lime kilns, laundry, and hotel in Leesburg. From the 1940s on, many men and women commuted down Route 7, often in car pools, to construction, clerical, or housecleaning jobs in Falls Church, Arlington, and Washington, DC. "Goin' down the country," as they called it, was appealing because jobs were more plentiful and workers often earned twice what they could in Loudoun.

Land

African Americans considered land ownership important for autonomy and security. Despite their lack of financial resources, many acquired land within ten or twenty years after emancipation. This happened in a variety of ways. Occasionally, former owners deeded them a piece of property in return for years of unpaid service. Often, freed people rented from former owners and then purchased the property a decade or two later. Other times, white or black landowners subdivided acreage and sold lots. Regardless, these were usually poorer or hillside plots of land, and thus more dispensable and affordable. By 1900, 194 Loudoun black men were primarily farmers; 62% owned their own land as compared to 57% of white farmers. During the mid-twentieth century, there were two large black-owned dairy farms in eastern Loudoun and a 120-acre horse farm in central Loudoun.

Homes

Many African Americans occupied log cabins built in the preceding century, but they preferred newer frame dwellings. Until the 1960s, they often pooled their labor and skills to build houses for one another. The vernacular style common in Loudoun included modest, two-story colonial homes with broad front porches, bungalow cottages at the turn-of-the-century, and later, ranch houses. Many of the properties had picket fences, green lawns and shrubbery, large vegetable gardens, and colorful flowerbeds, often with whimsical ornaments. During the warm months, clubs often held lawn parties in the nicest yards. These gatherings were fundraisers for service projects; guests purchased home cooked foods a la carte.

Culture

While African Americans shared many of the manners and sentiments of whites in rural, southern Loudoun County, they also enjoyed a distinct subculture. Before radio and television, people were constantly "in one another's houses," visiting for enjoyment. They entertained each other with song, dance, and storytelling. Black musicians played at their own gatherings and at white society affairs where they were barred as guests. Billy

Pierce of Purcellville took local dance styles to New York City where he helped popularize African American dance through the Charleston and Black Bottom. With their human dignity often assailed in popular culture and daily life, African Americans took pride in dressing well for business, church, and social events, with men in three-piece-suits and women in stylish dresses set off with hats and gloves. A kind of Victorian sensibility persisted well into the twentieth century in dress and manners, such as formal family meals with good china, tablecloths, and full place settings. Many black people worked for wealthy whites and understood the conventions of refined taste and manners; their homes and personal style often reflected this cultivation. The highlight of the year for many of Loudoun County's African Americans was Emancipation Day, when thousands of people gathered to celebrate freedom and racial pride. September 22nd was chosen to commemorate Abraham Lincoln's issuance of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in 1862. For black people in Loudoun, this was the day to begin wearing fall clothes—their finest for the celebration—and school usually began the following day. As young people acquired education and sophistication, many left for “the bright lights” and greater opportunities of Washington, D.C., New York, and other cities where they have prospered. Meanwhile, their old communities declined, but many remain vital and steeped in the memories and customs of earlier days.

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The Communities

Throughout Loudoun County's history, despite its history of segregation, people of African and European ancestry have lived, worked, and played together. Black people were segregated from white society, but not community. People of color made up about one-fourth of Loudoun's population, and a look at any manuscript census reveals how interspersed blacks, mulattoes, and whites were. Therefore, few settlements, and none of the larger towns and villages, were completely segregated. On the map and in the text, the primarily-black settlements are shown in black, and the larger towns and villages with primarily black neighborhoods are indicated in color. [In this text, they are

noted with an asterisk]. Aldie | Ashburne (Farmwell) | Berryman Lane | Bluemont (Snickersville) | Bowmantown | Britain (or Guinea) | Brown's Corner | Brownsville (Swampoodle) | Conklin | Cooksville | Dover | Gleedsville | Greggsville | Guinea Hill and Guinea Bridge | Hamilton | Hillsboro | Howardsville | Hughesville | Irene and Ivandale | Leesburg | Lincoln | Lovettsville | Little Washington | Macsville | Marble Quarry | Middleburg | Mount Pleasant (Scattersville) | Murphy's Corner | Nokes (Nokes Mountain) | Oak Grove | Paconian Springs | Powell's Grove | Purcellville | Rock Hill (Austin Grove or Midway) | Round Hill | St. Louis | Stewarttown | Sycolin | Trammeltown | Turnertown | Waterford | Watson | Willard | Willisville

***Aldie** - Although few black people lived in Aldie itself, the surrounding area included the black settlements of Bowmantown and Stewarttown on the south side and Back-in-the-Hollow on the north. Many of the women belonged to the Housekeepers' Club, founded in 1914. Members met monthly in one another's homes to enjoy fellowship, food, guest speakers, and workshops. At a summertime meeting, for instance, women brought fresh flowers from their gardens and learned floral-arranging from a professional. They also stitched baby clothes for expectant mothers, and women who didn't know how to sew could learn. The club still meets, with some members now traveling a long distance.

***Ashburn (Farmwell)** - In late 1887, several men and women of the growing Oak Grove Baptist Church applied for dismissal so that they could organize a church closer to their homes in Farmwell. Charlie Harris bought an acre of land and they held a grand cornerstone dedication for Zion Baptist in fall of 1880. By 1928 the congregation had forty members. In the warm months, picnic dinners were held outside. Families would bring baskets filled with homecooked foods covered with a white napkin or a large checkered tablecloth to spread on the grass. Often families pooled their meals, or for twenty-five cents they could purchase fried chicken, country ham, cornbread, stewed tomatoes, string beans, cabbage with fatback, potato salad, homemade pies, and ice cream from the stand run by four “sisters” and two deacons. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the community also supported Monroe Chapel Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, the only congregation of that independent branch of southern black Methodists in Loudoun. Greater Zion Baptist Church on Ashburn Road remains active and the one-room Ashburn school stands next door.

Berryman Lane - Several black families lived in this area near Mountville. The Berryman brothers, Raymond and Thomas, had the largest black-owned farms in Loudoun—over one hundred acres each. Raymond bred and trained hunters and showed them in St. Louis. His wife Mattie taught at the Marble Quarry School after it relocated nearby.

She brought the students to her fine stone house every Easter for an egg hunt and celebration. On summer Sunday afternoons, black and white children swam together in a deep section of Goose Creek near the ford at the end of the lane.

***Bluemont (Snickersville)** - James Fields, free before the war, was the first African American to own property on the Blue Ridge slope behind the present Snickersville store. Just after the war, Benjamin Franklin Young apprenticed with white physician George Plaster and became Loudoun County's first black physician. In 1871 he purchased 17 acres on the same slope from Plaster and sold smaller parcels to other blacks, thus helping them to home ownership. Dennis Weaver also bought land there from Plaster. The residents built homes, First Baptist Church in 1888, and a school. Many of them walked one-half mile to work in the town where they supported the hotels and boarding houses catering to summer guests from the cities. (See also Murphy's Corner.)

Bowmantown - Free blacks settled south of Aldie in the early 1800s, establishing one of Loudoun's oldest African American communities. Many residents were members of the Bowman and Napper families. In 1875 Baptists built a log church they named Mt. Pleasant because of the beautiful view of Bull Run Valley. They replaced it with a larger frame building in 1887, still standing on New Mountain Road. The cemetery runs up a steep slope on the northwest side of the church. Like many African American churches, it also served as a public school until a separate building was constructed in 1891, then again between 1898 and 1909 after the schoolhouse burned and before a new one was built. Neal Corum operated a store there for forty-six years beginning in 1931. Most of the families had gardens from which they shared produce. The men often worked for whites on the large farms in the Aldie/Middleburg area, and the women usually worked at home, supplemented by day work.

Britain (or Guinea) - Sometimes, African Americans established settlements by purchasing land and old dwellings from earlier white settlements, which saved many log cabins in Loudoun from ruin. This was the case in Britain, on the lower slope of Short Hill in the southwest corner of the German Settlement. Wooded, hilly, or poor land sold for as little as eight dollars an acre after the Civil War, and here was a place where freed people could establish themselves. Down Morrisonville Road, Ned Davis, free black man from Petersburg, had a home, workshop, and kiln where he produced redware pottery in the decades surrounding the Civil War. Mount Sinai Free Baptist Church, built in 1880, also served as a school until 1915. Unlike most black settlements, Britain had a post office. African Americans moved away by the 1920s.

Brown's Corner - Joseph and Sarah Moton Brown, both freed before the Civil War, acquired the stone house at Brown's Corner, just east of Middleburg, sometime around 1870. Never more than four houses, Brown's Corner boasted two regionally distinguished citizens. Chauncey Depew Brown, born in 1896, became an accomplished musician proficient in many instruments and genres. His band was popular throughout Virginia's Hunt Country from 1915 into the 1970s. Duke Ellington was a member in the '20s and they often played together in subsequent years. Chauncey Brown was also a horseman and sponsored the region's only integrated steeplechase. William Nathaniel Hall, born in 1890, moved from Berryman Lane to Brown's Corner as a child. He learned the building trade from his father, Nathan Hall, a master stonemason. Later, William founded W.N. Hall and Sons, which became the largest construction company in Loudoun. "Willie" Hall is most remembered for the Middleburg Bank, the Loudoun Hospital wing, the reconstructed George Washington Gristmill in Fairfax County, and his generosity to the black community.

Brownsville (Swampoodle) - Both black and white Browns lived in this community just east of Hamilton. It is geographically a low, swampy area, and both names go back to the nineteenth century. William H. and Marion P. Brown, white Quakers, allowed the Freedmen's Bureau to establish a school on their property just after the Civil War. In 1870, "Harmony" had sixty-four students, half of whom were over sixteen years of age, and a black teacher, Ellis S. Porter. The Baptist congregation of Second Mount Olive was going to build their church in Hughesville until Nancy Murray donated some of her Brownsville property. They constructed the church in 1892. The charismatic Elder Isham Williams served as pastor from 1940 to 1990. He was so inspired in his preaching that Robert Duvall modeled his southern minister character after Williams in the film *The Apostle*. The congregation remains active.

Conklin - Conklin was named for a white landowner in this southeastern corner of the county, but it later became known for its black residents. One was Phoebe Brooks, a midwife once enslaved at Oatlands, who delivered many of the black and white babies born in the area. Most African Americans here were subsistence farmers who raised

chickens, turkeys, hogs, and occasionally, beef cattle. Thomas Settle, a white landowner with a few slaves, willed his land and home to Charles Dean, once held in slavery by Settle's family in nearby Prince William County. The cabin has been preserved and moved across Loudoun County Parkway. Dean donated land for the Prosperity Baptist Church, built in 1899. His sister, the famous evangelist and educator Jennie Dean, raised money, much of it from northern philanthropists, for the building and two more churches in Prince William County. She is most known, however, as founder of the Manassas Industrial School in 1894, which enabled a number of blacks in Loudoun, Fauquier, Fairfax, and Prince William counties to obtain a secondary education. Conklin had a post office and an elementary school for black children established in 1871. The church is still active, but little else remains.

Cooksville - Many of the African Americans buried in the Cooksville cemetery on Telegraph Springs Road near Purcellville once worked as tenant farmers for Frank Wilson, a white landowner. Funeral services were held at Grace Methodist Church in Lincoln and the church bell tolled once for every year the deceased lived. The funeral procession traveled by foot down Cooksville Road (no longer accessible by automobile) to the graveyard. Henry Jackson, a director of the Loudoun County Emancipation Association, bought the land on the north side of the cemetery and built a house and farm buildings; his son later constructed a home nearby. In 1978, the settlement contained eight houses and three graveyards, but most of the buildings were destroyed for development in 2000.

Dover - A few black families lived in this settlement west of Aldie near two large homes, Dover Farm and Dover, but only two of the four houses remain. The smaller buildings may once have served as slave quarters, a miller's house for Dover Mills, or a toll house for the turnpike.

Gleedsville - John Gleed, once enslaved at Oatlands, continued to live nearby and in 1881 bought property near the original main entrance on the west side of the estate. Already in 1880, however, area men established the Mountain Gap Odd Fellows Lodge. The women instituted a Household of Ruth in 1900. In 1889 the school board purchased land for the Mountain Gap Colored School and built the schoolhouse the following year. Also in 1889, Washington and Margaret Thornton, who lived across Gleedsville Road, donated a half-acre for a church. The residents promptly built Mt. Olive Methodist Church, a white frame structure with German siding and French Gothic windows. One of the builders was Martin Buchanan, born in 1844 to a free mother and a father in slavery at Oatlands. As a young man he worked in the gardens on the estate until he joined the Union Army in 1863 to fight for freedom. After the war he returned to Gleedsville and married Amelia Gleed in the 1890s in the new church. The congregation held for 100 years, but finally merged with Mt. Zion Leesburg and sold the building to a Unitarian congregation. Gleedsville Cemetery, eastern Loudoun's largest black cemetery, remains nearby, but many of the graves are unmarked.

Greggsville - A failing white settlement in the mid-nineteenth century, the area revived in the 1870s when whites arranged to build a schoolhouse on the Shoemaker farm for the children of former slaves. The nearest black school was in Lincoln, four or five miles away. African Americans were holding Sunday School and church in the building by 1890. The school closed in 1929, but Bethany Baptist Church continued, buying the building and one acre of ground in 1952. The structure burned in 1973; all that remains of Greggsville (pronounced Griggsville) is a glen with grassy knoll and a water pump near the edge of the woods. One resident recalls hearing the congregation singing loudly in the old church, and after services they would set up tables and the women would cook large communal meals. "They had big times down here," he recalled.

Guinea Hill and Guinea Bridge - During the Civil War, Union forces burned the textile and gristmills along the North Fork of Goose Creek, southwest of Lincoln. African Americans who worked in the area occupied the miller's dwelling and other deserted buildings and began erecting cabins along the hillside. Many African American communities in the South went by the name Guinea. Historically, the name referred to the west coast of Africa between the Senegal River and Cameroon, a large region from which Europeans and European Americans captured or bought Africans who were forced into slavery.

***Hamilton** - Hamilton has a particularly vibrant black history. Oral tradition and geography indicates the town played a role in the Underground Railroad, lying as it does on the main road that connected the Quaker villages of Lincoln and Waterford, where there was also a sizeable free black population. When Hamilton incorporated in 1875, they excluded the black neighborhood to the north, known as "the Hill," but there was a high degree of formal organization there. The Galilean Fisherman built one of the first fraternal halls, which served as a community center. The Grand United Order of Odd Fellows started a lodge in 1878, followed by the women's auxiliary, Household of

Ruth, and a Juvenile Society. Their lodge held a school for a time. Methodists built Mt. Zion Church on West Virginia Avenue in 1881, and a number of black-owned businesses operated in the vicinity: George Rowe's grocery store, Howard Clark's ice cream parlor, two taxi services, and a well-digging company. The Loudoun County Emancipation Association organized in Hamilton in 1890 and held annual Emancipation Day celebrations near the town for their first twenty years. Pleasant Valley Cemetery on Harmony Church Road is one of the largest African American cemeteries in the county. It was established in 1922 as a shareholding corporation still operating today. Mt. Zion Church remains active and is on a charge with Mt. Zion, Leesburg.

Hillsboro - A busy industrial town before the Civil War, Hillsboro had a significant African American population. Free blacks included laundress and preacher Zilpha Davis, silver miner John Burns, and the bearded trapper Hill Tom, who also did odd jobs in the village. John Redman, a Cherokee Indian who quarried and dressed stone on the Short Hill since around 1790, married a mulatto woman named Cassie and secured her freedom. Quite a few of Loudoun's African Americans also have Native American ancestry. Some of Hillsboro's people of color worshiped at Arnold's Grove Methodist Church on Charles Town Pike, and buried their dead in the far side of the graveyard into the twentieth century. But African Americans also met secretly for worship away from whites, even though it was against the law. According to local legend, in Hillsboro they met on the Short Hill south of town at Pulpit Rock. Forrest Griffith, freed in 1839, had purchased fifteen acres there in 1847. In 1855 he sold an acre to his daughter Francis and her husband Elzy Furr. At the end of the Civil War in 1864 Hillsboro African Americans established their own congregation, Asbury Methodist. They worshiped at Pulpit Rock, at Arnold Grove where they were allowed to use the church at night, and in a log school established with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau. In 1887, the Furrs donated a bit of their land, and families supported one another as they constructed the fieldstone Asbury Church, which still stands. It was part of the Hamilton charge. The congregation merged with Mount Zion in Hamilton in the 1960s. The Lucas family cemetery is next to the church on Ashbury Road. Many black families made their homes on the Short Hill or down along the North Fork of the Catoctin Creek near the mills. Zilpha's rock, perhaps where she once did laundry, remains in the creek near where she once lived.

Howardsville - Although families emancipated from George Grayson may have lived in this area north of Upperville as tenants, the first black property owners were Jacob Howard, Jerry Basil, and five Summers brothers, all freedmen themselves. Howard became a stonemason and taught the trade to his grandson. It continues in the family to the present. Amanda Basil, herself mother of eight, was a renowned midwife who delivered black and white children for more than a half-century. Walker Summers made brooms and wove baskets and chair seats. Other early families included Sam and Emma Reid, Clarence and Gracie Reid, and Marin and Ada Young. Nearly everyone in Howardsville—about one-hundred people at its peak—was related by blood or marriage, making the community like a large extended family. Children here attended school two miles away in Rock Hill until it closed in 1919; then they walked three miles to Willisville. Churchgoers went to Willisville Methodist, Austin Grove Methodist, or St. Louis Baptist. The Howards were gifted singers and often participated in church choirs or quartets such as the St. Louis Harmonizers.

Hughesville - Although a white community settled by Hugheses in the eighteenth century, it also had a significant black population, which coexisted with considerable amity. Politically liberal, they voted, like the Quaker and German settlements, with Republicans or Readjusters in the nineteenth century. When the black school on Mount Gilead burned down the Old School Baptists in Hughesville came to the rescue. Having recently purchased the old white school building in 1897, they agreed that it could be used for a black school, though they accommodated by building a separate outhouse. In 1905, Daniel White took over the Hughesville Store, which sold groceries and dry goods, becoming the only black storekeeper to serve a biracial clientele. After serving in the Great War 1917-1918, he returned, met and married the Hughesville schoolteacher. She later helped him run the store while he worked at nearby Loudoun Orchards until they closed the business in 1935.

***Irene and Ivandale** - Just south of Hamilton at the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad Station, Irene included homes, a mill and a store. Immediately west, a railroad stop and warehouse marked the community of Ivandale and the wholesale florist of the same name. Quite a few African Americans were property owners in the area and worked at these businesses. Presley Ash and Gary Curtis both had farms large enough that they employed help to operate them. The Loudoun County Emancipation Association held its first annual celebration in Ivandale in 1890. The florist generously supplied flowers for Emancipation Day celebrations throughout the event's history.

***Leesburg** - African Americans have deep roots in the county seat and largest town. Leesburg contains the oldest continuing black congregation in the state. Members began worship in the Old Stone Church on Cornwall Street, built on the first property owned by the Methodist church in America (1766). They raised Mt. Zion after the Civil War when returning whites contested ownership of the old church. Baptists built Providence in 1875 and First Mt. Olive in 1884. African Americans established a number of schools with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau, but the Leesburg School on Union Street became the public school for the town's black students. Fraternal organizations included Odd Fellows (1874), Household of Ruth (1890), Free Masons (1913), Eastern Star (1922), Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria (1921 and 1924). The town once had a number of black-owned businesses, including a butcher shop, cleaning and alterations, shoe repair, barbershops, and a medical practice. White-owned businesses and private homes employed large numbers of African Americans. Whites and blacks from the surrounding rural areas flocked to Leesburg on Saturdays for shopping, dining, and movies at the Tally Ho, where black patrons sat in the balcony. Relegated to the windows or kitchen of white-owned restaurants, they preferred to dine at black-owned establishments such as Mary Berry's Do Drop Inn, which was so popular crowds hung outside, or at Honey's in Black Bottom, with its downstairs billiards room. Leesburg was unusual in its high degree of residential integration. Small, predominantly black neighborhoods were scattered throughout the town, including 'Round the Bay on North Street, Liberty or "Baby" Street, Black Bottom on lower Wirt Street, Royal Street, Vinegar Hill on Harrison Street, and Waverly Heights. Many streets, such as Cornwall, were mixed, and people helped one another in times of need. But in other important ways, segregation was as strong as anywhere. Black town and county residents campaigned for decades and enlisted the help of civil rights attorney Charles Houston before Douglass High School was built in 1941. Marie Medley Howard championed such causes in her beauty parlor, and became a founder and the first president of the Loudoun branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Helen Marie Ramey became the first black student to attend Loudoun County High School in 1962. African Americans and sympathetic whites conducted a protest to integrate the swimming pool, and won their court case in 1966, but the fire department—owners of the pool—chose to fill it in rather than comply. For more on the town's black history, see the African American Heritage Trail, Leesburg, Virginia.

***Lincoln** - African Americans have long been a strong presence in this Quaker village surrounding the Goose Creek Meetinghouse. The two groups often cooperated socially and politically. Before the Civil War, Lincoln was believed to be a hotbed of Underground Railroad activity, with Yardley Taylor, a prominent Lincoln Quaker, denounced by detractors as the manager of it. The Quakers established a private school in 1815 that included African Americans in its student body. The Lincoln School was built during Reconstruction with the aid of the Freedmen's Bureau, and now serves as a private home. African American Methodists established a congregation in 1872 and met at the school until they built Grace Church in 1884/85. The Baptists organized in 1879 and erected Mount Olive Baptist in 1884. J.R. Hicks, the founding president of the Emancipation Association in 1890, owned property in Lincoln, although his home, orchard, and shoemaking shop were three miles south in North Fork. Members of Grace Methodist built a new church in Purcellville in 1951, where the bulk of their members lived at the time, but the old one still stands. The cemetery is still used by both congregations.

***Lovettsville** - The German Americans, like the Quakers, tended to be socially more tolerant of minorities (being one themselves) and politically aligned with African Americans. In 1868, black people in the German Settlement around Lovettsville pooled their resources, bought an acre of ground, erected a practical little building, and gave it to the Methodist Episcopal Church for worship and educational use. They replaced it with an even nicer dual-purpose structure in 1882. The Antioch United Methodist Church later became known as the African Chapel and remains standing as a testament to the close alliance in the black community between school, church, and fellowship. It was always served by a circuit pastor, and was part of the Hamilton Charge with Mt. Zion in Hamilton, John Wesley in Waterford, and Asbury in Hillsboro. It's members later affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in nearby Maryland.

Little Washington - On the hill overlooking Gleedsville cemetery, where now only a fire tower stands, members of the Washington family lived in three houses. There they did laundry for white people who lived along Evergreen Mills Road, a wealthy area called "the Kingdom." The Mountain Gap Colored School was just down the road, but burned down in the 1980s.

Macsville - The roots of this settlement along Route 50, just east of Middleburg, reach back to the turn of the nineteenth century, when people held in slavery by members of the McVeigh family lived in small cabins along the road. It was called Macsville well before Emancipation. Afterwards, black families remained in the area, acquired small parcels of land, and replaced the old cabins with bungalow cottages. Clarendon Fisher's shoe shop, operating during the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, was the only commercial establishment. William Hall's park was located nearby, where blacks from throughout the county gathered for recreation such as baseball, horseracing, and swimming. Especially in the 1930s, special celebrations on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and the Odd Fellows' "Turn Out Day" in September drew large crowds for music, sports, and barbecue.

Marble Quarry - Lured by the jobs at Virginia Marble Company in the early 1870s, about fifty African American families rented company-owned houses in this old settlement near two mills on Goose Creek. Each morning the men would cross the footbridge over Goose Creek to work in the quarry, extracting marble and limestone and transporting it to Leesburg. The quarries here and in Leesburg were the two largest employers of black men in Loudoun. In 1875, Marble Quarry children began attending school in a frame building with a stone basement built into the hillside over the spring. Mt. Zion Church began holding services there, but in the 1920s the school moved two miles south on Sam Fred Road near Berryman Lane. The church congregation later converted the new school, then closed, to a church and changed their name to New Zion.

***Middleburg** - African Americans have been an important presence in this town, often called the capital of Virginia's Hunt County. In 1864 they established Asbury Methodist Church, Loudoun County's first official African American congregation. Three years later, Baptists founded Shiloh Church. The federal government opened a Freedman's Bureau Office at Jay and Marshall Streets, and many black families lived on "Bureau Corner." They opened the first school in 1868, but the best remembered is Grant School, started in 1888 and named for teacher and principal Oliver L. Grant. Middleburg men founded the Aberdeen Odd Fellows Lodge in 1873, and women, the Grant Household of Ruth, in 1884; an Elks Lodge followed later. Solon Cemetery was established in 1883. By 1938 African Americans had a remarkable business presence in Middleburg—the strongest in Loudoun County—with John Wanzer's blacksmith shop, W.N. Hall & Sons general contractor, two roofers, restaurants, a pool hall, barber shop, shoe repair, two cleaners, two beauty parlors, and three private cabs. Dr. Maurice Edmead had a medical practice there from 1933 to 1952. African American horsemen, farm workers and managers, and domestic help were employed in the area by wealthy white landowners. Community life was rich, including Memorial Day and July 4th parades through the town and celebrations at Hall's Park nearby. John Wanzer served as president of the County-Wide League, which agitated in the 1930s for an accredited black high school, built in 1941. Middleburg area residents then lobbied for a modern consolidated elementary school, and finally Benjamin Banneker was opened in nearby St. Louis in 1948. Philanthropists and black citizens united to remodel, expand, and reopen the Grant School in 1950 as the Marshall Street Community Center. It had a large kitchen, a lending library, an auditorium/ballroom, a multi-purpose game room, and an outdoor basketball court. The center hosted plays, concerts, dances, wedding receptions, sports programs, preschool, a range of everyday activities, and, with the churches, was the heart of the black community. On the west end of Middleburg, black builders constructed frame houses on a slope named Windy Hill, and across Rt. 50, the three-story stone house called Hole-In-the-Wall. In 1961, in response to pressure from the NAACP and an upcoming visit by President John F. Kennedy, black and white leaders met and agreed to integrate public facilities in the town. For more detail see *Destination Middleburg: A Walking Tour Into the Past*.

Mount Pleasant (Scattersville) - In this sprawling, rural settlement west of Lucketts, large vegetable gardens and livestock provided families with all their food except sugar and salt. Like many African American grandmothers, Susan Ambers hosted weekly Sunday dinners for her children, grandchildren, extended family, and friends. "High days" at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church (est. 1880) included a rally in July for the building fund and homecoming in August, which drew members who had moved north and west in search of opportunity. Every family carried food to the Odd Fellows Lodge (1897), which served as a community dining room. Patti Blanche Beard, a graduate of Storer College in Harpers Ferry, taught at Mt. Pleasant School and boarded with a family there—a common practice. She later married Robert Ambers and continued teaching.

Murphy's Corner - The population in the nearby Blue Ridge mountain community dwindled in the twentieth century, and more blacks began living in Murphy's Corner just east of Bluemont. Older residents had difficulty hiking the half-mile up the slope to church on Sundays, so the congregation dismantled the building in 1920 and reconstructed it on donated land in Murphy's Corner. Beatrice Scipio, another graduate of Storer College and a

much-beloved teacher, lived in the log house at the corner of Snickersville Turnpike and Foggy Bottom Road. She taught twenty years at the mountain school, but the school board closed it in 1933 due to dwindling enrollment. Some pupils could not afford the transportation to Round Hill or Rock Hill, so she tutored them after putting in a full day of substitute teaching in other black schools.

Nokes (Nokes Mountain) - In 1901 George Washington Nokes became the first black landowner in this eastern Loudoun settlement (now Dulles Town Center), followed by his three sons and other families. The children attended school in a little shanty until it burned down in the 1920s. Parents had to donate land to the school board before they would build a new school. The children did without schooling during the two years it took to raise \$125 for one acre. The new school also served as a community center. The children walked together to school, the group growing larger with each house they passed. During winter snows, one former student remembers her father wrapping her legs in burlap bags and tying them above the knees, and bigger boys lifting the smaller children over the schoolyard fence. The cemetery in Nokes is one of the largest African American graveyards in the county, but the community didn't have its own church until First Baptist was organized in 1962. On the north side of Route 7, two black families, the the Edds and the Ewings, owned and operated large dairy farms.

Oak Grove - In the post-emancipation period, freedmen sometimes had difficulty finding small plots of land that they could afford to buy. So in 1871, when a white couple bought a tract of wooded land on the eastern edge of the county and subdivided it into one-acre lots, it seemed like a good opportunity. Many of the buyers must have already lived in the area, since they built a log cabin for Oak Grove Baptist Church in 1868. In 1893 the men established the Odd Fellows "Autumnal" Lodge that drew membership from Loudoun and Fairfax. When the county boundary was surveyed in 1958, it determined that some of the village, including the school, was in Fairfax rather than Loudoun. This created disruption for the children because Loudoun decided to bus its pupils to Leesburg rather than pay tuition for them to remain at Oak Grove. Few buildings remain, but the community lives on through the church, which grew and still thrives in the midst of dense modern development.

Paeonian Springs - The black community here was spread out and interspersed with whites, but they still enjoyed a close-knit community. Some of the families did truck farming and raised some livestock, and the Boyds ran a large boarding house. Reverend Isham Williams lived in this village, and Sundays when he preached at his other church in Pennsylvania, the Redmans held Sunday School in their home.

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Powell's Grove - Freedmen established themselves here on Powell family land when it was still wooded. By 1884 the children attended school in Powell's Grove, and adults organized a Methodist congregation that shared the building until 1897. Then, white resident Lucien Powell, a noted artist and former Confederate soldier, and his wife Nannie sold them a plot of land for one dollar. Together the members sank a well and built Powell's Grove Methodist Church, which was on a circuit with Lincoln. The church burned down in 1907 and worshippers again used the school until they rebuilt in 1922. This structure still stands on Airmont Road just above the store.

***Purcellville** - Black families settled in Purcellville on the south side of town, less desirable because prevailing winds blew the coal soot there in the winter. The first street, now G Street, was called the "color line" by blacks and whites, and was pointedly excluded when the town incorporated in 1908. In 1910 the Loudoun County Emancipation Association became a shareholding corporation and purchased ten acres of land at the corner of 20th and A Streets for their annual Emancipation Day Celebrations and many other community functions. They erected a tabernacle that would seat 1,200 people and moved a log building to the site that served as an office, complete with Abraham Lincoln's portrait and an American flag. Annual celebrations were held on September 22, commemorating the day that Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in 1862. The celebrations drew thousands, dressed in high style, some traveling on special excursion trains, for a parade, pageants, music, noted speakers, cavalry drills, and lots of good food and fellowship. An Elks Club Lodge on G Street provided additional opportunities for fellowship. Famous New York dance teacher Billy Pierce was a member and returned every summer to his home across the street. For many years, Purcellville students had to walk two miles to attend the Lincoln School. In 1914, stonemason and carpenter Joseph Cook, whose daughter had been ill and could not endure the walk, organized the Willing Workers Club with other concerned residents. They raised money and bought land. Then, in his leisure time, Cook built a two-room school that opened in 1920 and still stands on 20th Street. It also

housed a library for black patrons, since they were banned from the “public” one on Main Street. G Street residents Samuel Cordoza Murray and his wife, Josie Cook Murray, pursued legal action in 1957 and brought official desegregation to Loudoun County public libraries. The modern brick Carver School was opened in 1947—the pride of the community until it was closed after integration in 1968. Purcellville did not have a black church until members of Grace in Lincoln built the brick Grace Annex on G Street in 1949 and discontinued use of the original structure. Three black students began integration at Loudoun Valley High School when it opened in 1962.

Rock Hill (Austin Grove or Midway) - Situated on Austin Grove Road about halfway between Upperville and Bluemont, black people here worked on farms or supported the hotels and boarding houses for tourists and summer guests in Bluemont. They established Rock Hill Methodist Church in 1872, first meeting in private homes, then Rock Hill School. They built a stone church in 1911 under Thomas N. Austin’s pastorship and named it Austin Grove in his honor. Under his leadership the churches grew such that Austin Grove, Powell’s Grove, and Grace were separated from Middleburg and became the Lincoln Charge. Preachers and teachers were often pillars of the community, and Rock Hill School had a number of fine teachers over the years. Although the settlement has faded, the church draws worshippers from Winchester, Maryland, and Fairfax County. The large cemetery nearby attests to a vigorous past.

***Round Hill** - The southeastern part of town, left out of the town limits in 1900, was called “The Hook” for a bend in the Simpson’s Creek where members of Mount Zion Baptist Church were initiated. The church on High Street, built in 1881, is still active. For a long time, residents hauled water from the branch, and many of the women took in laundry to supplement their incomes. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, the only Loudoun congregation of that branch of Methodism, worshipped here between 1893 and 1900. The Round Hill School was located on Woodgrove Road almost a mile north of town. As many as seventy-five or eighty children attended school in the yellow one-room schoolhouse surrounded by daffodils in the spring. In 1968, Round Hill’s baseball team became the first in the Loudoun County League to integrate and triumphed by winning the championship.

St. Louis - St. Louis, with about one hundred people in 1900, was the largest of all the African American settlements. Despite being also the largest village in southwest Loudoun, it never had a post office. Its name came from an older relative of storekeeper Phil McQuay, who moved to St. Louis, Missouri, but returned home in his old age. Baptists began meeting here in 1885 under Elder Wormley Hughes, grandson of Thomas Jefferson’s chief gardener at Monticello. They founded St. Louis New School Baptist Church and met in the St. Louis school when it was built in 1887. In 1891, the congregation bought land and constructed Mt. Zion Baptist Church two years later. By 1919 it burned down, and members again worshipped in the school until they built a new church in 1929. It is still in service today. Many of the men in the village worked in the horse industry, as grooms, jockeys, trainers, and riding instructors. The nearby training track, constructed in the 1920s and enlarged in 1954, employed many African American horsemen. The St. Louis Colored Colt Show, established in 1898, drew contestants from throughout the county for steeplechases and other competitions.

Stewartown - Stewartown and Bowmantown were separate settlements but intertwined, and the people shared Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. Phillip Stewart was the first freedman to purchase property here when he bought ten acres of the hilly, rocky land in 1868. Stewartown was unusual in that it had a large communal garden. From the 1950s on, the community was known for its inspired gospel singers, many of them Stewarts. The James Stewart Faith Gospel Singers performed widely, including New York and Washington, DC, in the late 1970s.

Sycolin - Pronounced (sic’-lin), the upper part consisted of wealthy whites, but around the turn of the twentieth century, lower Sycolin was largely black. Many of the residents had once been enslaved on the large estates. Here they organized the non-denominational Union Church in 1884. William Manning donated land for a school and church, and residents completed them both in 1894. The church subsequently became First Baptist Church, and is the only remnant of the settlement left. The Sycolin School was built the same year, which was recognized for its equipment and teachers. A post office was established there in 1885, which added an “e” to the name and operated for twenty years. One kindly resident would allow Douglass students to board at his house when transportation to remote parts of the county was difficult for them.

Trammelton - This small family settlement consisted of just a few subsistence farms along Hogback Mountain Road. It waned by the 1970s and disappeared by 1985. Some of the Trammels were free before the Civil War.

Turnertown - Named for Turner Lloyd, this settlement consists of four houses along Turkey Roost Road owned by members of the Lloyd family. Other members of the Lloyd and Jackson families owned farms along Beaver Dam Road toward Philomont. In the middle of the twentieth century, Jeff Jackson was known for his wine-making skill, using grapes, dandelions, or potatoes that friends and relatives brought him.

***Waterford** - Because Quakers were usually opposed to slavery and more supportive of African Americans, Waterford had a higher proportion of free blacks than other towns in Loudoun County during the antebellum period. With a tannery, mill, and other businesses, it also offered more employment opportunities. At the close of the Civil War in 1865, Quaker Sarah Steer began a school for black children in her home. The following year, five of the town's African American men joined together and, with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau, bought land and erected a commodious one-room building on Second Street for the school and church services. In 1891, Methodists built John Wesley Church on Bond Street. They labored in the evenings, after a full day's work, with women holding lanterns aloft after dusk so the men could see. Two years later, Waterford organized an Odd Fellows chapter and established a lodge, which also served as a community center. In the 1960s, members of John Wesley merged into Mt. Zion in Hamilton. The school, church, and lodge still stand. The Waterford Foundation conducts an educational program on the Second Street School in the original building. For a self-guided tour, see "Walk with us through Waterford's Black History," published by the Waterford Foundation.

Watson (Watson Mountain or Negro Mountain) - Free blacks settled on this high ridge south of Leesburg well before the Civil War, and Yardley Taylor denoted the area as Negro Mountain on his map of Loudoun County in 1853. A white storekeeper opened a post office here in 1888 using the name Watson, but its origin is a mystery. New School Baptists organized First Baptist Church in 1896 and constructed a building the next year that served as church and school. In 1955 a fire destroyed the structure, but someone managed to save the pulpit chairs and Bible. They rebuilt immediately, and the eaves bear the carved handprints of Clarence Scott, the carpenter. He was an active member of the congregation and an itinerate minister.

Willard - Warren Newman, who grew up in Willard, recalled that "most of it was farm land and most of it white people and there was a black family here and there. As long as you stayed on your side of the fence it was all right." African American settlement was mostly near the crossroads of Sterling Road and Willard Road—the center of the village. Their church, Shiloh Primitive Baptist Church (1898) and school were located a half-mile west. They had a post office between 1900 and 1907. In 1958 Federal authorities chose this area for a new international airport, later named Dulles, and began condemnation proceedings. They paid the congregation for the church and the cost of moving five graves. The church's deacon donated land on Gum Springs Road and the congregation built Second Shiloh Church. It is affiliated with the Second Kectoctin Primitive Baptist Association.

Willisville - In 1868 a delegation of people once enslaved visited the Freedmen's Bureau office in Middleburg to request help in building a school in their community northwest of town. They were given \$150, so they bought an acre of land and resident George Evans built a schoolhouse that also served as a church on Sunday. The congregation became part of the Methodist denomination by 1884. The building burned down in 1917 and the congregation held fair weather services in a grove for several years. The school was replaced with a two-room structure in 1918. The church was replaced in 1924, when church members raised \$1,000 and Mary D. Neville, a white artist who lived nearby, donated land, funds, and a French country design for a chapel made of stone. Anna Shorts Gaskins is lovingly remembered in Loudoun as an outstanding person, teacher, and principal, who consistently produced high-quality plays and programs, and positively influenced many lives.

Conclusion

The civil rights movement and integration brought much-needed change to Loudoun County and the Nation. But not all was gain. Youths left in larger numbers in search of opportunity, and many black-owned businesses failed. Neighborhoods declined and some vanished altogether. Yet, a sense of close-knit community remains in Loudoun County. African Americans still enjoy a rich social network, centered in the churches and the Loudoun branch of the NAACP. Some who moved from Loudoun hold on to those connections, traveling back to their churches for Sunday services, and especially for annual homecomings. Those who can't attend often send sizeable donations to sustain the church and symbolize their loyalty and commitment. Still, numbers are dwindling in small community

congregations as the years pass and the county changes even more. If you are interested in learning more about Loudoun's cultural heritage and helping to perpetuate it, the churches, the NAACP, and the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library welcome newcomers of all races. The people that make up these institutions generously share the history and caring that make Loudoun County a special place. You can also learn more about local history and genealogy by visiting the Thomas Balch Library of the Town of Leesburg.

Recommended Reading:

Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library.

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Credits

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