

**FLORIDA**  
*Chittlin' Circuit*

**HISTORIC RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**



**JUNE 2023**

**Remember - Educate - Celebrate**



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**COVER (left to right):** Jacksonville's Ritz Theatre & Museum in 2023. *Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.* St. Petersburg's 22nd Street South in the Deuces Live Main Street district. *Photo courtesy of Adrienne Burke, AICP, Esq.* **COVER BACKGROUND:** The Knights of Pythias Hall in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood during the 1940s. *Photo courtesy of Ellie Lee Weems and the Library of Congress.*

**THIS PAGE:** Looking south down Broad Street in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood during the 1920s. *Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intent of the Florida Main Street Chitlin' Circuit Historic Research and Documentation research effort was to coordinate with the Florida Main Street Program to conduct and provide a comprehensive review of Chitlin' Circuit-related venues in designated Florida Main Street programs. The project was divided into two phases.

The first phase identified locations of potential Chitlin' Circuit venues in Eatonville, St. Petersburg, Ft. Pierce, and Panama City. The second phase conducted additional research into some of the identified locations that still have existing buildings in the communities and provided an overview of the Chitlin' Circuit in Florida. In the second phase, Panama City was replaced by Jacksonville.

Research from this project has identified that the Chitlin' Circuit existed in large part because of what has been identified as "the stroll," a term coined by musician Walter Barnes in the 1930s to describe commercial and entertainment areas in Black neighborhoods across the country. Florida Main Streets in Black communities are historic evidence of the stroll. These districts, with dance halls, bars, juke joints, and clubs, provided the backbone in which the Chitlin' Circuit thrived.

COMMUNITY	NEIGHBORHOOD	THE STROLL
Jacksonville St. Petersburg Eatonville Ft. Pierce	LaVilla The Deuces Eatonville Lincoln Park	West Ashley Street 22nd Street South Kennedy Boulevard Avenue D

Information in this report includes Phase II research and includes an overview of the Chitlin' Circuit, the Chitlin' Circuit in Florida, and a closer look at each of the four communities. Each community review includes a brief background of African American history in the community, information on the stroll, and information on some of the existing Chitlin' Circuit venues that remain. Appendices include the Phase I Technical Memorandum and a reference list.

Additional Phase II work included creation of a brochure highlighting information identified in the report, four articles on Chitlin' Circuit venues, and content for the Florida Community Corporation's Chitlin' Circuit website. The brochure is included as an appendix.

# INTRODUCTION

**M**ain Street is a framework that sets up communities on the track towards revitalization. Main Street America is a movement born out of the recognition that everyone deserves access to a vibrant community. The program uses historic preservation and economic vitality as a foundation.

The mission of Main Street America is to create anchors for neighborhoods that foster a thriving local economy, are rich in character, and feature inviting public spaces that make residents and visitors feel that they belong.

In 2020, while delving into the cultural assets of Florida Main Street communities, the Florida Main Street Program discovered that Eatonville was a part of the Chitlin Circuit and had buildings that were used as performance venues for musicians. Subsequently, it was learned that Lincoln Park in Fort Pierce, Deuces Live in St. Petersburg, and the Glenwood District in Panama City were all part of the circuit.

In 2021, seeking to possibly revive and promote historical venues from the Chitlin Circuit, the Florida Main Street Program provided Phase I technical assistance for historic research and information compilation related to the aforementioned Main Street Districts. This effort would serve as a base document that the participating communities could utilize to help establish the cohesiveness and brand of the Florida Chitlin Circuit project.

## PHASE I

The intent of the Florida Main Street Chitlin' Circuit Historic Research and Documentation Project- Phase 1 research effort was to coordinate with the Florida Main Street Program to conduct and provide a comprehensive preliminary list of potential Chitlin' Circuit-related venues in the following four (4) designated Florida Main Street programs:

- Deuces Live Main Street - St. Petersburg
- Eatonville Main Street - Eatonville
- Lincoln Park Main Street - Fort Pierce
- Panama City Main Street - Panama City

Louis Armstrong performs at St. Petersburg's Manhattan Casino in 1957. Photo courtesy of Deuces Live Main Street.



1209 Martin Luther King, Jr Boulevard in Panama City's Glenwood neighborhood. Photo courtesy of Peppa's Jerk Spot.

As a result of this historic research and analysis project, 36 sites within the four (4) previously mentioned Main Street districts were identified as potentially being connected to the Chitlin' Circuit. Twenty-five (25) buildings were identified in Lincoln Park. Five (5) buildings were identified in Deuces Live. Three (3) buildings were identified in both Eatonville and Glenwood. Several demolished sites were also identified and listed in each community. Documentation also identified Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood as the original southern epicenter of what became known as the Chitlin' Circuit. This phase of the project was completed in April 2021. The Technical Memorandum for Phase I is included as an appendix.

## **PHASE II**

Phase I identified the following projects to be conducted in a second phase to further analyze the history and make specific connections to the Chitlin' Circuit:

- Site visit to each community
- Historic research of non-digitized resources in each community
- Personal Interviews
- Mapping & Graphics
- Procurement of photographs
- Development of a website
- Content Production

Phase II is the result of a Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources Small Matching Grant awarded in 2022. As a result of the Phase I effort, the Florida Chitlin Circuit Group Inc., a non profit organization, was established with the intent to create a Florida Chitlin' Circuit Trail that will link cultural entertainment history education to the modern uses of structures which have been either preserved or repurposed. Additional coordination efforts of founding Florida Chitlin' Circuit Group, Inc. members resulted in the analysis effort focusing on the community of LaVilla instead of Panama City's Glenwood. Phase II is intended to build upon initial Phase I research and planning to highlight the importance of the Chitlin' Circuit's historical relationship to cultural heritage education and the arts through the following primary tasks:

- Analytical evidence/ research of initial Phase I sites
- Identification of how each city/town contributed to Florida's rich cultural heritage and the arts
- Creation of a promotional brochure

This narrative report comprises Phase II. The brochure is included as an appendix.

# THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT AND THE STROLL

## ORIGINS OF THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT

The Chitlin' Circuit was the collective name given to a series of Black-owned nightclubs, dance halls, juke joints, theaters and other venues that were safe and acceptable for African American entertainers to perform in during segregation.

Notable venues on the Chitlin' Circuit were the Cotton Club and Apollo Theater in Harlem, the Royal Peacock in Atlanta, the Fox Theatre in Detroit, the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C., and the Two Spot and the Knights of Pythias in Jacksonville, Florida. The name for the circuit is related to African American foodways, specifically chitlins, that were a food staple for enslaved African Americans and continues as a part of Southern Black cuisine today.

"The term chitlin' circuit was strictly a word-of-mouth phenomenon, with precedents in Southern [B]lack culture. The hog intestine was a staple of Southern [B]lack cuisine dating to plantation hog slaughters during slavery, and remained popular during the decades of pervasive [B]lack poverty after emancipation. W.C. Handy mentioned chitlin' cafes in his 1917 composition 'Beale Street Blues.' On August 14, 1926, the National Edition of the Chicago Defender announced the 'latest terpsichorean novelties among the elite of Asheville,

NC,' including the 'Chitterling Strut,' and the related plight of Wallace Walker, dance-hall proprietor: 'Walker has been arrested charged with operating a dance hall without license, but he was released when it was found out the cost of 'chitterling strutting' was only 15 cents a head at Walker's place.' Shortly after Walker's near misfortune, a comic strip shot across the Associated Negro Press wire. It was set in just the sort of Southern, [B]lack anytown that Barnes circuited through and called 'Chittlin' Switch.' True to the chitlin' circuit's underground status, the phrase didn't appear in the [B]lack press until a December 23, 1972 Chicago Defender article about Ike and Tina Turner." (Lauterbach, 2012, p.305)

Like chitlins, the circuit was established to nurture African American performers during a time when they were not allowed in most White-owned venues. Walter Barnes, a Chicago



Bandleader Walter Barnes (1905-1940) was a musician and *Chicago Defender* columnist that is credited as being an early originator of the circuit. Photo courtesy of [sentireblues.blogspot.com](http://sentireblues.blogspot.com).

jazz musician and *Chicago Defender* columnist born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, is credited as being an early originator of the circuit. The *Chicago Defender* was one of the largest African American newspapers in the country. Following the collapse of the Theatre Owners Booking Association (T.O.B.A.), a vaudeville circuit for African-American performers, Barnes successfully established a network of venues across the American South during the 1930s where it was safe, acceptable and successful for African-American entertainers to perform. (Lauterbach, 2012)

"Just now one of the biggest box-office attractions is the Walter Barnes Royal Creolians, touring the

*While the circuit provided steady employment for musicians, traveling as a musician in the South during the Jim Crow-era could be dangerous.*

South,' a *Chicago Defender* colleague wrote in the spring of 1935, 'and believe it or not the outfit refused to stay put in any one place no matter how good the engagement looks'" (Lauterbach, 2012, p.48). Prior to Barnes' circuit, it was common for musicians to book an engagement and stay in one place for a longer period of time. Barnes' circuit kept musicians moving and employed.

While the circuit provided steady employment for musicians, traveling as a musician in the South during the Jim Crow-era could be dangerous. In 1922, African American musicians who were part of Howard's Whispering Orchestra of Gold were brutally attacked outside of Miami by racist White musicians who were jealous of the Howard's Orchestra success. The attackers beat the musicians senselessly and later their instruments were destroyed. D.A. Dorsey, one of the wealthiest African Americans in Miami, paid for their passage north to Jacksonville. They had to leave so quickly they did not



receive medical attention until they arrived in Jacksonville. Dr. J. Seth Hills of 434 West Ashley Street in LaVilla took the musicians into his home, where he cared for them for several days, and assisted in finding funds for their travel to Cincinnati. ("Florida Mob's Atrocities Put 'Huns' to Shame", 1922)

In another event, Harry C. Amore, his wife Babe and members of Amore's orchestra were arrested in Trenton, Florida in May 1930 on a charge of vagrancy. They were sentenced to six months on a chain gang, forcing them to break all of their summer engagements. As noted in a *Chicago Defender* article, "Harry warns all musicians and actors to beware of this town where they are all classed as vagrants," and the paper implored readers to "write the imprisoned pianist and his mate" ("Hotel Patrons Fined, Jailed," 1930, p.10).

## THE STROLL

Barnes noticed a pattern in communities that he came to call "the stroll." This term characterized the main corridors of Black neighborhoods across the country that were



West Ashley Street in 1947. Also known as Uptown, Walter Barnes considered West Ashley Street to be the stroll in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood. Photo courtesy of the Eartha M.M. White Collection and the University of North Florida Thomas G. Carpenter Library.

home to the commercial activities of the community. Today, Florida's Black Main Street communities are historic evidence of the stroll.

"As Barnes worked from town to town down South, he noticed a pattern. Any place with a sizable [B]lack population grew a darktown, and each of these [B]lack districts centered on a thoroughfare, a world unto itself. The maestro, in his hep vernacular, called it 'the stroll.' He dashed off dispatches from every stroll he hit on the 1936-37 tour, leaving behind a neon and mud portrait of [B]lack Main Street in the South - the unfolding filaments of the chitlin' circuit" (Lauterbach, 2012, p.51).

Barnes used his position at the *Chicago Defender* to promote himself and the circuit that visited strolls across the South. At its height, the *Defender* was a daily publication with a national circulation of over 500,000 and the largest Black-owned newspaper in the nation. White distributors in the South refused to stock the paper, and instead it gained an audience in the South via Pullman porters who traveled south on the railroad. Newspapers were shared among neighbors and in restaurants and barbershops, and Black southerners then had access to the

*Defender* and its news. (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d.) Barnes was in a unique vantage point to personally benefit from such a large audience of readers, but the contracts and routes created and promoted through Barnes' position at the *Chicago Defender* became the overall Chitlin' Circuit that ultimately featured many touring acts.

As another stroll example, Nelson Street in Greenville, Mississippi was a stop on the circuit, and the description of the stroll there echoes how other Black main streets operated in the South.

"During the era of legal segregation, nearly every major southern city or town had its own version of Nelson Street. It was the colored business district by day and dreamland by night" (Anderson, 2004, p.51). Like many other strolls in the south, these districts were home to Black entrepreneurs, housing daytime businesses and nighttime bars and clubs: "[T]he doors to the shops would lock up in the evening and the doors of the clubs and juke joints would fly open. The streets would be filled with different sounds — laughing couples, tinkling glasses, the slow, muffled beat of a bass guitar" (Anderson, 2004, p.52).

Florida's strolls were a significant part of the Circuit, especially since Barnes was based in Jacksonville during the winter. Barnes established a winter headquarters in Jacksonville in 1933 to conduct annual

late-fall-to-spring Southern tours. Barnes elaborated on the stroll in Jacksonville and Florida in his writings in the Defender.

Sadly, Barnes lost his life in a tragic nightclub fire along with other members of his band in 1940. Despite his death, Barnes' success in touring across the south encouraged numerous acts to follow the circuit during segregation. And a successor in Indianapolis stepped into the world of promotion, effectively taking over where Barnes left off.

## THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT CONTINUES



Denver Ferguson. Photo courtesy of Indianapolis Recorder Collection, Indiana Historical Society.

Denver Ferguson lived in Indianapolis in a neighborhood known as Bronzeville. The stroll in Bronzeville was Indiana Avenue, and Ferguson owned a print shop in the neighborhood, Ferguson Printing Company. Ferguson was also in the numbers game (illegal gambling) and printed ticket slips, receipts, and

tally cards. He was very successful with the numbers racket, which enabled him to become financially very comfortable. His brother Sea Ferguson joined him in Indianapolis and opened a real estate brokerage. He and Denver became community developers, extending loans and credit to people to rent or buy property or start businesses. The Ferguson brothers gave generously to charitable causes in Bronzeville. (Lauterbach, 2012)

The brothers got into the music business when Denver and Sea bought the old (White-

owned) Odd Fellows Hall in Indianapolis, and Sea opened the Cotton Club in 1931 on the lower level. Denver converted the top two floors into the Trianon Ballroom. One of the first acts at the Ballroom was Walter Barnes and the Royal Creolians in 1932. Denver later opened the popular Sunset Terrace club on Indiana Avenue. (Lauterbach, 2012)

Ferguson Brothers Booking Agency was started in 1941, just after Walter Barnes' death. The offices were adjacent to Denver's print shop. As an owner of clubs, Denver understood the circuit, the needs of bands, and issues with record companies. The agency was a "booking agent, promoter, sponsor and artists' representative for bands, orchestras, shows, revues, sporting, theatrical and athletic acts, concerts, games, contests, dances, shows and all other kinds of amusement enterprises" (Lauterbach, 2012, p.79).

Ferguson Brothers Booking Agency worked as promoters with club owners across the South. Florida was a part of the circuit that Ferguson managed. "Denver's [Ferguson] bands ran across the white sands of the Sunshine State too, via Bill Rivers, who controlled south Florida from his Rockland Palace nightclub on Miami Beach, plus Cracker Johnson over in West Palm, and Charlie Edd, who supervised north Florida from his Jacksonville club, the Two Spot, to the Gulf of Mexico at Pensacola" (Lauterbach, 2012, pp.88-89).

## THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT AND THE NUMBERS GAME

Denver Ferguson was not alone in working in the numbers game. Illegal gambling via the numbers game was a very popular activity in communities in the early and mid-20th century. In Florida, the numbers game was known as "bolita."

"Bolita is a numbers lottery where the winning number is drawn daily... Bettors can place bets on any number from 1 to 100 and receive a 60 to 1 return if they win... The public is contacted by 'peddlers' or 'sellers,' who receive a commission of 15% of their sales. 'Pick-up' men, who take bets from the sellers to the 'check-up houses,' receive 20% of what they collect. Employees such as 'check-up men,' adding machine operators, and supervisors above this position usually receive salaries for their duties" ("Orlando Police Sergeant Reviews Growth of Bolita for Probers," 1963, p.6)

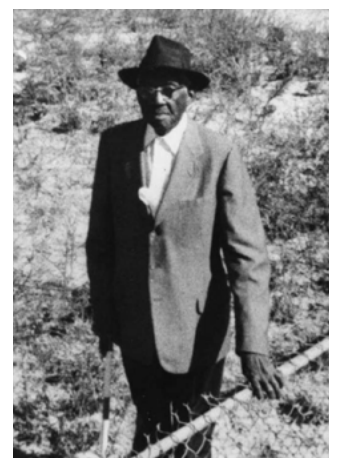
Raids and arrests because of bolita were common and it was seen as a major threat. In 1949, Florida governor Fuller Warren said that Tampa was "in danger of actual civil disorder" because of the prominence of bolita and a near breakdown in law enforcement, and stated that he was willing to call in the National Guard or FBI to assist ("May Call Upon FBI Aid to Rub Out Numbers," 1949, p.1). Nonetheless, bolita continued as a prominent, and dangerous, enterprise across the state. Cracker Johnson was shot and killed in 1946, reportedly by mob members trying to break his financial hold in the area. (Cracker Johnson: 1877-1946, n.d.) Charles Williams, reported bolita king of Pinellas County, was murdered in Tampa in 1953. ("Bolita King' Slain in Tampa," 1953)

Also in 1953, a *Defender* article recounts a sheriff's gaming raid on a "half-mile amusement district" in Perrine, near Miami, "crowded with taverns, dance halls, bawdy houses, pool rooms and other amusement

spots" ("Raids Smash Miami Gaming Joints in Half-Mile Amusement District," 1953, p.5). Those who owned establishments where bolita was played often had liquor licenses revoked and/or were arrested. But law enforcement was often in on the numbers game, offering protection in return for a portion of the cut. ("Says Negro Cops Hit Florida Racket," 1960) Still, major bolita players were the target of law enforcement. Central Florida bolita king Harlan Blackburn and his six African American bolita operators all received prison sentences for their role in gambling. ("Fla. Bolita Boss Gets Six Years," 1954)

The Chitlin' Circuit has been somewhat romanticized, with a focus on the musicians and celebrities that are associated with it. The reality of the Circuit is that it was tough work for the musicians involved, and many of the venues were smaller with lesser-known performers. The venues were intended to be primarily for entertainment on the stroll, for residents who had worked hard all week and were looking for an escape. So along with the music, there might also be other forms of entertainment and escape via bolita, drinking, drugs, and crime, as people often associate with nightclubs and similar venues today.

Clubs, juke joints, bars, and pool halls were popular locations for participating in bolita in particular. Owners of these establishments were sometimes peddlers, pick-up men, or the establishments were check-up houses. Proprietors of larger venues, like Condor Merritt at Club Eaton in Eatonville, Elder Jordan, Jr. at the Manhattan Casino in St. Petersburg, James Jerome "Cracker" Johnson



Elder Jordan, Jr. owned and operated the Manhattan Casino on 22nd Street South in St. Petersburg. Photo courtesy of St. Petersburg Museum of History Archives.

Barbecue, booze and entertainment were intertwined in Florida's Chitlin' Circuit strolls and performance venues. Still served at Jenkins Quality Barbecue in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood, the rib sandwich was a popular Chitlin' Circuit menu item during the 1950s. *Photo courtesy of Jenkins Quality Barbecue.*

in West Palm, and Charlie "Edd" Craddock in Jacksonville, were major operators of the numbers game. Their roles in the bolita world facilitated their financial success and in part enabled them to purchase more real estate and keep nightlife venues operating.

## THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT AND FOOD

In the South, the Black community and barbecue have a relationship that has been intertwined since slavery. While regional styles have evolved over time, barbecue is a

*The origins of American barbecue can be traced to the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which stretches along the Eastern coastline from North Florida to North Carolina.*

cooking method and style of food that predates the state of Florida by centuries. The origins of American barbecue can be traced to the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which stretches along the Eastern coastline from North Florida to North Carolina.

Its roots are a combination of Native American, Spanish and African culinary heritage. The word "barbecue" comes from "barbakoa", a term for open fire grilling used by the Taino people of the Caribbean, adopted into Spanish as "barbacoa". The

indigenous peoples of Florida, such as the Timucua, also slow cooked their meat and fish on grills over open fire. Learning how to barbecue hogs from Caribbean natives, the Spanish are said to have introduced the hog to Florida and the South around 1521.

Prior to their arrival in the Americas, West and Central Africans had already mastered cooking wild game over open pits, and eating the



smoked meat with sauces made from limes, lemons and hot peppers. According to Zora Neale Hurston, the enslaved then adapted and combined these techniques, leading to the various styles of American barbecue and sauces that we know and love today. (Opie, 2015)

By the 1700s, African Americans were southern, or pit, barbecue's "go-to" cooks. This type of barbecue fused African, European, and Indigenous meat cooking and seasoning techniques, and enslaved African Americans perfected it over a couple of centuries. After Emancipation, African Americans were recruited and sent to every part of the country to make authentic southern barbecue at all kinds of special events. In many cases, they stayed and kick-started a community's barbecue restaurant scene. (Raichlen, 2021)

It became customary in southern sawmill towns and turpentine camps for a juke that sold barbecue to serve as a place of entertainment for men to unwind. Black entrepreneurs owned these jukes (sometimes spelled jooks) in the segregated South and provided a place where laborers could eat their daily meals. "The grilled chicken, spare ribs, spicy pork, and whole range of smoky barbecued meat cooked so well in these places...are a continuum of the cooking that



In Fort Pierce's Lincoln Park neighborhood, Bakers Flamingo Bar & Grill was a large Chitlin' Circuit venue that also marketed barbecue as its specialty. *Photo courtesy of Polk, 1961 Fort Pierce City Directory.*

males did, beginning with those on plantations," writes anthropologist Anne Yentsch. (Opie, 2015)

In the novel *The Color Purple*, author Alice Walker provides a rich description of the pairing of liquor and barbecue in a southern juke joint in the 1930s and 1940s. Harpo and Swain stocked their new juke joint with liquor and barbecue. Harpo purchased "cold drinks, he got barbecue, he got chitlins, {and he} got store-bought bread." The business took off after Harpo got Shug Avery, a renowned singer, to agree to perform. That first Saturday night, "so many folks come they couldn't git in." Harpo would go on to gain a bunch of weight while working at the juke joint "drinking homebrew and eating leftover barbecue." (Opie, 2015)

A History of Memphis Barbecue by historian Robert F. Moss indicates that the relationship between the Chitlin Circuit and barbecue was no exception.

"Memphis-style barbecue has its roots in the early years of the 20th century, when smoked ribs and pork sandwiches became lunchtime staples as well as filling late-night treats for revelers at the city's many nightclubs. Memphis in these years was an economic magnet that drew thousands of people from the surrounding countryside to try their fortunes in the city. A large percentage of these migrants were African Americans looking for better economic opportunities than farming, and the city's black population grew from 3,800 at the time of the Civil War to over 50,000 by the turn of the twentieth century, amounting to more than half of the city's total population.

Memphis also drew crowds of weekend visitors, for the city was the hub of the world's largest timber market. Laborers from lumber and turpentine camps in the

bottomlands of Mississippi poured into town on their days off with hard-earned wages in their pockets. They were joined by waiters, cooks, porters, and deckhands from docked riverboats along with more than a thousand men who worked in the city's booming railroad yards.

These visitors were looking for three primary things: food, booze, and entertainment. A vibrant nightlife developed in Memphis, with its center on Beale Street. By day, Beale was the heart of black commerce in the city, lined with banks, dentist offices, dry goods stores, bakeries, and restaurants. At night it transformed into a bustling nightlife district, with saloons, theaters, and music halls, which were where the Memphis blues was born." (Moss, 2021)

Barbecue, booze and entertainment shared a similar relationship in the development of Jacksonville's LaVilla, an early 20th century peer of Memphis' Beale Street. By the 1950s, barbecue restaurants that dotted LaVilla included A Brown Bar & Bar-B-Q, Bill's Bar-B-Que, Duck's, Ivory's Barbecue & Chili Parlor, and Singleton's Superior Bar-B-Q. (Polk, 1955 Jacksonville City Directory)

Many other early barbecue operations were more taverns, clubs and juke joints than restaurants, catering to night-time crowds with live music, jukeboxes, beer, liquor and dance floors. In Lincoln Park, Baker's Flamingo Grill and Bar, the neighborhood's primary live performance Chitlin Circuit venue, advertised

barbecue as its specialty, while also serving cold drinks and hotel rooms rented overnight, weekly or monthly. Other Lincoln Park juke joints and taverns specializing in barbecue during the 1950s and 60s include Little Joe's Tavern, Lincoln Beer Garden, Gollet Drive In, Cozy Corner Cafe, Fuller's Bar-B-Q Drive In, Starlight Cafe, and Red Top Bar-B-Que. (Polk, 1961 Fort Pierce City Directory) During the mid-1960s, Benjamin and Broxie Smith opened and operated the B&B Barbecue Inn across the street from the popular Club Eaton. (Polk, 1966 Orlando City Directory)

On 22nd Street South in St. Petersburg's Deuces district, Geech's Bar-B-Q was the place to get a pig meat sandwich. Owned by John "Geech " and Almer Black, Geech's had several locations along the "Deuces," operating from the 1930s until the early 1980s. A favorite lunch time stop and catering to late-night crowds leaving the Manhattan Casino, Geech's was known for its trademark yellow mustard sauce and a spicy, smokey aroma of oak fired barbecue that permeated the Deuces and beyond. (Reese, 2013)

In many communities on the Chitlin Circuit, a popular menu item just after World War II was the rib sandwich, which consisted of three or four ribs served between slices of bread with slaw and a little barbecue sauce. Served with the bones in, the sandwich was meant to be pulled apart with the fingers and eaten. (Moss, 2021) Surviving the urban renewal of West Ashley Street, the rib sandwich is a popular item still served today at Jenkins Quality Barbecue in Jacksonville. Originally located on West Ashley Street during the 1960s, the downtown Jacksonville restaurant was recently crowned the best barbecue restaurant in Florida by the Food Network. (Food Network, 2023)

"Jenkins Quality Barbecue began with God, a dream and

\$125 on October 11, 1957. Established by Melton Jenkins Jr. and his wife, Willie Mae, Jenkins didn't have much to his name. What he did have was a secret family barbecue sauce recipe, which had been handed down from his father. He used this to open up his first restaurant at Kings Road near Spires Avenue with a menu that strictly featured ribs and chicken. Advertising in those days was done by word of mouth and "smoke signals".

Over six decades later, the second and third generations of the Jenkins family continue to run the local landmark. Over the years, additional locations have opened. Today, Jenkins still offers a fairly straightforward, simple menu of ribs, chicken, pork, beef, wings and a handful of sides. All meat is cooked over an oak wood-fired pit and basted with their famous mustard sauce. Currently there are Jenkins locations in downtown (LaVilla), Northside and Southside." (Davis, 2020)

A major and important part of the Florida Chitlin Circuit's history and legacy, barbecue is a dish that continues to survive as a part of Florida's Main Street communities business environment and scene today.

## **EVOLUTION OF THE CIRCUIT**

The Chitlin' Circuit became so successful because musicians did not make money from

records or recording contracts due to the setup of the music industry at the time. The Circuit enabled musicians to earn a living with regular payments, and helped sustain local economies in Black strolls across the South. However, by the late 1950s as rock 'n' roll (Black music sanitized for White ears) caught on with White crowd, records and recording contracts became more financially viable for musicians and the Circuit began to decline. (Lauterbach, 2012)

Changes in the strolls themselves also began to impact the Circuit after the 1950s in large part due to urban renewal policies that disproportionately and negatively impacted Black communities. "The streets Walter Barnes cruised in 1936-1937, which he found brimming with [B]lack barbershops, dentists, tailors, cafes, hotels, theaters, dance halls, and nightclubs, today are interstate freeway ramps, parking lots, weeds..." (Lauterbach, 2012, p.287). Racist urban renewal policies enacted by White politicians did not just impact the Chitlin' Circuit, they decimated the Black economies that supported the Circuit and made it possible.

"The basic argument against urban renewal, according to its most visible early critic, Jane Jacobs, is that it destroyed communities and innovative economies therein by isolating residential properties from commercial districts. Dense, African American precincts - 'the stroll' in Walter Barnes' hip 1930s jive - fostered such innovative economies as Madam C.J. Walker's cosmetics system, the numbers game, and the [B]lack nightclub business, the latter two respectively feeding and housing the creative economy



of [B]lack music up to rock 'n' roll. Denver Ferguson built the chitlin' circuit around the urban design of the stroll, through community hubs, barbers, and bars where literally everyone socialized, where blanket advertising through placards and handbills could reach a complete audience, and a few, always nearby retail outlets, whether barber and beauty shops, drug stores, or saloons, could serve the demand for tickets, and everyone could walk or catch the trolley to the showplace. Naturally, the removal of such an elegant system hurt the chitlin' circuit business model" (Lauterbach, 2012, p.273).

Despite changes in the music industry and the destruction of the historic strolls, the Circuit evolved. The Circuit offered new opportunities, but it was not like the old Circuit. "There would be no return to the old circuit, and reminders of [B]lack Main Street's importance to American culture were erased from sight" (Lauterbach, 2012, p.267). However, Black musicians were still touring on the remnants of the old Circuit well into the 1970s. Otis Redding's brother Rodgers Redding became a circuit booking agent in the 1980s and revived the package tour (multiple artists performing on one ticket) in the 1990s. There is still a circuit of rhythm and blues musicians touring the country today, but at a significantly smaller scale. (Lauterbach, 2012)



ABOVE: Zora Neale Hurston in 1937. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.



LEFT: A live music performance at the Ritz Theatre and Museum in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood. Photo courtesy of the Ritz Theatre and Museum.

# THE CHITLIN CIRCUIT AND FLORIDA MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES

Venues in Florida Main Street communities were also home to the numbers game. Historic newspapers from the era tell the stories of smaller venues across Florida in the selected Main Street communities that saw their operators arrested or fined, or had their liquor licenses revoked, for bolita operations. Bolita was pervasive and a way of life in mid-century Florida.

Florida was also the home of musicians who made their living on the Circuit across Florida and the United States. Hailing from Sanford, Billy Steward and his Celery City Serenaders were a 12-piece orchestra that in 1931 were on a tour of Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, Minnesota, and South Dakota, managed by Little Phil Dorsey along the way. (Barnes, 18 April 1931) Belton's Florida Syncopators, based in West Palm Beach, was another orchestra touring the Circuit in the early 1930s. (Barnes, 19 December 1931)

Talented musicians from Florida joined up with larger outfits, such as Leonard Graham from St. Petersburg. Graham was a former Gibbs High student and a member of the local band Fess Clark and His Swingsters. He joined up with Wesley Jones and His Carolina Cotton Pickers after they played an Easter breakfast dance in St. Pete, and "was headed straight for California...as second trumpet player for the band" ("Local Boy Joins Cotton Pickers," 1941).

The Florida Main Street communities selected for this project are tangible evidence of what Walter Barnes called "the stroll." Potential Chitlin' Circuit sites are sites where live music events would have taken place within each designated Florida Main Street district between 1930 and 1970. This timeline is based on the period of time following the fall of the T.O.B.A., the creation and rise of the circuit established by Walter Barnes throughout the South, and the gradual decline of the circuit following integration.

Venues where live music performances could have taken place could include bars, beer parlors, churches, dance halls, juke joints, liquor stores, fraternal lodges, parks, night clubs, package

stores, restaurants, taverns and theaters. This narrative includes information on buildings associated with the Chitlin' Circuit that are still in existence as of the writing of this report. Information on other potential sites that no longer exist are included in the Technical Memorandum included as Appendix A.

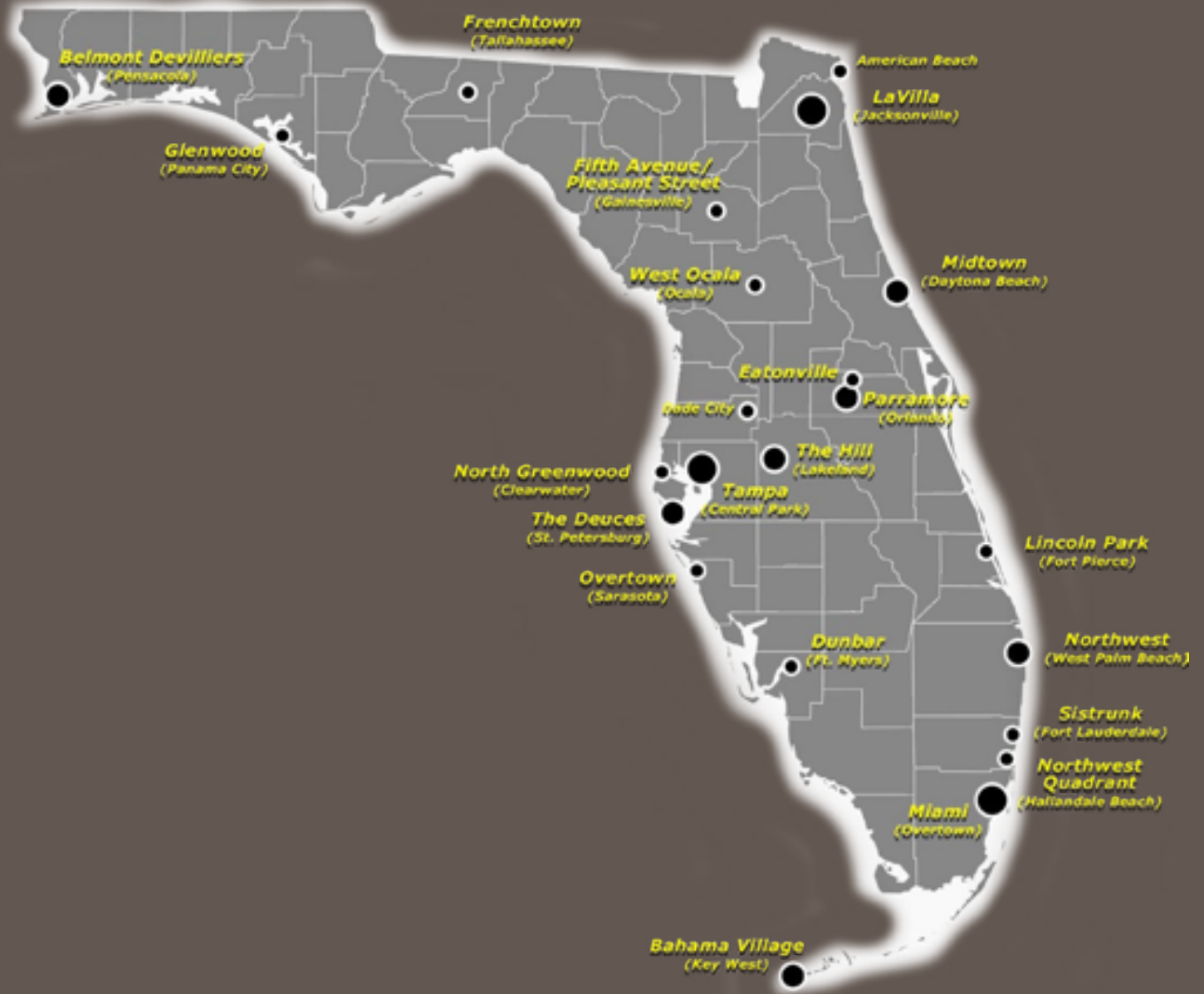
*The Florida Main Street communities selected for this project are tangible evidence of what Walter Barnes called "the stroll."*



**TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF FLORIDA STROLLS AND THEIR PRIMARY CHITLIN' CIRCUIT VENUE BY 1960**

CITY	STROLL	NEIGHBORHOOD	EXAMPLE VENUE
Miami	NW 2nd Avenue	Overtown	Lyric Theatre
Tampa	Central Avenue	Central Park (The Scrub)	Cotton Club
Jacksonville	West Ashley Street	LaVilla (Uptown)	Ritz Theatre
St. Petersburg	South 22nd Street	The Deuces	Manhattan Casino
Orlando	Parramore Street	Parramore	South Street Casino
Ft. Lauderdale	Sistrunk Boulevard	Sistrunk	Downbeat Club
Pensacola	Belmont & Devilliers Streets	Belmont Devilliers	Gussie's Records Shop
West Palm Beach	N Rosemary Avenue	Northwest Neighborhood	Sunset Lounge
Tallahassee	Macomb Street	Frenchtown	Red Bird Cafe
Lakeland	North Florida Avenue	The Hill	Roxy Theater
Daytona Beach	Mary McLeod Bethune	Midtown Boulevard	Ritz Theater, Warren's Liquors & Lounge
Hollywood/Hallandale Beach	Foster Road	Northwest Quadrant	The Palms
Coconut Grove	Grand Avenue	West Grove	ACE Theater
Clearwater	MLK Jr Avenue (Greenwood Avenue)	North Greenwood	Blue Chip Bar
Sarasota	Central Avenue	Overtown/Newtown	Savoy Bar
Key West	Petronia Street	Bahama Village	Frederick Douglass School
Panama City	Cove Boulevard	Glenwood	Harlem Bar
Gainesville	NW 5th Avenue	5th Ave/Pleasant St.	Sarah's Restaurant
Ft. Pierce	Avenue D	Lincoln Park	Baker's Flamingo Grill & Bar
Ft. Myers	Dr. MLK Boulevard	Dunbar	McCullum Hall
Eatonville	Kennedy Boulevard	Eatonville	Club Eaton

# MAP OF FLORIDA COMMUNITIES WITH STROLLS



# JACKSONVILLE: LAVILLA

## LAVILLA AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

**H**istorically, the land we refer to today as Jacksonville is on the traditional Homelands and territories of the Timucua people. After forced removal of the Indigenous people, the land was in part portioned off by the United States government to various homesteaders through a series of land grants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In 1866, Francis F. L'Engle purchased and subdivided land in the area, forming the Town of LaVilla. L'Engle became LaVilla's first mayor. United States Colored Troops settled in the area after the Civil War ended, having arrived there during the Union occupation. By 1870, 70% of LaVilla's population was African American, many of whom worked in Jacksonville's booming hotel, lumber, port, building, and railroad industries. Early businesses include the Banes and Washington Lumber Dealership, the El Modelo Cigar factory, the Bergner and Engle Brewing Company, the Refrigerated Ice Works, carriage works, and beef dressing works.

In 1871, famous LaVilla resident and educator, composer, and activist James Weldon Johnson was born in Jacksonville. Henry B. Plant opened the "Waycross Short Line" railroad in 1881 making direct rail travel from the North possible. LaVilla was annexed by the City of Jacksonville in 1887. 3,000 people lived in LaVilla at the time. By the 1890s, Ward Street in LaVilla developed into a red light district, giving the neighborhood its original aura of notoriety. The district was established in 1887 as a result of Jacksonville mayor John Q. Burbridge who chased most of Jacksonville's

prostitutes over the city line to the suburb of LaVilla. Burbridge's efforts were thwarted when Jacksonville annexed LaVilla two months later on May 31, 1887.

Henry Flagler, as president of the Jacksonville Terminal Company, opened a passenger railroad depot in LaVilla in January 1897. That same year John Rosamond Johnson returned to LaVilla and started teaching private music lessons out of his parents' house. Two years later, James Weldon Johnson wrote "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing, which brother Rosamond Johnson set to music. This song became known as the "Negro National Anthem."

By 1900, Jacksonville was the largest city in Florida with a population of 28,429. 16,236 of these residents were African American. The following year, the Great Fire of 1901 starts at LaVilla's Cleveland Fibre Factory (a mattress factory at Beaver and Davis) and destroys a significant portion of downtown Jacksonville; however, most of LaVilla is spared. The same year, Brewster Hospital opened, becoming the first African American hospital in Jacksonville. Also in 1901, along with seven other business associates, Abraham Lincoln Lewis founded the Afro-American Insurance Association.

In 1902, a consortium of Black and White businessmen organized the North Jacksonville Street Company. R. R. Robinson, the African American president of the North Jacksonville Street Company, hired black conductors and motormen for their cars and served the African American neighborhoods in the northern part of the city. Later that decade, in 1908, film companies like Kalem, Pathé, Thanhouser, and Lubin built production facilities in the region to take advantage of its sunshine, tropical locations, and cheap labor. Norman Studios was later established that created early Black films. Early theaters in LaVilla, including the Globe Theater, were opened in the first decade of the 20th century.

By 1916, large numbers of working class African-Americans, who had prospered during the rebuilding of Jacksonville after the 1901 fire, were beginning to leave the region. By 1916 recruiters from two northern railroads, the Pennsylvania and the New York Central were successfully drawing black workers away from Jacksonville. 16,000 African-Americans left Jacksonville between 1916 and 1917 due to economic conditions, white militancy, and Jim Crow laws.

In 1917, Stanton High School on Ashley Street was completed. In 1919, the \$2.5 million Jacksonville Terminal in LaVilla was opened on November 17, 1919. Modeled after NYC's Penn Station, the train station was the largest south of Washington, D.C. As a result, the

area of LaVilla south of Forsyth Street and west of Bridge (Broad) Street became known as Railroad Row. The district was characterized by small hotels (ex. St. Charles, DeSoto, Bay View, Maxwell, Olympia, etc.) serving railroad passengers.

In the 1920s, James Weldon Johnson was one of the major inspirations and promoters of the Harlem Renaissance. Zora Neale Hurston, A.

Philip Randolph, and Ma Rainey are a few notable Harlem Renaissance figures who also had Jacksonville ties.

In 1934, the Clara White Mission purchased the closed Globe Theatre. The Ward Street red light district had been in continuous operation, but was shut down by Mayor Haydon Burns in the 1940s after health concerns were expressed by the US Navy. Bordellos were replaced by commercial warehouses. The 654-unit Blodgett Homes public housing complex was constructed in 1942. Two years later, annual rail traffic at the Jacksonville Terminal

peaked with 38,345 trains and 10 million passengers. Over 2,000 were employed at the LaVilla railroad station.

The original 18-mile path of the Jacksonville Expressway system was proposed in 1947. The selection of the expressway system's routes was determined by avoiding areas deemed most valuable at the time, to eliminate "blighted" neighborhoods and serve as barriers to stop spread of "blight." Deemed



The Strand Theatre on West Ashley Street in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood. Photo courtesy of Ellie Lee Weems.



A Jaxson Magazine cultural heritage walking tour of LaVilla. Courtesy of Adrienne Burke, AICP, Esq.

to be “blighted” neighborhoods, the expressway’s original route cut through LaVilla. The first link of the Jacksonville expressway opened in 1958, connecting

Beaver Street in LaVilla with the Fuller Warren Bridge.

What became known as Ax Handle Saturday took place on August 27, 1960 as a result of a Civil Rights sit-in demonstration at the lunch counter of downtown’s Woolworths at Hemming Park. A White mob attacks the teenage demonstrators with ax handles. Riot ends once police jump in after a group of LaVilla youth, known as the Boomerangs, fight back to protect demonstrators.

Brewster Hospital closed in 1966 after suffering from competition from previously segregated medical facilities after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. After the 1960s, the neighborhood entered a period of precipitous decline. Urban decay set in as the railroad industry declined and the construction of I-95 disrupted the neighborhood, and after the end of segregation, many residents left the area to pursue opportunities elsewhere. The last Amtrak train left LaVilla’s Jacksonville Terminal on its way to St. Petersburg on

January 3, 1974. A victim of high maintenance costs, decreased rail travel and civic shortsightedness, the terminal (once LaVilla largest and Jacksonville’s second largest employer) was closed for good.

During the 1980s, the crack cocaine epidemic hit LaVilla hard, furthering the decline. 394 families were relocated in 1990 and the Blodgett Homes public housing complex was demolished. In 1991, three LaVilla bars were forced to close by the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office for being said to be breeding grounds for crime in an area that the city wanted to revitalize. This was the first time prosecutors used a law prohibiting buildings from being public nuisances to try to clean up an entire strip of trouble spots. The court order prohibited opening new bars in the buildings. In 1993, the River City Renaissance plan crafted by then Mayor Ed Austin allocated millions of dollars to revitalizing LaVilla. Dilapidated buildings were torn down and historical structures, like the Ritz Theatre, restored or reconstructed. This late-stage urban renewal program decimated the remaining historic fabric of LaVilla. (“The Rise & Fall of a Great Black Neighborhood”, Davis, 2014).

Looking south down Broad Street in Jacksonville’s LaVilla neighborhood during the 1920s. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.



## THE STROLL: ASHLEY STREET

LaVilla's Ashley Street was the stroll and an entertainment mecca for African Americans in the early 20th century. One of the most famous early entertainers was Patrick H. Chappelle. Born in 1869, Chappelle dominated the entertainment profession in the southeastern United States for most of the first decade of the 20th century and was one of the most intriguing entrepreneurs of his time. In 1898, Patrick Chappelle opened the Excelsior Hall on Bridge Street in LaVilla (now Broad Street). Excelsior Hall was one of the first Black-owned theatrical venues in the South. (Smith, 2006)

Patrick Chappelle established the Rabbit's Foot Company, a traveling performance troupe in 1900. By 1902, Jacksonville, by way of LaVilla, became a cultural exchange partner with New Orleans. LaVilla became a brief haven for John Robichaux, the leader of the New Orleans-based Lyre Club Symphony Orchestra, during this period after the elimination of the relative privilege of the Creole racial distinction and just before the implementation of Florida's most restrictive segregation laws. In 1905, Gertrude Pritchett, the bride of William "Pa" Rainey, a performer in Chappelle's Rabbit's Foot Company, joined

the troupe and adopted the stage persona of "Ma" Rainey. (Smith, 2006)

Theaters began to open on LaVilla's Ashley Street in the first decade of the 20th century. Frank Crowd opened the Bijou Theater at 615 West Ashley Street on July 19, 1908, although it closed in 1909. That year, Lionel D. Joel and Mr. Glickstein opened the Colored Airdome Theater at 601 West Ashley Street. With a seating capacity of 800, the Airdome is said to have been the largest theater exclusively for Black people in the South. The Globe Theater opened its doors to the public in January 1910. (Smith, 2006)

The first published account of blues singing on a public stage occurs at the Airdome on April 16, 1910. In an Indianapolis Freeman Stage section article entitled "Jacksonville Theatrical Notes," the reviewer states that Prof. John W. F. Woods, a ventriloquist, and his doll Henry, "set the Airdome wild by making little Henry drunk. He uses the "blues" for little Henry in this drunken act." (Indianapolis Freeman, 1910; Smith, 2006)

In 1911, the team of Rainey and Rainey joined the Globe Stock Company that January. At this time, Ma Rainey was billed as a "coon shouter" and the attraction of her powerful

A 1947 aerial of LaVilla's West Ashley Street.  
Photo courtesy of the Ritz Theatre and Museum.



West Ashley Street



moan was undeniable. She was receiving three or four encores every night. Patrick Chappelle died that year, and in 1912, Chappelle's Rabbit's Foot Company was taken over by Fred Wolcott, a white carnival owner, who relocated the show's headquarters to Port Gibson, Mississippi. (Smith, 2006)

By November of 1913, new motion picture houses in LaVilla created additional competition for audience dollars. Two white-owned movie theaters, the Frolic and the Palace (later renamed the Star) opened on Ashley Street to serve Black people only. The Strand Theater opened at 701 Ashley Street in June 1915. It rivaled the Apollo Theater in Harlem and the Regal Theater of Chicago for artistry and popularity in its heyday. (Smith, 2006)

During the 1920s and 1930s, new venues opened in LaVilla that provided additional opportunities for socializing and entertainment. In 1921, James "Charlie Edd" Craddock moved to Jacksonville and opened the Little Blue Chip bar on the ground floor of the Richmond Hotel on Broad Street. By 1930, Craddock's businesses included the Blue Chip Hotel, Blue Chip Cafe and the Blue Chip Billiards. (Polk, 1930 Jacksonville City Directory)

West Ashley Street's largest building and primary live performance venue, the Knights of Pythias Building, opened at 727 West Ashley Street in 1922. The five floor mixed-use building housed a variety of businesses, as well as boarding rooms, meeting facilities, and a third floor dance hall where nationally-known entertainers performed until 1957. (Polk, Jacksonville City Directory)

In 1925, the 665-seat Frolic Theatre opened at 741 West Ashley Street. Featuring a single screen with a seating capacity of 1,000, the

Frolic Theatre was said to be the largest and best equipped colored motion picture theater in the south. (Davis, 2020)

Four years later, Neil Witschen's Ritz Theatre opened in September 1929. Designed in the Art Deco style by local architect Jefferson Powell, the one screen, 970-seat theater quickly became an important part of the neighborhood's Chitlin' Circuit scene by anchoring an expansion of LaVilla's stroll along North Davis Street. (Davis, 2020)

During the 1930s, Manuel's Tap Room and the Lenape Bar began to feature live music. Co-owned by Craddock and Manuel Rivera, Manuel's Tap Room opened its doors in 1937. Operating 24 hours a day, the December 1942 edition of the Crisis Magazine described Manuel's as the most exclusive place of its kind in Jacksonville for drinking, dining and dancing. (Crisis, Dec. 1942, pg.31). Occupying a space that had been the previous home of the Harlem Bar, Holland Bar, and Brown Bar, the Lenape quickly became a favorite destination for visiting musicians following its 1937 opening. (Polk, 1937 Jacksonville City Directory)

Barnes discussed venues on the West Ashley Street stroll in LaVilla during one of his stays in 1937, and noted "All in all, Jacksonville is a very fly town" (Barnes, 1937, p.24). Defender readers across the country would have learned about the the Knights of Pythias ballroom, the Flajax Club, the Lenape Bar, Hayes Luncheonette, the Green Front Cafe, the Wynn Hotel, the Strand and Frolic theaters, the Harlem Grill Tavern, and the Hollywood Music Shoppe along LaVilla's Ashley Street stroll. As Barnes noted, "The stroll is West Ashley Street, where you can see everybody who is anybody" (Barnes, 1937, p.20)

"The group's [Barnes orchestra] 'June in January'

promised to thaw their numb, weary hands. 'I am unpacking my palm beaches and linens, preparatory to spending a winter in good old Florida, where the temperature is 98 degrees the year round,' Barnes bragged in December 1936. In Jacksonville, 'the telephone lines started buzzing, taxis started running, the tailors, the restaurants, and in fact, the whole stroll turned out on W. Ashley Street in this city's young Harlem when Walter Barnes and his orchestra returned,' he humbly began. Barnes had installed the band's winter quarters in Jacksonville for the previous few years, ensuring a strong turnout of the gracious gentleman's many Floridian friends. Fun-makers came from Palatka, Fernandina, St. Augustine, Gainesville, Daytona, and Tallahassee, by the maestro's account, to join Jacksonville's cream at the Flajax club for the big dance. 'This was the first time in the club's life that a band the caliber of ours furnished the tunes.' Green and maroon streamers flowed through the auditorium. The women in long evening gowns swayed in the arms of tuxedoed gents. The band swung into 'How Long Blues' at ten o'clock the evening of January 4, 1937, and beat out the last chorus of 'Barnes Stomp' at three the next morning.

After the dance, the leading colored citizenry of Jacksonville, 'where joy reigns supreme,' feted Walter, Dorothy [his wife], and the boys. Doctors, attorneys, president of a nearby [B] lack college, and the standard assortment of morticians and dentists toasted the midget maestro. The party made its way down West Ashley to the Lenape, the largest sepia bar around, for champagne on the house, and then to the Green Front cafe for breakfast and a complimentary picnic basket for the trip. Barnes sat behind the bus driver on the way out of town, drowsily jotting notes, nibbling at a piece of cornbread. 'All in all, Jacksonville is a very fly town,' he admitted. They played around the state for the next month, down to Sarasota, Miami, and West Palm Beach, up to Tampa and St. Petersburg, and finally back nearly where they started in Jacksonville." (Lauterbach, Jacksonville grew from 129,549 residents in 1930 to 204,275 residents in 1950. World War II was a significant economic driver in the city. During this period in time, several naval bases were created in the city and the downtown riverfront became one of the country's largest shipbuilding centers on the Atlantic coast. This period of growth led to additional entertainment opportunities for Black-owned businesses throughout LaVilla and the rest of the city.

"The city's economy had gotten a wartime boost when its port was put to shipbuilding. Nightclubs, theaters, and other Black-owned businesses lined Ashley Street and others surrounding it in the LaVilla neighborhood, west of downtown. National touring acts such as Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, and Erskine Hawkins played on the fifth-floor Knights of Pythias ballroom and other halls;

tickets were available at the Hollywood Music Store near Ashley and Broad. Manuel's Tap Room and the Two Spot, which was a few minutes north of LaVilla by car, were the most prominent nightclubs." (Capouya, 2017, p.32)

In 1946, 15-year-old Ray Charles Robinson, later known as Ray Charles, moved to LaVilla to stay with friends of his mother after she passed away. For over a year, Robinson played the piano for bands at the Ritz Theatre in LaVilla, earning \$4 a night.

"Jacksonville was a shrewd choice and, whether or not RC (Ray Charles) was conscious of it, an intrepid one. The biggest city in Florida was home to some seventy-five thousand Negroes, as they had begun to be called, and going back to the 1920s, that community had one of the most highly developed Black entertainment districts in the state and perhaps the country. Jacksonville's African American musical heritage was long and deep, going back to James Weldon Johnson, who wrote the Black national anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" in 1900, and the 1920s/1930s blues singer Blind Blake. Stanton High School, on Ashley Street between Broad and Clay, also featured a well-respected jazz band directed by James P. Small, who also led a local professional outfit, the Blue Devils." (Capouya, 2017, p.32)

In 1947, Adrian Kenneth "Ken" Knight became

the first Black radio announcer in the South when he went to work for a radio station in Daytona Beach. He moved to Jacksonville and produced the first black television program in Jacksonville, the Ken Knight Show which featured live gospel music on WJXT, TV-4. Knight was program director in 1949 at WERD, the first Black-owned radio station. He continued working in radio and became the general manager of radio station WPDQ. Also credited as one of the founders of the National Association of Television and Radio Announcers, Knight's profile helped promote LaVilla's entertainment scene across the state.

"Like RC [Ray Charles], trumpeter Teddy Washington was born in 1930, and he grew up on Clay Street, near Ashley. 'Ashley and Davis Streets was where the action was for Black people,' he said. 'This was our turf.' Washington and his musician friends competed in talent shows at the Roosevelt Theater and knew all the restaurants and cafes on Ashley the professionals would frequent, including Ms. Daisy Ford's Boston Chop House. As for nightclubs, 'El Chico on Ashley Street would jam all night long.' Washington lived across the street from Charlie "Hoss" Singleton, a performer and lyricist who co-wrote the Sinatra hit "Strangers in the Night" and the pop standard "Spanish Eyes", as well as writing songs performed by Nat King Cole. According to Washington, he and RC both worked in an annual show Singleton ran at Myrtle Avenue Park called the April Follies" (Capouya, 2017, p.32).

Ashley Street and Jacksonville were known for high-quality musicians. “‘Jacksonville had a glut of “first-quality musicians - I mean real motherfuckers - you never heard of,’ [Ray] Charles said. ‘Cats could play their instruments, and I mean from top to bottom’” (Capouya, 2017, p.36). Musicians naturally gravitated towards Ashley Street, but unlike in other Florida locations, Black bands also worked in the White community, playing at private parties, country clubs, and big social events that called for dance music. [Local musician] Tiny York played New Year’s Eve for a White doctor and his wife twenty years running (Capouya, 2017)

However, making it as a musician on Ashley Street was not easy. Musicians did not make a significant amount of money, even with the thriving atmosphere of Ashley Street. As an example, Tiny York had a second job as a landscaper for most of his career. Even Ray Charles had a difficult time, and left Jacksonville for Seattle.

“Perversely, the fact that Jacksonville was big, hip, and prosperous enough to draw national touring acts hurt the local musicians. When Count Basie, Billy Eckstine, or Nat “King” Cole came to town, locals couldn’t work that club during the occupation. Those stars would also draw patrons away from locals’ gigs on those nights.

Sometimes, too, the big names might not have their next engagement nailed down, or it would fall through, and they’d end up, as the professionals put it, “stranded.” They’d immediately try to find more work where they were

stuck, further reducing the Jacksonville musicians’ chances of a well paid gig. RC [Ray Charles], hardly a fixture or mainstay among those working pros, had even less of a shot.” (Capouya, 2017, p.38)

The heyday of LaVilla’s theater scene came to a close by the 1950s and 1960s. In 1950, the Frolic Theatre closed. Since demolished, the site where the theater stood is now the LaVilla School for the Arts. In 1957, the Knights of Pythias Building, the Ashley Street stroll’s largest and tallest structure, was demolished for a proposed development that never came to fruition. The Strand Theater closed in December 1968 after National Theatre Enterprises failed to renew its lease and was demolished the next year after suffering significant fire damages. This location is also now a part of the campus of the LaVilla School of Arts.

This decline came at a time when a large section of West Ashley Street and LaVilla were razed for the construction of Interstate 95. Despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, LaVilla continued to remain a popular entertainment destination in the Black community until the mid 1970s with the closure of the neighborhood’s largest employers, its railroad terminals and depots.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the most serious decline in LaVilla’s stroll as the neighborhood declined and the City of Jacksonville destroyed many historic buildings as a part of its River City Renaissance urban renewal program.



CAPTIONS (clockwise from top): A portrait of LaVilla's Ray Charles. Photo courtesy of the Eartha M.M. White Historical Museum. The Knights of Pythias Hall in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood during the 1940s. Photo courtesy of Gordon Parks and the Library of Congress. Duke Ellington and band members playing baseball in front of a LaVilla hotel in 1955. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress. Inside the Ritz Theatre and Museum. The Ritz Theatre and Museum is a Black history museum honoring the legacy of the LaVilla neighborhood and Chitlin' Circuit stroll. Photo courtesy of the Ritz Theatre and Museum.

# CHITLIN' CIRCUIT ON ASHLEY STREET

## Ritz Theater & Museum

**829 NORTH DAVIS STREET**

In September of 1929, Neil Witschen opened the Ritz Theater at the corner of West State and Davis Streets, just a few blocks north of West Ashley Street. Designed in the Art Deco style by local architect Jefferson Powell, the one screen, 970-seat theater quickly became LaVilla's motion picture venue and an important anchor of the neighborhood's Davis Street commercial district. (Davis, 2020)

After the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the Ritz lost the support of the declining community around it and closed in 1972. As a part of Mayor Ed Austin's River City Renaissance Plan, the theater was partially demolished and renovated into a new theater and museum. The new Ritz Theatre opened on September 30, 1999 and continues to operate as LaVilla's primary active Chitlin Circuit venue. (Davis, 2020)

A Chitlin' Circuit era musical performance in LaVilla. Photo courtesy of the Eartha M.M. White Historical Museum.



The Ritz Theatre and Museum. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.



## Old Stanton School

**521 WEST ASHLEY STREET**



Old Stanton School. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**T**his site was the original location of the Stanton Normal School, which opened on April 10, 1869. The school was named in honor of General Edwin McMasters Stanton, an outspoken abolitionist and Secretary of War under President Lincoln during the Civil War. In 1877, President Ulysses Grant visited the school during a tour of Florida. During the visit, a six-year-old student named James Weldon Johnson raised his hand from the crowd and Grant shook it. Johnson would go on to become the school's principal in 1894, and expanded it to become the only high school for African-Americans in the city. While serving as the principal, Johnson wrote "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which his brother Rosamond put to music. This song would later become known as the Negro National Anthem. (Davis, 2017)

The Johnson brothers relocated to New York City in 1902. James Weldon Johnson became a nationally famous songwriter, author, poet, diplomat, and civil rights orator. As a result of one of the first civil-rights litigation cases in Jacksonville and the South, the existing building was constructed in 1917. In 1953, this school was replaced by a newer facility in the nearby Durkeeville neighborhood. During the 1953-54 school year, it served as a junior high school. It then served as the Duval County Vocational School from 1954 until closing in 1971. Today, the building is currently vacant. (Davis, 2017)

## Clara White Mission / Globe Theater

615 WEST ASHLEY STREET

The Clara White Mission and Eartha M.M. White Historical Museum. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.



**F**rank Crowd, a prominent Jacksonville-based barber and shooting gallery owner, opened the Bijou Theatre on July 19, 1908. Occupying a new three story building at 615 West Ashley Street, the 218-seat theater featured silent films as its primary attraction. The first feature length motion picture ever produced, "The Story of Moses," was shown at the Bijou. A few months later, Kalem Studio's "The Artist and the Girl," one of the earliest films produced in Jacksonville, made it to the Bijou's screen. By May 1909, Crowd had expanded the Bijou with a stage for vaudeville shows. (Davis, 2017)

However, facing too much competition from the new Colored Airdome next door, Crowd closed the Bijou in 1909. Down but not out, Crowd invested \$25,000 into his theater, adding new inclined floors, a balcony, private boxes, and an all-tungsten lighting system. On January 17, 1910 he reopened as the Globe Theatre. In addition, the team of Rainey and Rainey joined Crowd's Globe Stock Company that January. At the time, Ma Rainey (Gertrude Pridgett Rainey) was billed as a 'coon shouter'

and the attraction of her powerful moan was undeniable. It was observed that she was receiving three or four encores every night. By the end of her career, Ma Rainey had become billed as "The Mother of the Blues," making several recordings with influential jazz figure Louis Armstrong. Jelly Roll Morton, the father of Jazz, also performed at the Globe on a regular basis during his brief time living in LaVilla. (Davis, 2017)

During its heyday, the Globe was acknowledged as the "anchor to the southern road shows" and its Russell-Owens stock company was one of the most influential pioneering African-American theatrical stock companies in the country. Like its popular neighbor, the Colored Airdome, changing times eventually sent the Globe into a downward spiral and by 1916, its doors were closed. However, unlike most historical buildings in town, the Globe still stands. In 1934, the vacant building became the new home of the Clara White Mission. Eartha Mary Magdalene White, who sang as a lyric soprano as a cast member of John Ishma's "Oriental America", was a noted





Dr. Eartha M.M. White (*left*) and Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune (*right*) in front of the Clara White Mission. Photo courtesy of the Jacksonville Historical Society.

local humanitarian and civil rights activist. Notable guests and friends who visited the mission during White's lifetime include Booker T. Washington, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Martin Luther King Jr. While in LaVilla, a young Ray Charles hung around the Musician Union office at Clara White where he honed his playing skills and provided the opportunity to back up some of these musicians at local clubs. Today, the Clara White Mission is a legacy institution in the neighborhood. Dedicated on December 17, 1978, the Eartha M.M. White Museum is a museum on the second floor of the building that contains most of her furniture, objets d'art and possessions. (Davis, 2017)

West Ashley Street in front of the Clara White Mission in 1947. Photo courtesy of the Eartha M.M. White Collection and University of North Florida Thomas G. Carpenter Library.



## The Lenape Bar & Wynn Hotel

**644 WEST ASHLEY STREET**



Originally built across the street from 19th-century madam Cora Crane's Hotel de Dream, this three story structure housed a variety of businesses during the ragtime, jazz and blues age of the early 20th century. In 1913, it housed a restaurant owned by M. Kinsey Bellamy. During the 1920s, George Sanders operated the Hotel Sanders on the building's upper floors. In 1931, the hotel was rebranded as the Wynn Hotel. A popular jazz club called the Lenape Tavern and Bar opened in 1937 on the first floor. (Davis, 2021)

Operated by Jack D. Wynn, the hotel became a favorite spot of Louis Armstrong when visiting LaVilla. Wynn's son, David Ruben Wynn, is a noted local artist who had his work exhibited at the Center of International Culture in Paris, France in 1975. From the 1940s through the 1970s, the hotel was



operated by Isaiah and Lillie Brown as the Green Front Hotel. During a 1937 visit to West Ashley Street, Walter Barnes described the Lenape as the city's largest sepia bar. In addition to Armstrong, others who performed at the Lenape include Dizzie Gillespie, Billie Holiday, James Brown, and Ray Charles, who briefly lived at 633 West Church Street. It was identified as Hotel Sanders in the Green Book. (Davis, 2021)

ABOVE: The Lenape Bar & Wynn Hotel. Current photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP. Historic photo courtesy of the Jaxson Magazine.

## Masonic Temple

**410 BROAD STREET**



The Masonic Temple.  
Photo courtesy of Ennis  
Davis, AICP.

**8**01 North Jefferson Street is a two story brick building that was completed in 1927. Featuring two upstairs apartment units, the ground level retail storefronts were occupied by a variety of businesses, including The Apothecary Shop by Theo M. Christopher. In 1958, William Graham opened Bill's Bar-B-Q in a storefront at 803 North Jefferson Street. In 1966, the restaurant was taken over by James Corbett. It was last listed in the 1971 city directory as being owned and operated by

Lorine Jordon. In 1975, L.C. and Pearl Williams opened the Starlight Diner in the storefront. Starlite Diner advertised itself as a restaurant offering meals, carry out service, short orders, sandwiches, beer, wine, soft drinks, pies, and cakes. The Starlight's slogan suggested it was "a place where friends meet to chat and eat". In 1977, the business was acquired by Jimmie Frazier and renamed the Stardust Diner. Today, the building is vacant. (Polk, Jacksonville City Directories)

## Richmond Hotel

420 BROAD STREET



The Richmond Hotel. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**B**uilt in 1909 by George and Alice Kilpatrick, the Richmond Hotel was once one of the finest hotels in the city for African-Americans during LaVilla's blues and jazz era. Featuring 48 upper floor rooms and a 65-seat restaurant, its famed guests included Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday. Many musicians would stand on the hotel's balcony to woo the crowds that came to see their performances, including the Cotton Club's Cab Calloway, who sang "Hi-De-Ho" to the ladies of Jacksonville. (Davis, 2017)

Business declined following desegregation, and the Richmond closed for good in the early 1970s. Situated as a key destination on the Broad Street strip, the Richmond's street level spaces were occupied by several jazz and blues era businesses and interesting historical figures. (Davis, 2017)

In 1910, Daniel Danson owned and operated a saloon at 428 Broad Street. By 1915, T.E. Williams had taken over the saloon. However, for most of the building's history, this space was occupied by a number of drug stores. During the 1950s, it also served as the Black bus station for the Jacksonville Coach Company. In 1921, James "Charlie Edd" Craddock established the Little Blue Chip club at 426 Broad after relocating to Jacksonville. Said to be a controversial character and recognized as a local bolita kingpin during LaVilla's heyday, Craddock opened a bread line for the hungry during the Depression, giving him a reputation as a philanthropist on the Black side of town. (Davis, 2017)

Growing out of this storefront, Craddock expanded his real estate empire to include several rental properties, the Charlie Edd Hotel, Young Men's Smoke Chop, Uncle Charlie Edd's Barber Shop, loan offices and

pawn shops, with a total workforce of 500. He was also the co-owner of Manuel's Tap Room on Ashley Street, a popular venue that was open 24 hours a day. However, his most well known business was the Two Spot nightclub at Moncrief Road and 45th Street. In 1942, the Two Spot was said to be "the finest dance place in the country owned by a Negro". (Davis, 2017)

Craddock's clubs, bars and taverns were said to be protected by the local police and were hotbeds for bolita. Bolita, Spanish for little ball, was a type of illegal lottery gambling popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Cuba and among Florida's working class Hispanic, Italian, and black populations. Littered with Cuban cigar companies, a crude form of bolita had arrived in LaVilla by 1911. Estimated at a total of \$500 million gambled

on the game annually, it may have been the city's most profitable illegal business by the 1930s. Craddock was so successful that in 1942, he paid the federal government \$35,000 in back taxes. (Davis, 2017)

Next door at 424 Broad, C.H. Hagan operated a billiard hall in 1910. For years, a barber named William Schenk operated a pool hall out of the same storefront and by 1960, its name was Bonner's Pool Room. In the second half of the 20th century and up until recent years, Deloach Furniture operated out of the building's ground level. Today, the first floor is occupied by Delo Studios. Today, its street level retail spaces are occupied by Delo Studios, an art gallery, meeting and event space. However, the building's former hotel rooms have largely sat empty and untouched over the past five decades. (Davis, 2017)

## Central Hotel

**605 WEST BEAVER STREET**



The Central Hotel. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**6** 05 North Broad Street opened as the Central Hotel in 1912. From the 1920s through the 1940s, the hotel was operated by Henry Smart and Mabel White. During the 1950s and 1960s, the hotel was operated by Julius and Vandoria Jackson. One block north of Ashley Street, for many years it was a social landmark in LaVilla. In 1935, the Jacksonville Negro Welfare League occupied one of its storefronts at 704 Broad Street. In 1947, the Jacksonville Negro Welfare League merged with a new Jacksonville branch of the National Urban League, officially becoming the Jacksonville Urban League. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Waldorf Vandoria Cafeteria was located inside of the New Center Hotel storefront on the northwest corner of Broad and Beaver Streets. In 2017, the building was renovated by Clara White Mission to house veterans. (Davis, 2017)

## The Whetstonian

**801 NORTH JEFFERSON STREET**



The Whetstonian. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**8**01 North Jefferson Street is a two story brick building that was completed in 1927. Featuring two upstairs apartment units, the ground level retail storefronts were occupied by a variety of businesses, including The Apothecary Shop by Theo M. Christopher. In 1958, William Graham opened Bill's Bar-B-Q in a storefront at 803 North Jefferson Street. In 1966, the restaurant was taken over by James Corbett. It was last listed in the 1971 city directory as being owned and operated by

Lorine Jordon. In 1975, L.C. and Pearl Williams opened the Starlight Diner in the storefront. Starlite Diner advertised itself as a restaurant offering meals, carry out service, short orders, sandwiches, beer, wine, soft drinks, pies, and cakes. The Starlight's slogan suggested it was "a place where friends meet to chat and eat". In 1977, the business was acquired by Jimmie Frazier and renamed the Stardust Diner. Today, the building is vacant. (Polk, Jacksonville City Directories)

# ST. PETERSBURG: DEUCES LIVE

## 22ND STREET SOUTH

### ST. PETERSBURG AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

“During the hip 1960s, the street’s double digits gave it a nickname, ‘the Deuces.’ Its ten-block-long core of [B]lack-operated businesses, professional services, entertainment hotspots and churches offered most everything a person required in a segregated society. You could be born in Mercy Hospital, buy groceries, clothing and furniture in any number of small stores, go on an after-school date to Henderson’s soda fountain, choose a favorite beer garden, see a movie at the Royal Theater, consult physicians, dentists and lawyers, and, when life was over, be served by one of two funeral homes.

People ate at Newkirk’s Chop House, got their hair cut at Oscar Kleckley’s barbershop and danced at the Manhattan Casino to the music of such all-stars as Buddy Johnson and Count Basie” (Peck & Wilson, 2006, p.42).

African Americans began to arrive in St Petersburg in 1888-89, as workers building the Orange Belt Railway. They settled in what was known as Pepper Town, just east of 9th Street South along 3rd and 4th Avenues. In the 1890s, another Black community formed along 9th Street South south of 1st Avenue South, later known as Gas Plant District. A third community grew during that decade called Methodist Town. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

The Black community continued to grow, and by 1930, 7,416 Black residents lived in St. Petersburg, comprising 18% of the population. In 1931, the St. Petersburg City Charter included a clause banning White people from living or having a business in Black neighborhoods and vice versa; however, this was rarely enforced in the case of Whites operating businesses in Black neighborhoods. (Simner, 2017) In 1936, the St. Petersburg City Council passed a resolution requiring all Black people to live west of 17th Street and south of 6th Avenue South. During the mid-20th century, the Black population continued to grow, although the percentage of the overall city population declined. In 1960, 24,080 Black residents called St. Petersburg home. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

Civil rights activity occurred in the 1950s; leaders included Dr. Fred Alsup, Dr. Ralph Wimbish, C. Bette Wimbish, Dr. Robert J. Swain, Jr., Harold Davis, and Rev. Enoch Davis. Six African Americans sued to integrate City pools and won the suit in 1957. Dr. Fred Alsup, Dr. Ralph Wimbish and Harold Davis were part of the suit. The City refused to integrate and closed the pools and beach, but it didn’t last because the tourist industry protested it would impact them. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)



22nd Street South prior to desegregation. Photo courtesy of Deuces Live Main Street.

The movement for Civil Rights reached a peak in the early 1960s. Lunch counter sit-ins at stores on Central Avenue took place, and most public dining places were integrated by 1961. Black patients were admitted to Mound Park Hospital by Dr. Fred Alsop that same year. In 1969, C. Bette Wimbish was the first African American elected to City Council. Schools were not desegregated until court-ordered in 1971. By 1980, 40,903 Black residents lived in St. Petersburg and comprised 17% of the population. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

The Black movie theater on 9th Street South was bombed in 1921 by Whites angry about a Black congregating place. Black residents started moving away from that area to 22nd Street South. At that time, 22nd Street was a dirt trail that was a rural part of St. Petersburg, having recently been annexed in 1914. The population in the area continued to grow. In 1923, Mercy Hospital was built on 22nd Street South for Black residents. That same year, Chatauqua Laundry opened at 515 22nd Street South that later became Soft Water Laundry, a major employer in the neighborhood. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

22nd Street first appeared in the St. Petersburg City Directory in 1924, when it showed one resident and three commercial businesses towards the north end (McCormick-Hannah Lumber Company, Johnstone Brothers Wood and Coal Yard, and Soft Water Laundry). By just the next year, growth occurred rapidly. 22nd Street was home to 43 families or

individuals were living on the street, and there were seven grocery stores, three restaurants, one drug store, one fish market, one clothes cleaner, one confectioner, and one real estate agent. (Simner, 2017)

It was in that environment that Elder Jordan, Jr. built what became the Manhattan Casino in 1925. Jordan also built housing east of the Casino and in the 22nd Street area. That year another city annexation brought in 22nd Street South, south of 7th Avenue South. Jordan Elementary School was built to accommodate the growing population in 1926. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

In 1939, Jordan Park, the City's first housing project just west of 22nd Street, was constructed, with a second phase following in 1941. (Peck & Wilson, 2006) There was a short decline in the economy of 22nd Street South after the land boom bust and Great Depression. In part, it was the City Charter amendment created by the City of St. Petersburg in 1931 that required racial separation that pushed more growth towards 22nd Street South. Major tourist pushes by the City at the same time led to a burgeoning need for service workers, which led to population growth in the Black community. Interestingly, however, the number of White business owners on 22nd Street South grew as well as the number of Black-owned businesses; for example, in 1948, there were 47 Black-owned businesses and 24 White-owned businesses. (Simner, 2017) By 1946, 58 businesses in total were



open on 22nd Street South. The Royal Theater opened in 1948 and Mercy Hospital expanded that year. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

Dr. Robert J. Swain, Jr., a dentist, broke the redline that existed at 15th Avenue South in 1954, and built an office at 1501 22nd Street South. The City initially refused to issue building permits, but Dr. Swain threatened to sue. Dr. Fred Alsup and Dr. Ralph Wimbish had offices on 22nd Street South. Both doctors were part of the lawsuit to integrate city pools in 1955. Harold Davis, another plaintiff, owned a barber shop on 22nd Street South. Dr. Swain built apartments next to his office in 1956 specifically to house Black Major League

baseball players who could not stay in White hotels during spring training. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

1958-1966 was the heyday of 22nd Street South, also known as the Deuces. In 1960, there were 111 businesses along the corridor. Dr. Fred Alsup further expanded the redline by building an office and apartments at 1700 22nd Street South. Dr. Alsup, Dr. Wimbish and his wife C. Bette Wimbish, along with Reverend Enoch Davis took in Freedom Riders in 1961. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

Mercy Hospital was expanded again in 1963, but by 1966, the hospital closed. The Royal Theater closed the same year. The NAACP opened an office at 1125 22nd Street South in 1967. City sanitation workers went on strike in 1968 and uprisings occurred that August. Several White-owned businesses on 22nd Street South were burned. The Manhattan Casino closed the dance hall that year, but the businesses on the first floor remained open. (Peck & Wilson, 2006) The change is attributed to the national Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Fair Housing Act in 1968 that required integration and housing choice. (Simner, 2017)



ABOVE: The Tampa Bay Collard Green Festival. Photo courtesy of the Tampa Bay Collard Green Festival, Inc.



RIGHT: Lorene's Fish House on 22nd Street South. Photo courtesy of Adrienne Burke, AICP, Esq.

Jordan Elementary School closed in 1975. The neighborhood further dramatically changed during 1978-1981 with the construction of Interstate 275 built right through the community. Homes and businesses were destroyed. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

In 1994, the City Council designated Manhattan Casino and Mercy Hospital as local historic sites. That year, the City also approved a redevelopment plan for 22nd Street noting that 25% of the land was vacant, indicating many buildings had been demolished since the community's heyday in the early 1960s. The City purchased the Mercy Hospital site in 1997, the same year that Dr. Swain's office and apartments were designated as local historic sites. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

In 1998, the City announced plans to develop an industrial park in an area bordered by 22nd Street South, 5th Avenue South and I-275. 22nd Street South became the Deuces Live Main Street program in 2001. In 2002, the last residents left the area where the industrial park was going and the City purchased the Manhattan Casino. In 2003, St. Petersburg College opened a center on 22nd Street South. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

# CHITLIN' CIRCUIT ON 22ND STREET SOUTH

**22**nd Street South, also known as The Deuces, was home to the primary Chitlin' Circuit venues in St. Petersburg.

"On any given Saturday night into the 1960s, Roseland, the Shangri La, the High Topper, the Black Cat, and the Champagne Lounge would also offer jazz and R&B in The Deuces. But the Casino was — to its partisans, at least — the classiest act. 'The teachers, doctors, and lawyers we had, they'd dress up in their nice evening wear to go there,' Frankie Gearing remembers. 'Regular working people came too, to dance there and at the other clubs on 22nd Street.' Besides the clubs, there were also a dozen or so bars and pool rooms up and down that same street." (Capouya, 2017, p.261)

There are several buildings related to the Chitlin' Circuit that still exist on the 22nd Street South corridor. They include the Manhattan Casino, Twenty-Second Street Package Store, 900 22nd Street South, 901-903 22nd Street South, 927-929 22nd Street South and the Royal Theater. All are described in more detail below. In the quote above, Roseland and Shangri La were on the 16th Street South corridor. The Champagne Lounge appears to have been at Redington Beach.)

Musicians who performed at the Manhattan Casino.  
*Photo courtesy of Deuces Live Main Street.*



## Manhattan Casino

636-650 22ND STREET SOUTH



The Manhattan Casino in 2023. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**T**he Chitlin' Circuit in St. Petersburg began in the early 1930's. Fletcher Henderson was one of the first to bring a big band to play 22nd Street South in 1934. They played a dance hall at 562 22nd Street South, and were booked by George Grogan. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

However, the Manhattan Casino became the most well-known venue, known as "The Home of Happy Feet," along the stroll. The Casino was built by Elder Jordan Jr. in 1925 and opened in 1931 as the Jordan Dance Hall. City records indicate that the building was originally supposed to be a service station and apartments. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

The Jordans were leaders in the community. Elder Jordan, Sr., formerly enslaved, arrived with his family to St. Petersburg from Columbia County, FL around 1904. Jordan started by selling produce, and turned his profits into real estate. He began building small wooden homes in groups called "courts." Through real estate, Jordan Sr. was able to finance

other ventures like a bus line and a Black beach. (Peck & Wilson, 2006) Jordan Park and Jordan Elementary were named for Elder Jordan, Sr. Two Jordan sons were pastors, but Elder Jordan Jr. took a different path in moving into the entertainment world. ("Rev. W. Jordan, Pioneer Negro Pastor, Dies," 1944 and "McCabe Church to Have Guest Speaker Today," 1954).

The name Manhattan Casino was adopted later, as anything having to do with Manhattan was seen as sophisticated, and despite the addition of casino to the name, no (legal) gambling took place there. The building had commercial/retail spaces on the first floor and the dance hall was upstairs.

George Grogan was the booking agent for the venue; he was a former New Yorker who had a connection to the agency Universal Attractions. He was a musician himself, appearing as "George Grogan and His Orchestra," in the late 1940s. ("Pellpushers Frolic at Joyland," 1947). Joyland was a

musical venue on 6th Avenue South just off of 22nd Street. (Peterman, 1972) Grogan and his family were prominent in the 22nd Street community. His family often appeared in the newspaper in relation to charity events, such as Grogan heading local Red Cross campaigns. ("Grogan Again Heads Red Cross Campaign," 1953). Grogan was also at different points the Jordan Park Housing Project Manager ("Ambassadors' Milk Fund Drive Slated," 1958) and a teacher at Gibbs High School (Capouya, 2017).

The Grogans maintained numerous businesses in addition to their civic roles and Grogan's role at the Casino. In 1945, an advertisement for "The Little Record Shop" at 661 22nd Street South enticed shoppers with "Your Favorite Records by All Top-Notch Bands" (Advertisement, 1945) Little George Grogan Jr., Grogan's son, is listed as the proprietor. Grogan later operated the Manhattan Pool

Room on the first floor of the Casino from 1959-1961. (Polk, St. Petersburg City Directories) Grogan Sr. and his son Grogan Jr. also owned and operated the Holiday Restaurant and Caterers on 22nd Street South near 7th Avenue South. ("Restaurant, Catering Firm Opens Business, 1961)

Grogan Sr. was also part-owner of the Robert James Hotel in 1959, when he went into business with dentist Dr. Robert J. Swain, who had previously been the sole owner. Grogan held multiple positions at once, as the newspaper notes he was still the Jordan Park Housing Project Manager and a prominent dance promoter. The hotel was noted as the city's only Negro hotel at the time. ("Swain-Grogan Merger in Hotel Announced," 1959). It appears by 1960, Grogan was the sole owner of the hotel who then brought in additional investors, and the hotel ballroom and bar was managed by Miss Vernel Banks. ("Hotel

Louis Armstrong performs at the Manhattan Casino on February 28, 1957. Photo courtesy of Deuces Live Main Street.



Selects New Manager for its Lounge," 1960) Grogan Jr., who became an attorney, later operated the Draft House Tavern in 1970. ("Seven Standing Outside Tavern Struck by Car," 1970).

"The [Manhattan Casino] Ballroom in the two-story white, flat-topped building wasn't big as dance halls go; the orchestras of Cab Calloway, Count Basie and Duke Ellington had to crowd onto the bandstand in one corner. There weren't any tables in the Manhattan Casino, either, recalled Buster Cooper, born in 1929, who played trombone there with his cousin George's sixteen-piece band, and others. 'They had long benches around the sides, but the floor was clear for dancing,' Cooper, who died in 2016, said in a Florida Soul interview. In Cooper's time there, the late 1940s, Casino shows cost less than a dollar, he thinks. Cooper made 'maybe \$2 a night. That's maybe.' More than size, the Casino had stature - it was an integral center of African American life in St. Pete" (Capouya, 2017, p.259).

The Manhattan Casino was an extremely popular venue over the years and played host to many musicians, as well as White audience members from around the Tampa Bay area for some of the larger acts. Children and younger folks were not welcome at the Casino, but it did not deter them from participating in the Casino scene. Across 22nd Street to the south of the Casino sat the Sno-Peak ice cream shop that also sold hot dogs and hamburgers.

## **NAMES OF PERFORMERS WHO PLAYED THE MANHATTAN CASINO WERE COLLECTED FROM NEWSPAPER FILES, PROMOTERS' RECORDS AND RECOLLECTIONS FROM LONGTIME RESIDENTS AND INCLUDE:**

(Peck & Wilson, 2006, p.109)

A.C. JONES AND THE ATOMIC ACES	MAHALIA JACKSON
LOUIS ARMSTRONG	ILLINOIS JACQUET
LAVERNE BAKER	LITTLE WILLIE JOHN
COUNT BASIE	BUDDY JOHNSON
CHARLES BROWN	ELLA JOHNSON
PROFESSOR ALEX BRADFORD	EDDIE JONES (KNOWN AS GUITAR SLIM)
TINY BRADSHAW	LOUIS JORDAN
JAMES BROWN	JIMMIE LUNCEFORD
CAB CALLOWAY	FRANKIE LYMON
RAY CHARLES	AMOS MILBURN
SAVANNAH CHURCHILL	LUCKY MILLINDER
FESS CLARK	THE MILLS BROTHERS
REVEREND JAMES CLEVELAND	CLYDE MCPHATTER AND THE DRIFTERS
DOROTHY LOVE COATES	LITTLE JUNIOR PARKER
SAM COOKE	ARTHUR PRY SOCK
BUSTER COOPER	LOU RAWLS
GEORGE COOPER	OTIS REDDING
STEVE COOPER	LITTLE RICHARD
ALVIN DOWNING	THE FIVE ROYALES
BILL DOGGETT	NOBLE SISSLE
DUKE ELLINGTON	SISTER ROSETTA THARPE
ELLA FITZGERALD	IKE AND TINA TURNER
DIZZY GILLESPIE	SARAH VAUGHN
AL GREEN	CLARA WARD
MANZY HARRIS ORCHESTRA	ALBERTINA WALKER AND THE CARAVANS
ERSKINE HAWKINS	THOMAS "FATS" WALLER
FLETCHER HENDERSON	CHICK WEBB
EARL "FATHA" HINES	JOE WILLIAMS
IVORY JOE HUNTER	COOTIE WILLIAMS
B.B. KING	
THE INKSPOTS	

Younger residents or those who did not have Casino tickets would sit outside the Sno-Peak and listen to the entertainment since the Casino was not air-conditioned and the windows would be open. Adults would drive and park near the Casino, bringing drinks, and listen from the comfort of their cars. (Capouya, 2017)

Spiritualists and preachers also appeared at the Casino, including Father Divine. (Capouya, 2017) The Casino was also home to dances and community events such as the Coronation Ball and children's pageants. ("Coronation Ball Will Be Held Friday Evening," 1941 and "Tots to Compete in Event Today," 1940) One of the Casino performers, Ray Charles, even wrote a song about St. Petersburg. During his time living in Tampa, he fell in love with a girl from St. Pete. He called it the "St. Pete Florida Blues," and it was recorded in 1950 when he was still going by the name R.C. Robinson. (WUSF Public Media, 2019)

The Casino's first floor was home to many other businesses over the years, including restaurants, pool rooms and taverns. There were several commercial spaces on the first floor available for use. Walter R. Moton operated a restaurant and tavern starting in 1935 that ran through 1961 that was for some time named the Casino Rendezvous. Otis Smith ran a restaurant from 1951–1954. Gussie W. Moton ran "The Spot" restaurant from 1957 to 1961. Interestingly, the Moton family had a connection with the Chicago Defender; Mrs. E.M. Monroe Moton, presumably a family member, was the St. Petersburg correspondent. ("Florida State: St. Petersburg," 1937).

The Manhattan Pool Room was a billiards hall that existed from 1945 to 1970. From 1963 to 1967, it was called the Blue Moon Pool Room. The pool room was operated by Columbus Wilkerson (1941–1942, 1945–1957), George

Grogan (1959–1961), and Hyman Fortunoff (1963–1967, 1969–1970). (Polk, St. Petersburg City Directories)

Hyman Fortunoff also ran a tavern called the New Manhattan Tavern in 1963, alternately named the Manhattan Bar and Package Store (1966-1970). In 1957, William R. Watts ran the Hi-Stepper Bar. (Polk, St. Petersburg City Directories) Having a package store and tavern on the ground floor was important and connected to the Casino's dance hall business because alcohol was not served upstairs in the event venue. Patrons would avail themselves of the first-floor establishments.

Like other major venues in Florida, the Casino was associated with bolita. In 1942, three men were fined because of bolita sales. One of the men, Jack Blake, stated in court, "I do business for Elder Jordan and Ray Tutson'" ("Bolita Ticket Brings Fines to Three Negroes," 1942). Two years later, Jordan Jr. was in Circuit Court on charges of operating a lottery. The trial was delayed after Jordan skipped town in 1942 after being charged and was arrested in Baltimore. He was extradited back to Florida for the trial. ("Criminal Cases Assigned," 1944)

Charlie Williams, who was later murdered in Tampa, was a part of the 22nd Street South scene. He was a porter on the Seaboard railway, but also a businessman financed by the bolita game. Williams was known to lend money to people to start businesses on 22nd Street, and was politically active, encouraging Black people to vote, even standing up to the Klan. (Peck & Wilson, 2006)

Grogan was interviewed by the St. Petersburg Times in 1972 and reminisced about his time booking performers for the Casino. He recalled the list of many entertainers he personally booked (included in the list above), and



Louis Armstrong performs at the Manhattan Casino to an integrated audience on February 28, 1957. Photo courtesy of Deuces Live Main Street.

shared a story about a young Black man who was a valet to the Supersonic Attractions, a frequent performer at the Casino. That young man was Jimi Hendrix. Grogan ran afternoon dances called matinees at the Casino, where admission was ten cents to start and later went to 75 cents. (Peterman, 1972)

“When the musicians got here, they hung out on 22nd Street. They ate soul food and played pool. They ate at Moton’s Cafe and some of the rest of the places on the street. All the activity was in this block right here [between 6th and 7th Avenues]. Buddy Johnson would always stay at that white house there on the corner [corner of 22nd Street and Fairfield]. The musicians always used to love to go fishing...they liked liquor too, of course,” Grogan shared (Peterman, 1972, p.54).

Grogan lamented the changes over the years, noting that by the early 1970s, musicians were “stuck up” and would not mingle with the people like they used to. He noted that past performers were large bands with a full range of instruments, performing jazz and swing. But by 1972, musicians moved to rock n’ roll and substituted “volume for music.” He noted the cost of performances had increased dramatically, and that was a major contributor to the fact that the “Manhattan Casino hasn’t been used over 10 times in the last 10 years and no one books attractions there anymore” (Peterman, 1972, p.55).

## Twenty-Second Street Package Store

**833-847 22ND STREET SOUTH**



The former Twenty-Second Street Package Store. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

The Twenty-Second Street Package Store at 833–847 22nd Street South was in operation from 1941–1970. From 1941–1957, the owner and operator was Edward Mastry. From 1957–1970, the business was also known as Eddie’s Place and was co-owned and operated by Michael and Edward Mastry. (Polk, St. Petersburg City Directories) Today the building houses the offices of the Deuces Live Main Street program.

## The Spot/Chubby’s

**900 22ND STREET SOUTH**

900 22nd Street South was a restaurant from 1963–1967. In 1963, Mrs. Gussie W. Moton operated her establishment “The Spot,” which had previously been located on the first floor of the Manhattan Casino. From 1964–1966, Franklin Rembert,

Jr. ran Chubby’s Corner Restaurant here, and in 1967, he renamed it Chubby’s Coffee Shop. (Polk, St. Petersburg City Directories) Today the building houses a church. The Pinellas County Property Appraiser lists the building as constructed in 1945.



900 22nd Street South. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.



## Jordan Park Tavern

**901-903 22ND STREET SOUTH**



The former Jordan Park Tavern. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

901-903 22nd Street South operated as a tavern from 1941–1970. From 1941–1957, it was called George Washington Beer, and by 1959, was the George Washington Tavern. During the 1960-1970 decade, it was called the Jordan Park Tavern. George and/or Hortense Washington were the operators from 1941 to 1960. Hortense Washington operated the tavern from 1961 to 1963 with George Berrien, and from 1964 to 1970 it was run by George and Hortense Bryon (likely the same people with a name change). (Polk, St. Petersburg City Directories) The Pinellas County Property Appraiser lists the building as constructed in 1946, which is inaccurate based on the City Directory information listing the location in operation as of 1941. Today the building is home to The Catalyst on The Deuces.

## Lorene's Fish House

**927-929 22ND STREET SOUTH**



Lorene's Fish House. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

927-929 22nd Street South has been home to numerous food and drink establishments over the years. In 1939, Thaddeus H. Brothers operated a "soft drinks" establishment at 927-929 22nd Street South. By 1942, Rosa Johnson operated a restaurant until 1947. Primus J. Jackson and Arthur Robinson operated restaurants in the early 1950s; Jackson from 1951-1952 and Robinson from 1952-1954. Mildred Lewis then operated The Shag Restaurant, which advertised as serving three meals daily, open from 7am until 11pm, specializing in steaks, chops, chicken, and seafood. She ran the restaurant from 1957-1963. The building then became a fish market: Sun Coast Fish Market (Pauline Kelly; 1964-1965), Allen's Fish Market (Willie Allen; 1966), and Jennings Fish Market (Mary L. Jennings; 1970). (Polk, St. Petersburg City Directories) Today the building is Lorene's Fish Market. The Pinellas County Property Appraiser lists the building as constructed in 1925.

# Royal Theater

1101 22ND STREET SOUTH



The Royal Theater. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**T**he Royal Theater operated from 1948 to 1966 as the main theater in the 22nd Street South corridor. Horace Williams, Jr. ran the theater from 1948 to 1963, after which it was run by William A. Boardman. (Polk, St. Petersburg City Directories) The Pinellas County Property Appraiser lists the building as constructed in 1925.

The Theater was a venue for showing films, but also served as an event venue. Amateur

talent contests were held there, as recalled by an amateur night winner, Frankie (Francis Yvonne) Gearing, who was part of a Gibbs High School group called the Co-Eds. The Co-Eds win led to a talent scout taking the group to Miami where they recorded a few singles and performed at the Knight Beat, opening for acts such as Screaming Jay Hawkins, Dionne Warwick, Little Eva, Sam Cooke, Big Maybelle, and James Brown. (Capouya, 2017)

# EATONVILLE

## EATONVILLE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

**H**istorically, the land we refer to today as Eatonville is on the traditional Homelands and territories of the Seminole, Miccosukee, Timucua, and Tocobaga people. After forced removal of the Indigenous people, the land was in part portioned off by the United States government to various homesteaders through a series of land grants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

After the Civil War, between 1865–1900, there were approximately 400 Black enclaves, settlements and towns. By 1920, that rose to 800. Most were informally organized; less than 150 were official municipalities. Eatonville was one of those municipalities and as of the National Register of Historic Places nomination, only one of 12 chartered Black towns still surviving. (Grant, Bucuvalas & Shiver, 1997)

Formerly enslaved persons settled around Lake Lily in what was called Fort Maitland. White northerners established the town of Lake Maitland working with Black residents, but the Black residents were very interested in forming their own town. In 1882, two white men, Josian Eaton and Lewis Lawrence, in Lake Maitland sold land to Black people one mile west of Maitland. The original town plat was created in August 1882. Two Black men, Joseph E. Clark and Allen Ricket, were instrumental in establishing Eatonville. In August 1887, 27 Black men met in the Oddfellows Hall and voted to incorporate. Eatonville is recognized as the oldest incorporated all-Black town in the United States. (Grant, Bucuvalas & Shiver, 1997)

Early settlers often bought more than one lot in Eatonville to have room for vegetable growing, citrus and small farm animals. The early life of the community was primarily rural in nature. Lakes Sybelia and Bell were used for fishing, boating and picnicking as well as domestic use. The Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School was founded in 1889. By turn of 20th century it was ten buildings, a sawmill, dairy and workshops and comprised 304 acres. The school property was annexed by the town in 1919. Trustees gave the school to the Orange County Public School system in 1950. (Grant, Bucuvalas & Shiver, 1997)

Eatonville was maintained successfully as a town during 1900–1940. This era is associated with perhaps the town's most famous resident, writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston. Towards the mid-20th century, the rural nature of the community started to change. Post WWII, larger tracts of land were subdivided and developed, and the town saw an increase in population in the 1960s. Eatonville began to feel less rural and more like a small town. Public housing was added to the community in the 1980s. The main uses in town are residential single family homes, although Kennedy Boulevard developed as



the main thoroughfare. (Grant, Bucuvalas & Shiver, 1997)

The Eatonville Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998. The community has a historic preservation ordinance and a local historic district. Eatonville became a part of the Florida Main Street program in 2020.

## THE STROLL: KENNEDY BOULEVARD

Having developed as a primarily small, rural community, Kennedy Boulevard was not as densely populated with commercial establishments as other strolls in Florida. However, for the town, it was the stroll, and home to the town's Chitlin Circuit venues. Additional commercial uses supporting Eatonville were on the corridor, as in other strolls.

Eatonville gained media attention around the stroll in 1955. The two local Air Force bases forbid their personnel from visiting the

community. This happened after a shooting of two servicemen outside Club Eaton. Eatonville was known for allowing liquor sales on Sundays at town bars, which was seen as part of the problem. ("Air Force Slaps Ban on Eatonville," 1955) Shortly after, the Eatonville City Council voted to stop Sunday liquor sales, but three months later, they allowed the sales to continue. ("Eatonville Relaxes Sunday Tavern Law," 1955) The pressure to stop Sunday liquor sales came from the Orange County legislative delegation who threatened to abolish the corporate community. ("Air Force Slaps Ban on Eatonville," 1955) This threat to revoke the corporate charter of Eatonville was also reportedly due to White fears that "[W]hite women from Winter Park, Orlando, and other nearby communities" were going to Eatonville to buy liquor, and jealousy over the fact that Black-owned liquor stores were allowed to sell on Sundays ("Negro Town Must Halt Sabbath Liquor Sales," 1955, p.12).

The Parramore neighborhood and Altamonte East in Altamonte Springs were other strolls in the Orlando area.

# CHITLIN' CIRCUIT ON KENNEDY BOULEVARD

**K**ennedy Boulevard was home to the primary Chitlin' Circuit venues in Eatonville. Even as a smaller, rural community, Eatonville always had night spots including beer and wine parlors and "back rooms" that drew clientele from miles around. Joseph Clark's general store was considered one of the first informal night spots. While some venues were "legitimate," others were considered "havens of vice" that were on the radar of local law enforcement. (Otey, 1989, p.35) Several Chitlin' Circuit buildings still exist in Eatonville on Kennedy Boulevard. They include Club Eaton, the Green Lantern Tavern, B&B Barbeque Inn, and the Big Joy Beer Parlor/Delaney's Pool Room. All are described in more detail below.



Kennedy Boulevard. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.



Condor Merritt (center) and friends at Club Eaton during the 1950s. Photo courtesy of Jim Robinson.

## Club Eaton

426 EAST KENNEDY BLVD



The former Club Eaton building. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

Club Eaton is the largest and most well-known Chitlin' Circuit venue in Eatonville. Nightlife in town was small-scale until the opening of Club Eaton, which was considered "big time" (Otey, 1989, p.35). "People would come from miles around to Club Eaton." (Smith, 1987) The Club opened in the late 1940s. Constructed c.1946 according to the Orange County Property Appraiser, owner Condor Merritt got a liquor license for the club at the November 5, 1948 Orange County Board of County Commissioners meeting. (Orange County Board of County Commissioners, 1948)

Condor Merritt was a prominent figure in the Central Florida African American community.

Born in 1905, he was a community leader and real estate owner. Merritt developed the Winwood community of Altamonte Springs after World War II and owned stores and various real estate across Central Florida. He also had a jazz club in Winwood and a pool room in Orlando's Parramore in addition to Club Eaton. (Robison, 2002) Condor Merritt was the uncle of U.S Congressional Representative Alcee Hastings. (Robison, 1999)

William "Billy" Bozeman managed Club Eaton on behalf of Merritt. At one time, Billy Bozeman was chair of the Eatonville City Council. ("Town Councilmen," 1964) He was also a musician himself, once performing as

"Billy Bozeman and His Orchestra" at Orlando venues like the Club Cabana. ("Club Cabana" Advertisement, 1945) "Billy Bozeman of Orlando helped make it a landmark, booking top national acts such as James Brown, Sam Cooke, B.B. King, Ray Charles, Chuck Willis, the Drifters, and the Platters." (Robison, 1999, p.65) Other headliners included Chuck Berry, Sugar Pie DeSanto, the Olympics, Ben E. King and Nat Kendrick and his orchestra with H.L. Terry on bass. (Everett, 1961) Media from the time references performances being standing-room only with people having to be turned away, and the Club being so crowded that performers could not get to their dressing rooms. ("Stars Shine at Club Dance," 1961)

Chitlin' Circuit venues were host to nationally famous musicians and entertainers. But in between major acts, the venues employed house bands and local musicians. In 1961, Bobby Williams and his band performed Sunday nights. Saturday nights, the house band the Balladiers performed. There was also a cocktail lounge open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights with music provided by Enoch Allen (organ) and Kenneth Wallace (guitar). (Everett, 1961) Local musician Johnnie E. Griffin remembered when Merritt owned the Club Eaton in Eatonville: "'I was a drummer in high school,' Griffin recalled... 'I played in clubs in Orlando and Club Eaton in Eatonville until 1965. Then I got drafted. Half of the musicians around were drafted.'" (Robison, 1999, p.65) Club Eaton also hosted community events like sorority fashion shows and dances. ("Gamma Phi Delta Pledge Club Models Fashions, Wigs," 1965)

Club Eaton had a reputation as a sophisticated venue. "Dress codes were always strict at Club Eaton. Men had to wear coats and ties and women had to wear dresses." (Smith, 1987, p.192) While "[i]t didn't have the mystique of the Cotton Club... it was a Class

A place," pianist, bassist and vocalist Bernie Lee recalled. (Robison, 2002, p.65)

Club Eaton also had hotel rooms upstairs that artists could use during a time when they were barred from white hotels. Said Bernie Lee, "Let's face it, the big-name acts could afford hotels, but at that time [B]lack entertainers couldn't stay in white hotels... They stayed at the Club Eaton because they didn't have to get off the bandstand at two in the morning and try to find a halfway decent [B]lack motel." (Robison, 2002, p.65)

Like other club owners in Florida, Condor Merritt had a significant connection to bolita. Merritt was indicted for income tax evasion on his 1947-48 taxes, with the government charging that he made most of his money from bolita operations in Orange and Seminole counties. He was indicted for evasion in 1954, but it took 8 years later for the trial. "Although Merritt's reputation as a bolita kingpin is not officially a part of the indictment, the Government stated in its opening remarks to the jury that the defendant earned most of his money during the two years from bolita." (Persons, 1962, p.1) At the trial, his nephew and business partner Cecil Merritt testified that he [Cecil] took care of Condor's bolita business when Condor was sick or went fishing (Persons, 1962)

Prior to 1948, bolita in Central Florida was run by Charlie Wall. After 1948 it was run by Harlan Blackburn. Cecil Merritt was one of the five "lottery bankers" in Central Florida who worked for Blackburn. ("Orlando Police Sergeant Reviews Growth of Bolita for Probers," 1963) Cecil Merritt was arrested in 1963 for bolita operations. (Persons, 1963)

Presumably, Condor Merritt retained knowledge of bolita operations as well; he was a FBI informant on crime in Central

Florida. (Belanger, 1962) Club Eaton was also a target for bolita raids. The Florida state beverage department was sent to raid multiple establishments in November 1950, including Club Eaton, but Club Eaton was closed. It was noted at the time that the “[r]aid will cause a near shutdown of the bolita racket in Central Florida.” (Associated Press, 1950, p.4) Club Eaton manager Billy Bozeman himself requested more police presence in Eatonville due to crime in 1973. (“Eatonville Force Called Inadequate,” 1973) However, in later years, club goers recalled “[t]here were seldom problems in the club because Eatonville had a strict police department.” (Smith, 1987)

Elijah L. Bing, Jr. acquired Club Eaton in 1983. E.L. Bing was born in June 1921 in East Plant City, Florida. His family’s rooming house in Plant City is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Bing Rooming House. E.L. Bing became principal of Marshall High School from 1954 to 1967. He became the first African American assistant in education in Hillsborough County. In 1971, Bing worked with the Hillsborough County School Board to draft a desegregation plan for the County school system, which became a model nationally. Governor Bob Graham appointed Bing the first African American Hillsborough County Commissioner in 1983. (Schwarz & Jones, 2002)

The Bing family was already established as a nightclub owner in Eatonville. In 1947, Bing opened a restaurant and tavern called the Green Lantern in a building catcornered from Club Eaton that he purchased. (Wark, 1984) He purchased the Green Lantern from James Steele. (Otey, 1989) The Bings also owned and operated the Rainbow Bar, Grill and Entertainment Complex at 201 West Kennedy Boulevard since 1952. This complex has since been demolished. The bar was known as “the

Bow.” (Wark, 1984, p.37)

In 1955, the Hillsborough County School authorities received complaints that E.L. Bing was operating the bar himself on the weekend. The Bow manager at the time, John T. Epkins, disputed that and said E.L. Bing’s uncle Bubba Bing was the manager though he had recently passed away. The Hillsborough School superintendent responded that he had no authority to tell teachers what they can do off-duty, but he informally advised Bing to sell the bar. (Blalock, 1955)

After acquiring Club Eaton, the Bing family completely renovated the building inside and out. They envisioned a new era for the club, renaming it “Mr. B’s” and distinguishing it from The Bow. Mr. Bing’s children assisted in managing the club. “Mr. B’s will have mixed drinks and hot hors d’oeuvres, quite different from the snacks and packaged drinks customers buy at the Rainbow Club... The average customer at the Rainbow Club is between the ages of 20 and 28 and is a blue collar ‘John Travolta type,’ Bing said. ‘They work hard all day and escapism is important to them.’” (Burstion-Wade, 1983, p.105)

The Orlando Sentinel covered the interior changes at Mr. B’s in the early 1980s:

“The two dance floors will remain, but many of the club’s tables and booths will be replaced. And the large club, which can seat 600, will have moveable partitions for more intimate affairs, like a daily happy hour Bing plans. A portion of the upstairs, which is now used for storage, will eventually be available as a meeting room for civic clubs. The exterior will get a massive



facelift, including new entrance doors and an awning... 'We're trying to fill a void for entertainment facilities for [B] lack people in Central Florida. The Rainbow Club isn't for everyone' ...Bing is going for a different customer at Mr. B's. There will be dancing, 'but it won't be at the feverish pitch that it is at the Rainbow,' [Bing] said. There will also be a strict dress code, a carryover from the Club Eaton." (Burstion-Wade, 1983, p.105)

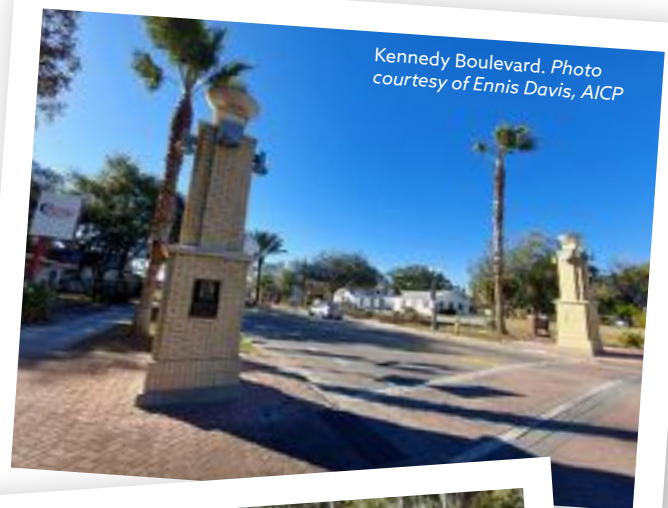
More details on the renovation included the building repainted in three shades of blue, a gutted and totally rebuilt interior, and a repainted sign. "[H]undreds of bamboo tubes make geometrical decorations in an art nouveau style to adorn club walls." E.L. Bing was the interior decorator who credited his "innate ability." (Wark, 1984, p.37)

By the late 1980s Mr. B's was still in full swing and the Bing family were recognized for their contributions to Eatonville:

"Today it is known as Mr. B's and is as fine as any night club in central Florida. This ultra modern facility has an attractive rose and beige decor, plush seats, comfortable booths, spacious bar, and a large dance floor. Mr. B's is also a classic entertainment spot for special parties, weddings, club meetings, conventions, and reunions. Young Harry Bing, manager, is quite creative, but tastefully selective in programming for

the club. Here it should be noted that the Bing family has not only distinguished itself in entrepreneurship, but also for their civic-mindedness. They have always taken an active interest in the town's affairs and give of their time and resources towards its advancement." (Otey, 1989, p.35-6)

Mr. B's was sold to Orlando Magic player Jerry Reynolds in 1992. The club was remodeled and reopened as Heroes Nightclub. Wayne Freeman operated the club as Heroes Nightclub and Club K.O.H.A. through the early 2010s. Closed today, the building was the recent recipient of a Division of Historical Resources African American Cultural and Historical (AACH) grant for restoration.



Kennedy Boulevard. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP



Eatonville Zora Neale Hurston Festival. Photo courtesy of Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community.

## Green Lantern Tavern

**501 EAST KENNEDY BLVD**



The former Green Lantern Tavern. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**J**ames Steele built the Green Lantern Tavern. The Orange County Property Appraiser states the building was constructed in 1938, but City directories indicate the business in existence as early as 1935. Steele's goal in 1935 was to have a small but legitimate entertainment venue. (Otey, 1989) Steele operated the Tavern until 1947. E.L. Bing operated the Tavern until 1951. By 1959, the site became the Blue Lantern Restaurant, operated by Jeffrey Cunningham until 1966. (Polk, Orlando City Directory) Operation as a restaurant continued until 1980 when it became a grocery store. (Otey, 1989) Today the building is vacant.

## B&B Barbecue Inn/Smith's Eatonville Motel

**429 EAST KENNEDY BLVD**



The former B&B Barbecue Inn. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**4**29 East Kennedy Boulevard was home to the B&B Barbecue Inn, owned by Ben E. and Broxie Smith. It is connected to what was the Smith's Eatonville Motel, both in operation by the Smiths from 1966-1975. (Polk, Orlando City Directory) Smith's Eatonville Motel was owned by E.L. and Harry Bing during the 1980s. (*Orlando Sentinel*, 1988, pg.218) Today the motel operates as housing, and the former restaurant is vacant.

## Big Joy Beer Parlor/Delaney's Pool Room

**308 EAST KENNEDY BLVD**



The former Big Joy Beer Parlor.  
*Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.*

**B**uilt in 1958 according to the Orange County Property Appraiser, the B.J. Beer Parlor operated at 308 East Kennedy Boulevard from 1961–1966. It was owned by Effie James. In 1975, Effie James and Bessie Mac Pender operated the beer parlor as Big Joy Beer Parlor. From 1961 to 1970, the building was also home to Delaney's Pool Room, operated first by William Posey and second by Steven Delaney. By 1975, the Pool Room was Frankie's Pool Room. (Polk, Orlando City Directory) Today the building is vacant.

# FORT PIERCE: LINCOLN PARK

## FORT PIERCE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

**H**istorically, the land we refer to today as Fort Pierce is on the traditional Homelands and territories of the Seminole, Miccosukee, and Ais people. After forced removal of the Indigenous people, the land was in part portioned off by the United States government to various homesteaders through a series of land grants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In 1842, the first white settlers arrived in the Treasure Coast and brought 38 enslaved Africans. During the mid-19th century and after the Civil War, there were few people of color, freed or enslaved. Things began to change when St. Lucie County became known for pineapple plantations. Clearing the land and farming the pineapples was grueling work and was largely done by Black people. Black settlements began to appear west of the River. (Wilson, n.d.) The Duvals were an early Black family in Fort Pierce, arriving from the Bahamas, and were pineapple farmers (St. Lucie County Regional History Center). "Blind tigers" were mobile gambling and drinking establishments near the settlements. They were run by men who did not work in the pineapple fields but took the earnings. (Wilson, n.d.)

Early Black residents also found work on the steamboats that went up and down the Indian River as well as work in the fishing industry. James G Seward was the first Black man to own land in Ft. Pierce in 1889, owning 5 acres near where Georgia Avenue and 7th Street are today. He went on to own many other properties. He was also a trustee of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and was

a registered voter in 1890. (Wilson, n.d.)

The second Black man to own land was Issac E. Brown, who paid off his land purchase in 1890. This land was 10 acres west of the railroad in lots 1 and 2, Section 3, Township 35. When Henry Flagler's rail line was expanded through Fort Pierce, the Black population grew to construct the railroad and then became workers on the railroad when it was completed. It is noted from New Smyrna to Miami, almost all Black neighborhoods are northwest of downtown having started as railroad camps. Music was a big part of the railroad camps and after meals, banjos, fiddles and guitars appeared and singing continued into the night. Blind Tigers also were near the railroad camps. (Wilson, n.d.)

In 1900, 26 Black men were listed as living in Ft. Pierce. In 1902, Benjamin Hogg, one of St. Lucie's "First Families," started subdividing land in Township 35, Section 10. In 1905, it was noted that these lands west of downtown were building up as a "colored" community. In 1902, Mose and Lucinda Boyd built a house at 414 Dundas Court in Hogg's Addition. The Fee/Mays subdivision was also an area of Black home ownership. (Wilson, n.d.)



A parade on Avenue D. Photo courtesy of Lincoln Park Academy and the St. Lucie County Regional History Center.

The Jim Crow-era occurred in the late 19th and early 20th century, and opportunities were limited. In 1919, Black people in St. Lucie County formed a chapter of the Negro Uplift Association. Woodbine was an early Black neighborhood in Fort Pierce (east of US 1, south of Delaware Avenue, north of Georgia Avenue, and east of 10th Street). Black residents had their church burned and were forced to leave Woodbine in 1897 after a supposed threat to a White woman. (Wilson, n.d.)

Areas where Black people could live continued to be limited. In 1929, the St. Lucie County Colored Welfare Association protested a zoning change that would change the Hoggs and Fee/Mays subdivision from unrestricted to Zone B. It is unclear what that zone was, but it was seen as a threat to the community. Early Civil Rights efforts in Fort Pierce included World War II veteran Pat Duval, who was commander of the first Black VFW post in Fort Pierce as well as St. Lucie County's first Black sheriff's deputy, requesting a Black section of the beach. (Wilson, n.d.; Main Street Focus, 2007)

## **THE STROLL: AVENUE D**

Lincoln Park was the center of St. Lucie County's African American community during the 1950s and 1960s. Lincoln Park is in the northwest part of town that kept expanding from the early Black community in Fort Pierce that was established at the turn of the 20th century. The neighborhood expanded from the 1940s-1970s. Lincoln Park is largely

intact from a built environment perspective. Unlike 22nd Street South in St. Petersburg or LaVilla in Jacksonville, urban renewal and highway expansion did not occur in Lincoln Park. Avenue D is the stroll in Lincoln Park and experienced a heyday in the mid-20th century.

The Lincoln Park subdivision was originally platted in 1913. Street names were different, and it encompassed the area from North 10th Street on the east to North 13th Street on the west, the canal on the south and Avenue E to the north. Avenue D was called Selene Street, and at the center was a central park called Lincoln Park. (Lincoln Park Subdivision Plat, 1913)

In 1924, the subdivision was revised to remove the Lincoln Park open space. The street names were changed at this point to reflect the current names. The park space was transitioned to subdivided lots fronting Avenue D. The former park space is still identifiable in the development pattern of the neighborhood; it is the area between Douglas Court on the east and North 12th Street on the west, Lincoln Place on the south, and Warrick Drive on the north. This subdivision is the original core of the Lincoln Park neighborhood, which then expanded out to the north and west. (Lincoln Park Subdivision Plat, 1924)

Avenue D was the heart of Lincoln Park. "[The] Avenue D that I remember in the forties and fifties was gutsy, exciting and challenging. It was indeed the hub of the African American community" (Leath, 1998). Avenue D served

as the major thoroughfare in the community - a path for workers in the vegetable and citrus fields, a path for domestic work for women, a path to the schools and a path to all the businesses. It was the place to see and be seen - attend church, eat at a restaurant, and sing to jukeboxes. It was a mixed-use corridor with residential, religious, and business uses. (Leath, 1998)

Buildings themselves were often mixed-use with commercial space on the bottom floor and residential above. Examples included the Betts Building at 1217 Avenue D with Bobby's Grocery Store on the first floor and a rooming house upstairs. The Caynon building at 1234 Avenue D is another example. Jackie Caynon was the first Black City Commissioner. He lived upstairs at his building, and the downstairs was a hangout for young teens called Twinks. (Culverhouse, 2007)

The corner of Avenue D and Douglas Court was a landmark location. It was home to a large white frame building owned by the Cherokee Lodge No. 7270. It was the scene of ritual ceremonies, parties and meetings for the Order of the Eastern Star, Mount Moriah Lodge No. 96, Free and Accepted Masons and other organizations. By 1965, it was home to Henry's Western Meat Market. That year the structure was lost to fire and a young boy, Douglas Brown, lost his life while in the building. (Pottorff, 1965)

One of the first Black doctors in Fort Pierce, Dr. C.C. Benton, lived near the corner of Avenue D and North 11th Street. Other well-known families were: McDonald, Johnsons, Millers, Gilliams, Lyons-Burns, Hughes, Oats-Johnsons, Smiths, Bushs, Rogers, Rhodes, Warricks, Butlers, Peeks, Broxeys, Williams, Langs, Curtises and Parishes. Businesses included Richardson's Garage, 9th Street Market, Adams' Grocery, Bush's Drugstore,

Pahner's Grocery, Lincoln Theater and Variety Shop, Broxey's Grocery, Oats-Johnson Beauty Box, Benton's Beauty Parlor, McDonald's Kindergarten, L.T. Thomas Dry Cleaning Parlor, Lincoln Car Company, Peek's Funeral Home, Baldwin Building Mall, Moye's Cozy Corner, Dale's Beauty Center, McAfee's Beer Parlor, Bailey's Barber Shoppe, George's Place, Williams' Variety Shop, Currington's Ice Cream Parlor, the Chronicle-Ft. Pierce Publishing Company, Gibson and McClain Funeral Home, McMillian's Grocery, and Charlie's Service Station. (Leath, 1998)

*The Chronicle* newspaper was started in the 1950s by C.E. Bolen. This weekly Black newspaper was published at 1529 Avenue D. (City of Fort Pierce, n.d.) Bolen hired Zora Neale Hurston to write a weekly column. (Florida Stories, n.d.) Today Zora Neale Hurston is perhaps the most famous person associated with Lincoln Park; however, at the time she lived in the neighborhood, she was towards the end of her career. She taught at Lincoln Park Academy in addition to working for the *Chronicle*.

The neighborhood is also famous for its association with the Highwaymen. The Highwaymen are 26 African American landscape artists who were largely self-taught, after having been introduced to art by A.E. Backus, an artist living in Fort Pierce. The artists have been inducted into the Florida Hall of Fame. Alfred Hair, Livingston "Castro" Roberts, Johnny "Hook" Daniels, Harold Newton, and the lone female artist, Mary Ann Carroll, are some of the prominent names among the artists. Tragically, Alfred Hair lost his life on Avenue D, when he was murdered at Eddie's Place at 1907 Avenue D in 1970 at age 29. (City of Fort Pierce, n.d.)

Bolita was also present on the stroll. Stories of arrests were not uncommon. In one, an

Avenue D resident who was arrested for possession of lottery tickets said he could not remember where he purchased them. The presiding judge said he heard lottery tickets could be easily purchased in the Lincoln Park area. ("Given Chance to Refresh His Memory - In Jail," 1954).

On April 8, 1968, four days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., firebombs were thrown into the Bass grocery store on Avenue D. This led to a demonstration of 250-300 Black people along Avenue D, most of them teenagers. It was peaceful until a tear gas bomb exploded near 8th Street and Avenue D

and the crowd scattered. Numerous stores on Avenue D between 9th and 13th Streets lost all or a part of their windows. Police said it was done by people in the crowd, but that was disputed. There was a curfew put in place in St. Lucie County and the City of Ft Pierce. (Sharp, 1968) Avenue D began to decline after the uprising in 1968. Many businesses were not able to get insurance policies after that event. Drug traffic came in during the 1970s and 1980s. (Port, 2002)

Lincoln Park and Avenue D became a Main Street community in 2001. The neighborhood is within the Fort Pierce Redevelopment Area. The neighborhood is a local historic district.



LEFT: Reverend Stone's cafe at 8th Street and Avenue C. Photo courtesy of St. Lucie County Regional History Center.

BELOW: The Lincoln Park Academy band. Photo courtesy of Lincoln Park Academy and the St. Lucie County Regional History Center.



# CHITLIN' CIRCUIT ON AVENUE D

**T**he buildings below are structures with ties to Lincoln Park's Chitlin' Circuit heritage in an area where a cultural corridor is planned by Lincoln Park Main Street. Cultural corridor centered around the intersection of Avenue D and North 13th Street. Proposed projects within this centralized section of Lincoln Park Main Street include the Black Archives at the Means Court Elementary School building, the proposed Highwaymen Museum and Theater at the Jackie Caynon Building and the Lincoln Theater restoration project.



*Jake's 66 Service Station and Grey Taxi Service on Avenue D. Photo courtesy of Lincoln Park Academy and the St. Lucie County Regional History Center.*



## Lincoln Theatre

1124 - 1132 AVENUE D



The Lincoln Theater. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

One of the most well-known and visible venues on Avenue D was the Lincoln Theater. Lincoln Theater was built in 1946 by Dr. Clem C. Benton and Dr. Harry Center. Dr. Benton was one of the first African American doctors in Fort Pierce, and Dr. Center was a White pharmacist. The theater was a central location for entertainment and culture along Avenue D from the time it opened until closure in the late 1960s. Movies were shown at the theater, but it also served as a live performance venue with musical and theatrical events. It also served as a venue for graduation ceremonies. (Benton, 2006)

Lincoln Theater did not have a concession stand. Dr. Center had a drug and sundry store to the right of the building and he had a soda fountain. There was a small window that opened into the lobby of the movie theater where people could buy drinks and popcorn. Center also had another pharmacy in the white section of Fort Pierce on Orange Avenue. (Yates, n.d.)

## Jackie Caynon Building

1228 - 1230 (1234 TODAY) AVENUE D



The Jackie Caynon Building. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

Built in 1948, this building known as the Caynon Building (today 1234 Avenue D), was originally two storefronts on the first floor. Jackie Caynon was the first Black City Commissioner. He lived upstairs at his building, and the downstairs at one time was a hangout for young teens called Twinks. (Culverhouse, 2007) Restaurants once located in the Jackie Caynon building during the 1950s and 1960s include Robinson's Place, Sam's Place, Lillie's Cafe and The Grill. In addition, in the early 1960s, Augustus Johnson briefly operated the Johnson's Pool Room at 1232 Avenue D. (Polk, Fort Pierce City Directories)

## La Tropical Tavern & Little Joe's Tavern

1233 - 1237 AVENUE D



The former La Tropical Tavern and Little Joe's Tavern building. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**1** 233-1237 Avenue D was constructed in 1952. (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser) There were originally two storefronts. One storefront was occupied by LaTropical Tavern, originally owned by George J. Ford in 1958. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Tavern was operated by George and Ora L. Jones. Recollections of the Tavern, also known as George Jones Bar, include the venue being filled to capacity on Friday nights after the migrant labor force in the neighborhood had been paid.

The bars were nearly the same inside the Tavern, about 50 feet by 20 or 30 feet wide with a bar at one end, booths along the sides, and a loud jukebox in the corner. Half of the people danced until closing time at 2:00 a.m. Others stand immobile, leaning against the bar top, unless someone pushes them accidentally. Saturday night was more active,

with a greater sale of moonshine and bolita tickets. The bars were more crowded, and trouble was sometimes anticipated. (St. Lucie News Tribune, Jul. 3, 1962, pg.9)

The second storefront was occupied by Little Joe's Tavern, owned by Josephine Griffin from 1957-1969. Little Joe's sold beer, wine, short order, sandwiches, home cooking, bar-b-que, and soft drinks. (Polk, Fort Pierce City Directories) Ms. Griffin was a Temple 853 (Elks Lodge 1189) member. In 1957, she was charged with operating a gambling house in the Tavern, and was later arrested in 1964, charged with selling bolita tickets and possession of gambling equipment. This space was the Blue Moon Tavern in 1974.

## Tavern/Restaurant

**1238 AVENUE D**



The former El Chico/  
Ethel's Tavern. Photo  
courtesy of Ennis  
Davis, AICP.

**B**uilt in 1954 as two storefronts, 1236-1238 Avenue D was home to Ethel's Tavern and El Chico Restaurant. (Polk, Fort Pierce City Directory) Ethel's Tavern at 1238 Avenue D was operated during the late 1950s and into the 1960s by Ethel Bryant. El Chico was at 1236 Avenue D and was opened by Mrs. David Monroe in 1955. Other owners over the years were Mr. and Mrs. George

Ferguson and David Monroe. Both George Ferguson and David Monroe were previously employed as cooks at Chisholms, located at US 1 in Stuart. El Chico specialized in home-cooked meals and pastries, as well as a catering service. A 1961 ad noted El Chico "specialized in steak, chops, chicken and fish, 'challenging you to find better home cooking anywhere!'" (Fort Pierce Yellow Pages, 1961)

## Eddie's Place

**1907 AVENUE D**



The former Eddie's Place. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**1**907 Avenue D was constructed in 1950. (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser) During the 1950s and 60s, the building was known as Eddie's Bar & Grill, Eddie's Drive In and Eddie's Place and owned by Eddie Asbury. (Polk, Fort Pierce City Directories) Eddie's Place was a juke joint where twenty-nine-year old Alfred Hair was shot to death on the night of August 9, 1970. (City of Fort Pierce, Highwayman Heritage Trail, n.d.)

## Starlight Cafe/Harrell's Barbecue & Grill

**510 N. 13TH STREET**



The former Starlight Cafe/Harrell's Barbecue & Grill.  
Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**5**10 North 13th Street was constructed in 1952. (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser). By 1956, it was the Starlight Cafe. Operated by Hardy and Ruby Pelt, the Starlight Cafe served home cooked meals, sandwiches, barbecue, homemade pies and

cold drinks. (Polk, Fort Pierce City Directories) In 1969, Margaret Harrell operated Harrell's Barbecue & Grill in the building. In 1974, the space was home to the Casa Rena Grill owned by Marie Cox. (Polk, Fort Pierce City Directories)

## Means Court Elementary

**532 NORTH 13TH STREET**



Means Court Elementary School. Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

**M**eans Court Elementary School was constructed on the original site of the Lincoln Park Academy, which was established in 1925. Over the years, the school's auditorium was a space occasionally used for concerts, events and dances, including Daddy Dave's Rock and Roll Talent Show on August 19, 1955 (Ft. Pierce News-Tribune, Aug. 14, 1955, p.12) Other events include a concert by the Gospel Harmonettes, who performed at the Means Court Elementary School Auditorium on January 3, 1956. (Ft. Pierce News-Tribune, Dec. 30, 1956, p.13) In 2021, the school became the home of Lincoln Park Mainstreet. Future plans for the structure include the use of the space for a new community hub and Black archives.

## Baker's Flamingo Bar and Grill

907 NORTH 13TH STREET



The former Baker's Flamingo Bar & Grill.  
Photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP.

Levie Baker was the owner and operator of Baker's Flamingo Bar and Grill, another significant live music venue in Fort Pierce. Baker was the first Black person to get a liquor license in Fort Pierce. The Baker's Flamingo Bar heyday was during the 1950s and 1960s. Baker and his wife Irene built the bar from the ground up despite Levie having only a grade-school education. ("Businessman Following in His Family's Footsteps with Venture," 2001) The venue was located in what is today called the Love Center.

A performance by the Griffin Brothers Orchestra with singer Margie Day on April 19, 1952 is an example of the popularity of the venue. The *Fort Pierce News-Tribune* noted, "For the dance occasion Saturday night, it is

expected that the Flamingo Bar and Grill will be packed and jammed to its capacity. Ladies and gents in Fort Pierce as well as persons from Martin County and Indian River areas have made preparation to be in attendance" ("Griffin Brothers Will Play Sat. at Bakers Flamingo Tickets," 1952). for the event were sold at the Flamingo, with reserved tickets available at Twink's at 1213 Avenue D.

The venue hosted a teenage dance every week in 1956, with Ace King and His House Rockers as the regular performers. Emmet Wiley and his Melody Makers were also routine visitors to the Flamingo. (*Ft. Pierce News-Tribune*, June 3, 1956, p.12)

**THE FT. PIERCE NEWS-TRIBUNE  
CAPTURED PERFORMERS AT BAKER'S  
DURING THE 1950S INCLUDING:**

- Silas Green Orchestra - January 20, 1952
- Charles Brown - March 9, 1952, March 16, 1952
- Wiley's Music Melody Makers - December 21, 1952
- Charles Brown and his Smarties plus Billy Ford Orchestra - December 26, 1952
- Griffin Brothers Orchestra - April 13, 1952, January 18, 1953
- Emmit Wiley and his Melody Makers - June 25, 1952, August 31, 1952, February 8, 1953
- Floyd Dixon and Margie Day - November 16, 1952
- The Great Silas Green Band - January 29, 1956
- Ace King and His House Rockers - January 6, 1956
- The Midnighters - March 30, 1958
- B.B. King
- Nat King Cole
- Sam Cooke
- Ruth Brown

A January 20, 1952 advertisement for a Silas Green Orchestra at Baker's Flamingo Grill and Bar. Photo courtesy of the Fort Pierce News-Tribune and Newspapers.com.

**BIG DANCE at . . .**  
**Baker's Flamingo Grill and Bar**  
North 13th Street

**Wednesday, January 23**

Music By  
**Silas Green Orchestra**

10—? Admission \$1.25  
Reserved Tables \$1.00; Call 905-W

**PUBLIC IS CORDIALLY INVITED**

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested for highlighting, promoting, and preserving venues associated with Florida's Chitlin Circuit.

## STATEWIDE

- Create a unified Chitlin Circuit heritage trail. The communities addressed in this report can serve as a foundation for a trail, with additional communities added in the future. This trail could be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on wishes of individual communities, but could be unified via the Chitlin Circuit website with information on all communities.
- Consider a Multiple Property Submission National Register nomination for Chitlin' Circuit sites in Florida.
- The four foundational communities addressed here all have some level of local historic preservation in existence already via a local historic district or local historic landmarks. There is precedence for expanding the use of those tools for additional buildings in each community.
- The four foundational communities should incorporate their Chitlin Circuit history and sites into their on-going economic development, promotional and district master planning efforts.
- Pursue additional grant opportunities related to assisting to implement recommendations.

## LAVILLA

- Update existing Florida Master Site File forms with more information from this research.
- Work with the City of St. Petersburg to explore more local historic landmarking for identified buildings.
- Consider pursuing a National Register of Historic Places historic district.

## **DEUCES LIVE/ST. PETERSBURG**

- Update existing Florida Master Site File forms with more information from this research.
- Prioritize 833-847 22nd Street South and 901-903 22nd Street South.
- Work with the City of St. Petersburg to explore more local historic landmarking for identified buildings.
- Consider pursuing a National Register of Historic Places historic district.

## **EATONVILLE**

- Create Florida Master Site File forms for any structures not recorded yet.
- Prioritize 429 E. Kennedy and 201 W. Kennedy.
- Update Florida Master Site File forms for structures with more information from this research.
- Prioritize 426 E. Kennedy and 550 E. Kennedy.
- Update National Register of Historic Places historic district with buildings up to 1975 and include mid-20th century history.
- Update local historic district to include buildings up to 1975.

## **LINCOLN PARK/FT. PIERCE**

- Florida Master Site File forms are needed for most of the properties identified in the research list for this project.
- Consider pursuing a National Register of Historic Places historic district.
- Consider resurveying the neighborhood to update period of significance and evaluate non-contributing properties for contributing status.



# **APPENDICES**

A: Phase I Technical Memorandum

B: Reference List

C: Project Brochure

# Appendix A

## Phase I Technical Memorandum



# Chitlin Circuit Research & Documentation

## Phase I - Technical Memorandum

### April 2021



Research by Ennis Davis, AICP

Images courtesy of the State Archives of Florida

# Chitlin Circuit Research & Documentation Technical Memorandum

*By Ennis Davis, AICP*

The intent of the **Florida Main Street Chitlin Circuit Historic Research and Documentation Project - Phase 1** research effort was to coordinate with the Florida Main Street Program to conduct and provide a comprehensive preliminary list of potential Chitlin Circuit related venues in the following four (4) designated Florida Main Street programs:

- Deuces Live Main Street - St. Petersburg
- Eatonville Main Street - Eatonville
- Lincoln Park Main Street - Fort Pierce
- Panama City Main Street - Panama City

As a result of this historical research and analysis project, 36 sites within the four (4) previously mentioned main street districts, were identified as potentially being connected to the Chitlin Circuit. Twenty-Five (25) buildings were identified in Lincoln Park. Five (5) buildings were identified in Deuces Live. Three (3) buildings were identified in both Eatonville and Glenwood. Several demolished sites were also identified and listed in each community. This information is included in **Appendix A**. Additional analysis would be required to confirm if each address has a direct connection to the circuit. An explanation of the research effort to collect, document the business name, business owner, site address and time of operation is provided below.

## **RESEARCH & DOCUMENTATION PROCESS**

### **1. DEFINE CHITLIN CIRCUIT**

The “Chitlin’ Circuit” was the collective name given to a series of black-owned nightclubs, dance halls, juke joints, theaters and other venues that were safe and acceptable for African American entertainers to perform in during segregation. Notable venues on the Chitlin’ Circuit were the Cotton Club and Apollo Theater in Harlem, the Royal Peacock in Atlanta, the Fox Theatre in Detroit, the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C., the Two Spot and the Ritz in Jacksonville.

“Chitlins” are a dish made from pig intestines that date back to slavery, when the enslaved were forced to nurture themselves with the less desirable parts of animals provided by the planter class. What was provided in a demeaning manner was turned into soul food delicacy that remains popular in African American communities throughout the country today. Like chitlins, the circuit was established to nurture African-American performers during a time when they were not allowed in most white-owned venues.



Walter Barnes' Big Band (Wikipedia)

Walter Barnes, a Chicago jazz musician born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, is credited as being an early originator of the "Chitlin' Circuit". Following the collapse of the Theatre Owners Booking Association (T.O.B.A.), a vaudeville circuit for African-American performers, Barnes successfully established a network of venues across the American South during the 1930s where it was safe, acceptable and successful for African-American entertainers to perform. Establishing a winter headquarters in Jacksonville to conduct annual late-fall-to-spring Southern tours, contracts and routes created and promoted through Barnes' position at the Chicago Defender soon became the Chitlin' Circuit. Despite his death in 1940, his success in touring across the south encouraged numerous acts to follow the circuit during segregation.

Excerpts from chapter three of *"They Never Stopped Rockin': A Brief History of the Chitlin' Circuit, Mississippi, and Their Effects on America's Music"* by Warren Beebe at the University of Southern Mississippi are highlighted below to further provide a definition and description of what the Chitlin Circuit was and how it was formed during the 1930s. This document is included in **Appendix B**.

*Miller observed of the relative inequity that, "Many southern, working class musicians did not have access to the most fruitful gigs in urban theaters, opera houses, and nationally touring*

shows. They nevertheless, created opportunities to get paid wherever they could" (Beebe, 2019, p. 16).

As the circuit itself was centered around the Southern region of the United States, the popular hotspots for bands and artists to perform at were dive-bars, roadhouses, and juke joints located in the poorer, segregated African American side of town. (Beebe, 2019, p. 37).

"Being the smart businessman that he was, Walter realized that he had gained a solid and devoted following in the South, Lauterbach said he "established winter headquarters in Jacksonville, Florida, from where he could conduct his now annual late-fall-to-spring Southern tours." Barnes toured the region extensively, meeting lifelong friends and avid supporters of his music, creating the contacts and routes that would soon become the Chitlin' Circuit. "In Barnes's own words, dirt-road hustlers became financiers or capitalists, and their burlap-curtain, sawdust-floor joints were ballrooms." (Beebe, 2019, p. 43)

"Walter began to notice that many cities and towns that held a "sizeable black population grew a darktown," referring to any portion of a city that was predominantly African American. Walter cleverly nicknamed the main street in these little sections "the stroll." These streets and avenues showcased black businesses and performance attractions that proudly showcased artists like Barnes and others who arrived in town." (Beebe, 2019, p. 45).

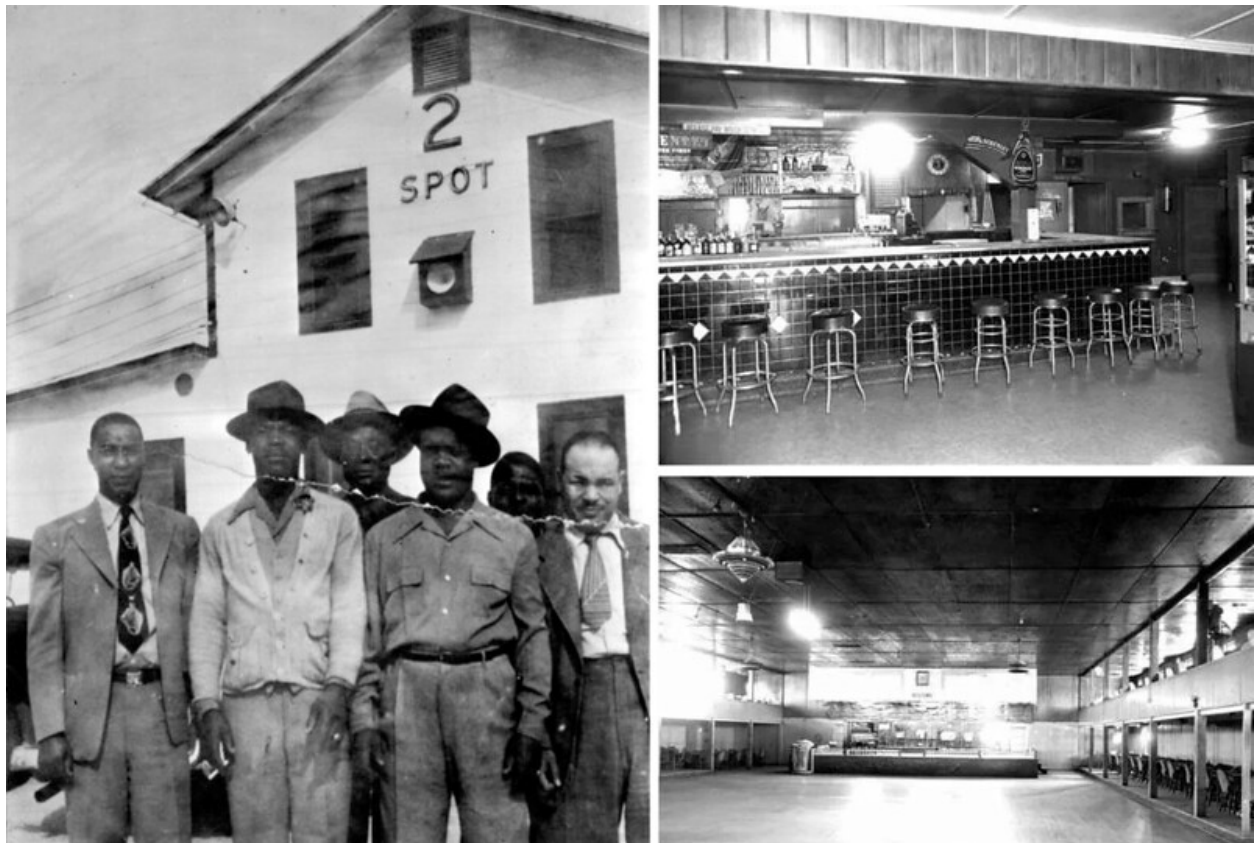


22nd Street South in St. Petersburg's Deuces Live is an example of "the stroll" that was described by Walter Barnes. (Deuces Live)

Florida Main Street examples of “the stroll” include Kennedy Boulevard in Eatonville, Cove Boulevard (Martin Luther King Jr.) in Panama City’s Glenwood community, Avenue D in Ft. Pierce’s Lincoln Park community, and 22nd Street South in St. Petersburg’s Deuces Live corridor.

## **2. IDENTIFY VENUE TYPE**

Potential Chitlin Circuit sites are sites where live music events would have taken place between 1930 and 1970, within each designated Florida Main Street district. Venues where live music performances would have taken place could include bars, beer parlours, churches, dance halls, juke joints, liquor stores, masonic lodges, parks, night clubs, package stores, restaurants, taverns and theaters.



*Identified as a night club in the Negro Motorist Green Book, the Two Spot in Jacksonville was one of the South’s largest venues on the Chitlin Circuit. (State Archives of Florida)*

### **3. IDENTIFY RESEARCH PARAMETERS**

#### **(A.) Florida Main Street Program Border**

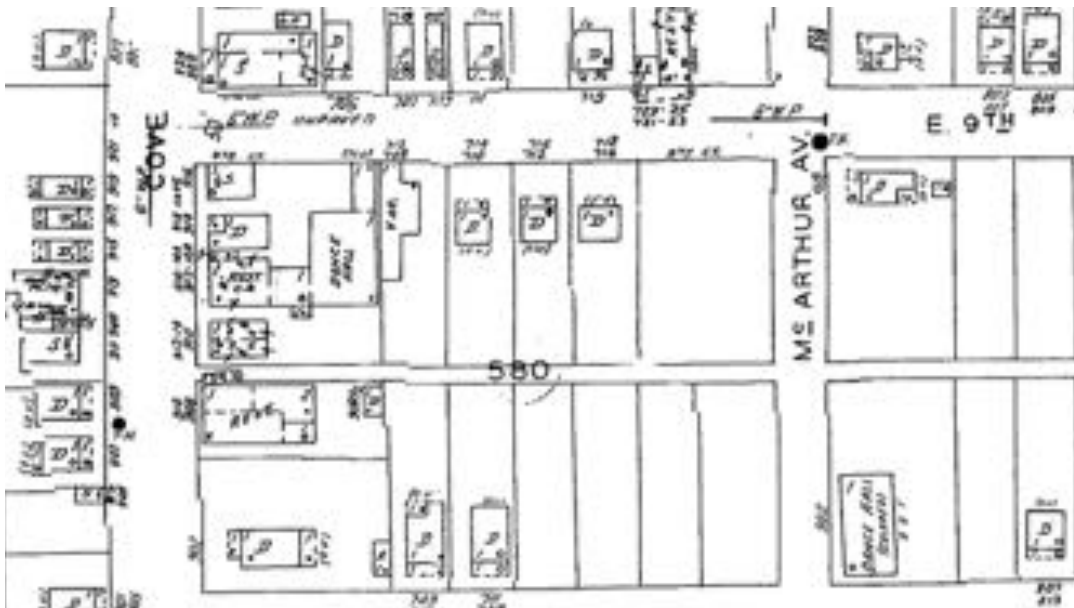
Florida Main Street maps for the Deuces Live, Eatonville, Glenwood and Lincoln Park were provided by Katherine Beck, Florida Main Street State Coordinator on February 9, 2021. Upon the request of Veatrice Farrell, the study area for Deuces Live was extended to include the business corridor from 2nd Avenue South to 18th Avenue South. A map of each Main Street District is provided in **Appendix C**.

#### **(B.) Venue Type**

Venues where live music performances would have taken place could include bars, beer parlours, churches, dance halls, juke joints, liquor stores, masonic lodges, parks, night clubs, package stores, restaurants, taverns and theaters. The development of a list of places potentially connected to the Chitlin Circuit initially starts with a list of these venues within each designated Florida Main Street district. Additional analysis will be required to confirm if each address has a direct connection to the circuit.

#### **(C.) Timeline**

A four decade period between 1930 and 1970 is the general targeted timeline for this research project. This timeline is based on the period of time following the fall of the T.O.B.A., the creation and rise of the circuit established by Walter Barnes' throughout the south and the gradual decline of the circuit following integration.



*A 1950 Sanborn map of Panama City, identifying dance halls and other potential Chitlin Circuit sites in Glenwood. (ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970)*



#### **4. RESEARCH SOURCES**

Several digital resources were used to generate the initial list of demolished and surviving potential Chitlin Circuit sites within each Main Street District.

- U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online through Ancestry.com) were used to identify potential business names, business types, owner name, address and years of operation in Deuces Live, Glenwood and Ft. Pierce.
- Digitized Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (through UF George Smathers Library and Jacksonville Public Library) were used to identify the historic location of addresses of each business identified in the U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 for Deuces Live, Glenwood and Ft. Pierce.
- The Bay County Property Appraiser was used to identify existing buildings and the year each building was constructed in Glenwood.
- The Orange County Property Appraiser was used to identify existing buildings and the year each building was constructed in Eatonville.
- The Pinellas County Property Appraiser was used to identify existing buildings and the year each building was constructed in Deuces Live.
- The St. Lucie County Property Appraiser was used to identify existing buildings and the year each building was constructed in Lincoln Park.
- Since there were no digital records of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps or U.S. City Directories for the community of Eatonville, alternative research methods were applied to document and identify potential chitlin circuit sites within the Eatonville Main Street area.
- Resources used to identify potential Eatonville chitlin circuit sites include the use of the Orlando Sentinel archives, Eatonville National Register Historic District 1998 nomination form and a narrative of the Eatonville Historical Trail by Steve Ratjar.
- Sites illustrated both on historic Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and each respective property appraiser's GIS website were identified as surviving sites as of March 26, 2021.

A detailed list of sites in each Main Street district can be found in **Appendix A**.

## 5. PHASE II - NEXT STEPS



*Gospel steel guitarist Aubrey Ghent (left) teaching apprentice Elton Noble (right) in Fort Pierce in 1994. (State Archives of Florida)*

Documentation produced in this Phase I historical research and documentation effort will be used to conduct further in-depth analysis on sites within the four Florida Main Street programs.

Additional analysis would include the following:

- Site visit to each community
- Historic research of non-digitized resources in each community
- Personal Interviews (Oral history)
- Mapping & Graphics
- Procurement of Photographs
- Content Production
- ArcGIS Storymap

**Appendix A**  
**Potential Chitlin Circuit Sites**

**POTENTIAL CHITLIN CIRCUIT SITES: DEUCES LIVE MAIN STREET**

**Surviving Deuces Live Properties for further research**

**636-650 22nd Street South (Manhattan Casino)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Dance Hall	1925 - 1938	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan
Beer + Restaurant + Tavern	1941 - 1954	Walter R Moulton	Walter R Moulton
Restaurant	1957 -	Casino Rendezvous	Walter R Moton
Restaurant	1951 - 1954	Otis Smith	Otis Smith
Restaurant	1957 -	The Spot Restaurant	Gussie W Moton
Pool Room	1941 - 1942	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkerson
Billiards	1945 - 1957 -	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkerson
Bar	1957 -	Hi-Stepper Bar	William R Watts

*\*Building constructed in 1920 (Pinellas County Property Appraiser)*

*Sources: Pinellas County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for St. Petersburg 1914 - 1957)*

**833-847 22nd Street South (Twenty-Second Street Package Store)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Liquor	1941 - 1957	Twenty-Second Street Package Store	Edw Mastry

*\*Building constructed in 1940 (Pinellas County Property Appraiser)*

*Sources: Pinellas County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for St. Petersburg 1914 - 1957)*

**901-903 22nd Street South**



<b>Type</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Tavern	1941 - 1947	Geo Washington Beer	Geo Washington
Tavern	1949 - 1957	Hortense Washington Beer	Hortense Washington

*\*Building constructed in 1946 (Pinellas County Property Appraiser)*

*Sources: Pinellas County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for St. Petersburg 1914 - 1957)*

**927-929 22nd Street South**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Soft Drinks	1939 - 1941	Thaddeus H Brothers	Thaddeus H Brothers
Restaurant	1942 - 1947	Rosa Johnson	Rosa Johnson
Restaurant	1951 - 1952	Primus J Jackson	Primus J Jackson
Restaurant	1952 - 1954	Arth Robinson	Arth Robinson
Restaurant	1957 -	The Shag Restaurant	Mildred Lewis

*\*The Shag Restaurant (1957 advertisement) - Serving 3 meals daily, open from 7am till 11pm, specializing in steaks, chops, chicken and seafood*

*\*Building constructed in 1925 (Pinellas County Property Appraiser)*

*Sources: Pinellas County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for St. Petersburg 1914 - 1957)*

**1101 22nd Street South (Royal Theatre)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Theatre	1948 - 1966	Royal Theatre	Horace Williams

*\*Building constructed in 1948 (Pinellas County Property Appraiser)*

*Sources: Pinellas County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for St. Petersburg 1914 - 1957)*



**Supporting Deuces Live Research - U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for St. Petersburg 1914 - 1957)**

**Red = Building still stands**

**1925**

Type	Address	Name	Owner
Dance Hall	638 22nd St S	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan
Restaurant	602 22nd St S	Isaac Jenkins	Isaac Jenkins
Restaurant	704 22nd St S	Jas Brown	Jas Brown
Restaurant	708 22nd St S	McCloud & Goff	
Restaurant	728 22nd St S	Quarles & Thompson	

**1926**

Dance Hall	638 22nd St S	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan
Restaurant	602 22nd St S	Isaac Jenkins	Isaac Jenkins
Restaurant	728 22nd St S	Quarles & Thompson	
Restaurant	907 22nd St S	Ida Lewis	Ida Lewis
Restaurant	betw. 11th & 12th	22nd St Cafe	

**1933**

Restaurant	600 22nd St S	Zanie Williams	Zanie Williams
Dance Hall	638 22nd St S	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan
Restaurant	665 22nd St S	John Brightly	John Brightly

**1934**

Restaurant	600 22nd St S	Hiram Church	Hiram Church
Dance Hall	638 22nd St S	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan
Restaurant	665 22nd St S	John Brightly	John Brightly

**1935**

Restaurant	600 22nd St S	Hiram Church	Hiram Church
Dance Hall	638 22nd St S	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan

**1936**

Restaurant	600 22nd St S	Hiram Church	Hiram Church
Dance Hall	638 22nd St S	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan
Restaurant	665 22nd St S	John Brightly	John Brightly
Liquors + Restaurant	701-03 22nd St S	Roy Jones	Roy Jones

**1937**

Restaurant	600 22nd St S	William Clay	William Clay
Dance Hall	638 22nd St S	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan
Restaurant	665 22nd St S	John Brightly	John Brightly
Liquors + Restaurant	701-03 22nd St S	Roy Jones	Roy Jones
Restaurant	857 22nd St S	Herbert Jones	Herbert Jones

**1938**

Restaurant	600 22nd St S	Arthur C Hicks	Arthur C Hicks
Billiards	604 22nd St S	M C Fountain	M C Fountain
Dance Hall	638 22nd St S	Jordan Dance Hall	Elder Jordan
Restaurant	659 22nd St S	John W Black	John W Black
Liquors + Restaurant	701-03 22nd St S	Roy Jones	Roy Jones
Restaurant	857 22nd St S	Stephen Wallace	Stephen Wallace

**1939**

Restaurant	600 22nd St S	Arthur C Hicks	Arthur C Hicks
Billiards	604 22nd St S	M C Fountain	M C Fountain
Soft drinks	616 22nd St S	Eddie Martin	Eddie Martin
Restaurant + Bar	626-28 22nd St S	Just-Rite Bar & Grill	
Restaurant	659 22nd St S	John W Black Jr	John W Black Jr
Dance Hall + Beer + Liquor	701-03 22nd St S	Dixieland Beer Parlour & Dance Hall	
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Clarence Williams	Clarence Williams
Restaurant	857 22nd St S	Stanford Thomas	Stanford Thomas
Soft drinks	929 22nd St S	Thaddeus H Brothers	Thaddeus H Brothers
Beer	947 22nd St S	Minnie Evans	Minnie Evans

**1940**

Restaurant	600 22nd St S	Arthur C Hicks	Arthur C Hicks
Billiards	604 22nd St S	M C Fountain	M C Fountain
Soft drinks	616 22nd St S	Eddie Martin	Eddie Martin
Restaurant + Bar	626-28 22nd St S	Just-Rite Bar & Grill	

Restaurant	659 22nd St S	John W Black Jr	John W Black Jr
Barbecue	700 22nd St S	Jas Barrett	Jas Barrett
Dance Hall + Beer + Liquor	701-03 22nd St S	Dixieland Beer Parlour & Dance Hall	
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Clarence Williams	Clarence Williams
Restaurant	857 22nd St S	Williams & Bryant	Williams & Bryant
Soft drinks	929 22nd St S	Thaddeus H Brothers	Thaddeus H Brothers
Beer	961 22nd St S	Minnie Evans	Minnie Evans
Barbecue	1050 22nd St S	M A Copeland	M A Copeland

### 1941

Beer	600 22nd St S	Jas Barrett	Jas Barrett
Billiards	604 22nd St S	M C Fountain	M C Fountain
Soft drinks	616 22nd St S	Eddie Martin	Eddie Martin
Restaurant + Bar	626-28 22nd St S	Just-Rite Bar & Grill	Robert Murray
Beer + Restaurant	640 22nd St S	Walter R Moulton	Walter R Moulton
Pool Room	650 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkerson
Restaurant	659 22nd St S	John W Black Jr	John W Black Jr
Barbecue	700 22nd St S	Jas Barrett	Jas Barrett
Dance Hall + Beer + Liquor	701-03 22nd St S	Dixieland Beer Parlour & Dance Hall	Harry F Kimura
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Clarence Williams	Clarence Williams
Restaurant	857 22nd St S	Stanford Thomas	Stanford Thomas
Beer	903 22nd St S	Geo Washington	Geo Washington
Soft drinks	929 22nd St S	Thaddeus H Brothers	Thaddeus H Brothers

Restaurant	951 22nd St S	Coleman Davis	Coleman Davis
Beer	955 22nd St S	Minnie Evans	Minnie Evans
Barbecue	1050 22nd St S	M A Copeland	M A Copeland

## 1942

Beer	600 22nd St S	Jas Barrett	Jas Barrett
Restaurant + Bar	626-28 22nd St S	Just-Rite Bar & Grill	Robert Murray
Beer + Restaurant	640-42 22nd St S	Walter R Moulton	Walter R Moulton
Pool Room	646-50 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkerson
Beer	654 22nd St S	Frank Inman	Frank Inman
Restaurant	659 22nd St S	Moses Cooper	Moses Cooper
Restaurant	700 22nd St S	Robert Thomas	Robert Thomas
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Clarence Williams	Clarence Williams
Beer	903 22nd St S	Geo Washington	Geo Washington
Restaurant	927 22nd St S	Rosa Johnson	Rosa Johnson
Billiards	951 22nd St S	Coleman Davis	Coleman Davis
Beer	955 22nd St S	Minnie Evans	Minnie Evans

## 1944

Beer + Restaurant	640-42 22nd St S	Walter R Moulton	Walter R Moulton
Restaurant	652 22nd St S	Edwin McCloud	Edwin McCloud
Beer	654 22nd St S	Moses C Cooper	Moses C Cooper
Beer	701 22nd St S	Herman Fortunoff	Herman Fortunoff

Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Clarence Williams	Clarence Williams
Restaurant	857 22nd St S	Rainbow Cafe	
Beer	903 22nd St S	Geo Washington	Geo Washington
Restaurant	927 22nd St S	Rosa Johnson	Rosa Johnson
Billiards	951 22nd St S	Coleman Davis	Coleman Davis
Beer	955 22nd St S	Minnie Evans	Minnie Evans
Restaurant	1050 22nd St S	Two Tone Barbecue	Lillie B Brown

## 1945

Beer + Restaurant	640-42 22nd St S	Walter R Moulton	Walter R Moulton
Billiards	648-50 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkenson
Restaurant	652 22nd St S	Edwin McCloud	Edwin McCloud
Beer	654 22nd St S	Moses C Cooper	Moses C Cooper
Beer	701 22nd St S	Poncy Rhyme	Poncy Rhyme
Restaurant	705 22nd St S	Josephine Crosby	Josephine Crosby
Liquor	775 22nd St S	Poncy Rhyme	Ponce Rimes
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Clarence Williams	Clarence Williams
Beer	903 22nd St S	Geo Washington	Geo Washington
Restaurant	927 22nd St S	Rosa Johnson	Rosa Johnson
Billiards	951 22nd St S	Coleman Davis	Coleman Davis
Beer	955 22nd St S	Minnie Wilson	Minnie Wilson
Restaurant	1048 22nd St S	Two Tone Barbecue	Lillie B Brown

**1947**

Restaurant	640-42 22nd St S	Walter R Moulton	Walter R Moulton
Billiards	648-50 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkenson
Restaurant	652 22nd St S	Edwin McCloud	Edwin McCloud
Liquor	654 22nd St S	Moses C Cooper	Moses C Cooper
Liquor	656 22nd St S	Pinellas Liquor Store	Thos C Clark
Restaurant	663 22nd St S	Brown's Cafe	Reece Brown
Tavern	705-09 22nd St S	Harlem Cafe Inc	Jerome L Friedman
Liquor	775 22nd St S	Roof Garden Palace	Ponce Rimes
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Clarence Williams	Clarence Williams
Beer	903 22nd St S	Geo Washington	Geo Washington
Restaurant	927 22nd St S	Rosa Johnson	Rosa Johnson
Billiards	951 22nd St S	Jos Twiner	Jos Twiner
Beer	955 22nd St S	Minnie Wilson	Minnie Wilson
Restaurant	1048 22nd St S	Two Tone Barbecue	Lillie Brown

**1948**

Dance Hall	632.5 22nd St S	Dance Hall	Columbus Wilkenson and George Grogan
Restaurant	640-42 22nd St S	Walter R Moulton	Walter R Moulton
Billiards	648-50 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkenson
Restaurant	652 22nd St S	Edmund McCloud	Edmund McCloud
Beer and Wine	654 22nd St S	Moses C Cooper	Moses C Cooper

Liquor	656 22nd St S	Pinellas Liquor Store	Thos C Clark
Restaurant	662 22nd St S	Brown's Cafe	Reece Brown
Tavern	705-09 22nd St S	Harlem Cafe Inc	Jerome L Friedman
Billiards	720 22nd St S	Blue Front Pool Room	Will Strong
Liquor	775 22nd St S	Roof Garden Palace	Ponce Rimes
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Restaurant	844 22nd St S	Lila Dumas	Lila Dumas
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Harlem Pool Room	Clarence Williams
Billiards	951 22nd St S	Jos Twiner	Jos Twiner
Beer	955 22nd St S	Minnie Wilson	Minnie Wilson
Restaurant	1048 22nd St S	Two Tone Barbecue	Lillie Brown

## 1949

Dance Hall	632.5 22nd St S	Dance Hall	Columbus Wilkenson and George Grogan
Restaurant	640-42 22nd St S	Walter R Moton	Walter R Moton
Billiards	648-50 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkenson
Liquor	652-56 22nd St S	Pinellas Liquor Store	Thos C Clark
Restaurant	658 22nd St S	The Chop Suey House	Titus J Newkirk
Restaurant	662 22nd St S	Royal Cafe	Tuft US
Restaurant	663 22nd St S	Wigwam Lunch	
Tavern	705-09 22nd St S	The Harlem Cafe	Jerome L Friedman
Billiards	720 22nd St S	Blue Front Pool Room	Will Strong



Liquor	775 22nd St S	Roof Garden Palace	Ponce Rimes
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Harlem Pool Room	Clarence Williams
Beer	903 22nd St S	Hortense Washington	Hortense Washington
Billiards	951 22nd St S	Marshall H Lester	Marshall H Lester
Beer	955 22nd St S	Minnie Wilson	Minnie Wilson
Restaurant	1048 22nd St S	Two Tone Barbecue	Lillie Brown

### 1951

Tavern	640 22nd St S	Walter Noton	Walter Noton
Restaurant	642 22nd St S	Otis Smith	Otis Smith
Billiards	648-50 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkenson
Liquor + Bar	652-56 22nd St S	Pinellas Liquor Store and Hi-Stopper Bar	Thos C Clark
Restaurant	658 22nd St S	S & W Cafe	Eliz Thomas
Restaurant	663 22nd St S	Newkirk's Steak & Chop House	Titus J Newkirk
Restaurant	700 22nd St S	El Rancho Cafe	Joe Rodriguez
Tavern	705-09 22nd St S	The Harlem Cafe	Jerome L Friedman
Liquor + Bar	722 22nd St S	Green Back Dollar Bar & Package Store	Will Strong and Jas Barrett
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Harlem Pool Room	Clarence Williams
Tavern	903 22nd St S	Hortense Washington	Hortense Washington
Restaurant	927 22nd St S	Primus J Jackson	Primus J Jackson

Billiards	951 22nd St S	Marshall H Lester	Marshall H Lester
Tavern	955 22nd St S	Minnie Wilson	Minnie Wilson
Restaurant	1048 22nd St S	Two Tone Barbecue	Lillie Brown

## 1952

Tavern	640 22nd St S	Walter Noton	Walter Noton
Restaurant	642 22nd St S	Otis Smith	Otis Smith
Billiards	648-50 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkenson
Liquor + Bar	652-56 22nd St S	Pinellas Liquor Store and Hi-Stopper Bar	Thos C Clark
Restaurant	658 22nd St S	S & W Cafe	Eliz Thomas
Restaurant	663 22nd St S	Newkirk's Steak & Chop House	Titus J Newkirk
Restaurant	700 22nd St S	El Rancho Cafe	Joe Rodriguez
Tavern	705-09 22nd St S	The Harlem Cafe	Jerome L Friedman
Liquor + Bar	722 22nd St S	Green Back Dollar Bar & Package Store	Will Strong and Jas Barrett
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Harlem Pool Room	Clarence Williams
Tavern	903 22nd St S	Hortense Washington	Hortense Washington
Restaurant	927 22nd St S	Arth Robinson	Arth Robinson
Tavern	955 22nd St S	Minnie Evans	Minnie Evans
Restaurant	1048 22nd St S	Two Tone Barbecue	Lillie Brown

1954

Tavern	640 22nd St S	Walter Moton	Walter Moton
Restaurant	642 22nd St S	Otis Smith	Otis Smith
Restaurant	645-49 22nd St S	Chicken Shack	Wilbur W Wright
Billiards	648-50 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkenson
Liquor + Bar	652-56 22nd St S	Pinellas Liquor Store and Hi-Stopper Bar	Thos C Clark
Restaurant	658 22nd St S	S & W Cafe	Eliz Thomas
Restaurant	663 22nd St S	Newkirk's Steak & Chop House	Titus J Newkirk
Restaurant	700 22nd St S	El Rancho Cafe	Joe Rodriguez
Restaurant	701 22nd St S	Handy's Watermelon Stand / Casaloma Inn	
Tavern	705-09 22nd St S	The Harlem Cafe	Jerome L Friedman
Liquor + Bar	722 22nd St S	Green Back Dollar Bar & Package Store	Will Strong and Jas Barrett
Restaurant	802 22nd St S	John W Black	John W Black
Restaurant	827 22nd St S	Red Lantern Drive-In	
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Edw Mastry
Restaurant	844 22nd St S	Carter's Lunch Stand	Henry Carter
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Harlem Pool Room	Clarence Williams
Tavern	903 22nd St S	Hortense Washington	Hortense Washington
Restaurant	927 22nd St S	Arth Robinson	Arth Robinson
Billiards	951 22nd St S	22nd St Pool Room	
Restaurant	955 22nd St S	Blue Moon Restaurant	Minnie Evans
Theatre	1011 22nd St S	Royal Theatre	
Restaurant	1048 22nd St S	Two Tone Barbecue	Lillie Brown

1957

Tavern	618 22nd St S	Club Moton	
Restaurant	620 22nd St S	Harlem Restaurant & Grill	
Restaurant	630 22nd St S	B&B Luncheonette	Eliza Morton
Restaurant	640 22nd St S	Casino Rendezvous	Walter R Moton
Restaurant	642 22nd St S	The Spot Restaurant	Gussie W Moton
Restaurant	645-49 22nd St S	Squeeze Inn	Willie Wright
Billiards	648 22nd St S	Manhattan Pool Room	Columbus Wilkenson
Bar	650 22nd St S	Hi-Stepper Bar	William R Watts
Restaurant	658 22nd St S	S & W Cafe	Eliz Thomas
Restaurant	663 22nd St S	Newkirk's Steak & Chop House	Titus J Newkirk
Billiards	700 22nd St S	Two Duces Pool Room	Joseph Rodriguez
Restaurant	701 22nd St S	Orange Blossom Cafe	Jos E Walker
Tavern	705-09 22nd St S	Harlem Liquor Store	Arth Meyers
Liquor + Bar	722 22nd St S	Green Back Dollar Bar & Package Store	Will Strong and Jas Barrett
Restaurant	769-71 22nd St S	El Rancho Restaurant	Jos Rodriguez
Restaurant	802 22nd St S	Geech's Pig Meat Bar-B-Q	
Liquor	833 22nd St S	22nd St Package Store	Michael and Edward Mastry
Restaurant	844 22nd St S	Carter's Lunch Stand	Henry Carter
Billiards	855 22nd St S	Harlem Pool Room	Clarence Williams
Tavern	903 22nd St S	Hortense Washington	Hortense Washington
Restaurant	927 22nd St S	The Shag Restaurant	Mildred Lewis

Billiards	951 22nd St S	22nd St Pool Room	John A Baldwin
Theatre	1011 22nd St S	Royal Theatre	Horace Williams

**POTENTIAL CHITLIN CIRCUIT SITES: EATONVILLE MAIN STREET**

**426 East Kennedy Blvd (Club Eaton)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Night Club	1952 - 1955	Club Eaton	Condor Merritt
Night Club	1955 - 1983	Club Eaton	William "Billy" Bozeman
Night Club	1983 - 1985	Club Eaton	E.L. Bing
Night Club	1985 -	Mr. B's	E.L. Bing

*\*Musicians who performed here include Drifters, the Inkspots, Duke Ellington, B.B. King, Sam Cooke, Cab Calloway, James Brown, Bobby Bland, Tina Turner, Fats Domino, Aretha Franklin*

*Sources: Orlando Sentinel online archives, Orange County Property Appraiser*

**550 East Kennedy Blvd (Thomas House)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Church	1882 - 1900	St. Lawrence AME	St. Lawrence AME
Library	1900 - ??	??	??
Beer Parlour / Dance Hall / Juke Joint	?? - 1946 (??)	??	??
Residence	1946 -	Thomas Residence	Stenson Thomas

*Sources: Blackandbookish.com, Eatonville Historical Trail by Steve Ratjar, 1998 Eatonville Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*

**429 East Kennedy Blvd (Green Lantern Tavern)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Night Club	1935 - 1947	Green Lantern Tavern	James Steele
Night Club	1947 - 1951	Green Lantern Tavern	E.L. Bing
Night Club	1951 - 1980	Green Lantern Tavern	??

*\*Converted to grocery store in 1980*

*Sources: Orlando Sentinel online archives, Orange County Property Appraiser, Eatonville Historical Trail by Steve Ratjar*



**201 West Kennedy Blvd (Rainbow Bar & Package Store) - Demolished in 2001**

Type	Year	Name	Owner
Night Club	1946 - 1952 ??	Tuxedo Junction	??
Night Club	1952 - 1991	Rainbow Club	E.L. Bing

*\*Musicians who performed here included Count Basie, Lionel Hampton and Duke Ellington*

*Sources: Orlando Sentinel online archives, Eatonville Historical Trail by Steve Ratjar, Making Our Voices Heard: Power and Citizenship in Central Florida's Black Communities by Gramond McPherson (University of Central Florida)*

**POTENTIAL CHITLIN CIRCUIT SITES: GLENWOOD MAIN STREET**

**Surviving Glenwood Properties for further research**

**1209 N Cove Blvd (Smith Drive Inn)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurant	1955	Smith Drive Inn	Simon Smith
Restaurant	1957	Smith Drive Inn	Simon Smith
Restaurant	1958	Smith Drive Inn	Simon Smith
Restaurant	1959	Smith Drive Inn	Simon Smith
Restaurant	1960	Smith Drive Inn	Laura J Smith

*\*Building constructed in 1950 (Bay County Property Appraiser)*

*Sources: Bay County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Panama City 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960)*

**1015 N MacArthur Ave (Lover's Rest Cafe)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955	Lover's Rest Cafe	Lucille B Crews

*\*Building constructed in 1942 (Bay County Property Appraiser)*

*Sources: Bay County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Panama City 1948, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960)*

**723 - 725 E 9th Ct (White Rose Cafe)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Cafes	1948	Roosevelt Cafe	Lettie M Packard
Cafes	1951	New White Rose Cafe	L D Parker
Restaurant	1955	Bill's Sandwich Shop	Willis Dillard
Restaurant	1957	Bill's Sandwich Shop	Emma Austin
Restaurant	1958	White Rose Cafe	James Austin
Restaurant	1959	White Rose Cafe	Perman Baker
Restaurant	1960	White Rose Cafe	Palmer Baker

*\*Building constructed in 1945 (Bay County Property Appraiser)*

*Sources: Bay County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Panama City 1948, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960)*

**Supporting Glenwood Research - U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Panama City 1935, 1948, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960)**

**Red = Building still stands**

**1935**

Restaurants	East End	Blue Front Cafe	Jas Dennis
Restaurants	314 E 6th (??)	Coleman's Cafe	Coleman J Gaines
Restaurants	545 East End	Wells Cafe	Jas W Wells

**1948**

No \* or (c) in directory

Billiards and Pool	704 E 9th	Edw Benton	Edw Benton
<b>Cafes</b>	<b>725 E 9th Ct (1945)</b>	<b>Roosevelt Cafe</b>	<b>Lettie M Packard</b>
Motion Picture Theaters	722 E 9th Ct	Royal Theatre (operated 1944 - 1964)	Bishop Theatres
Taverns	914 (912) N Cove Blvd	Harlem Bar + Cafe	T A Hall
Taverns	908-10 N Cove Blvd	Little Savoy	C R Jones

Not in study area:

Taverns	3801 E 1st Plaza (BH)	Cotton Club	Geo Ross (mgr)
Taverns	142 Ruth Dew Drop Inn	Dew Drop Inn	Acie Varner

**1951**

Cafes	828 (814) N Cove Blvd	Club 66	Lucille & J E Spires
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Cafes	725 E 9th Court (1945)	New White Rose Cafe	L D Parker
Cafes	704 E 8th	Riverside Cafe	Maude Bellamy
Cafes	800 N Cove Blvd	Skilite Cafe	Mary Williams
Cafes	910 N Cove Blvd	Wayside Grill	J C Shazier
Hotels	913 N Cove Blvd	Stanley Hotel	C H Stanley
Motion Picture Theatres	1127 N Cove Blvd	Lincoln Theatre (Opened in 1950)	Elmer R. Gray
Taverns	912 N Cove Blvd	Harlem Bar	F A Branning
Taverns	908 N Cove Blvd	Little Savoy	R J Blackburn

### 1953

Can't find categories in directory - part of directory appears to be missing

### 1955

Hotels	1308 N Cove Blvd	Hotel Jacquelin	Mercy D Jackson
Hotels	913 Cove Blvd	Stanley Hotel	Llyod D Parker
Liquor Dealers - Retail	906 N Cove Blvd	Little Savoy	Jules Jones
Night Clubs	933 N Cove Blvd	Two Spot Club	Willie Conner
Restaurants	725 E 9th Ct (1945)	Bill's Sandwich Shop	Willis Dillard
Restaurants	3529 St. John (S) - this is another AA neighborhood	Cotton Club	Elzia Varner
Restaurants	817 ½ N MacArthur Ave	Dew Drop Cafe	Sol Mathis
Restaurants	1015 N MacArthur Ave (1942)	Lover's Rest Cafe	Lucille B Crews
Restaurants	1001 N Cove Blvd	Northside Cafe	Ruth Mapley
Restaurants	815 E 15th	Rocket Eighty-Eight	William M World

		Cafe	
Restaurants	800 N Cove Blvd	Skilite Cafe	Mary William
Restaurants	1209 N Cove Blvd (1950)	Smith Drive Inn	Simon Smith
Restaurants	4 E 15th	Trio Grill	Violet Musson
Restaurants	910 N Cove Blvd	Wayside Grill	Harry Tolbert
Taverns	319 E 14th	Mrs. Jennie Stewart	Jennie Stewart
Theatre	1125 N Cove Blvd	Lincoln Theatre	Chas D McCrary

## 1957

Billiards and Pool	3416 St John (another neighborhood )	Bay Harbor Pool Room	Willie B Henry
Hotels	700 E 15th	Pine Hotel	Joe Calhoun
Hotels	1700 N Cove Blvd	Red Mount Hotel	Arth Chambers (mgr)
Liquor Dealers - Retail	908 N Cove Blvd	Little Savoy	Roy J Blackburn
Night Clubs	900 N MacArthur Ave	Twilight Casino	Hattie M Hunter
Night Clubs	933 N Cove Blvd	Two Spot Club	Willie Conner
Restaurants	725 E 9th Ct (1945)	Bill's Sandwich Shop	Emma Austin
Restaurants	560 E 11th	Blue Wilmer	Lena M
Restaurants	911A N Cove Blvd	Chicken Nest Cafe	Jas Austin
Restaurants	817 ½ N McArthur Ave	Dew Drop Inn Cafe	Anna P Mathis
Restaurants	800 N Cove Blvd	Skilite Cafe	Mary Williams
Restaurants	1209 N Cove Blvd (1950)	Smith Drive Inn	Simon Smith
Restaurants	911B N Cove Blvd	Speckle Perch	Rubin A Robinson

Restaurants	910 N Cove Blvd	Wayside Grill	Harry Tolbert
Taverns	619 Cone Av	Burks Inn	Earl McGadney
Taverns	912 N Cove Blvd	Harlem Bar	Ben Overstreet
Theaters	525 E 15th	Gulf Drive In Theater	Marion D Adams (mgr)
Theaters	1125 N Cove Blvd	Lincoln Theater	A Smith Dewey (mgr)

**1958**

Beer - Retail	619 Cone Avenue	Burks Inn	Earl McGadney
Billiards and Pool	911b N Cove Blvd	Mrs Pauline R Owens	Pauline R Ownes
Hotels	1700 N Cove Blvd	Pamela Denise Hotel	Perilee Scott
Hotels	700 E 15th	Pine Hotel	Joe Calhoun
Hotels	913 N Cove Blvd	Stanley Hotel	Cleve L Stanley
Liquor Dealers - Retail	Hwy 98 at Cove Blvd	Beverage Shoppe (State Liquor Store)	Roy J Blackburn
Liquor and Wines - Retail	908 N Cove Blvd	Little Savoy	Roy J Blackburn
Restaurants	911a N Cove Blvd	Chicken Nest Cafe	Mrs Willie M Stephens
Restaurants	817 ½ N MacArthur Av	Dew Drop Inn Cafe	Sol Mathis
Restaurants	1308 N Cove Blvd	Lady Ethel Cafeteria	"Lady" Ethel W Spires
Restaurants	815 E 15th	Rocket Eighty Eight Cafe	William M World
Restaurants	1209 N Cove Blvd (1950)	Smith's Drive In	Simon Smith
Restaurants	910 N Cove Blvd	Wayside Grill	Harry J Tolbert
Restaurants	725 E 9th Ct (1945)	White Rose Cafe	James Austin
Taverns	912 N Cove Blvd	Harlem Bar	Ben Overstreet



Theaters	1125 N Cove Blvd	Lincoln Theater	Irvin Smith (mgr)
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*\*Roy J Blackburn owns the Little Savoy and three State Liquor Stores. Cocktail Lounge in downtown Panama City at 38 W 4th Street. Beverage Shoppe at US 98 & Cove*

**1959**

Beer Gardens	815 E 15th	Rocket Eighty Eight Cafe	William M World
Hotels	1700 N Cove Blvd	Pamela Denise Hotel	Lauvenia Holmes
Hotels	700 E 15th	Pine Hotel	Alt Ward (mgr)
Liquor and Wines - Retail	912 N Cove Blvd	Harlem Bar	Ben Overstreet
Liquor and Wines - Retail	908 N Cove Blvd	Little Savoy	Roy J Blackburn
Restaurants	619 Cone Av	Burk's Inn	Earl McGadney
Restaurants	817 ½ N MacArthur Av	Dew Drop Inn Cafe	Sol Mathis
Restaurants	1308 N Cove Blvd	Lady Ethel Cafeteria	"Lady" Ethel W Spires
Restaurants	911b N Cove Blvd	Mrs Pauline R Owens	Pauline Owens
Restaurants	911b N Cove Blvd	Pauline's Snack Bar	Pauline Owens
Restaurants	815 E 15th	Rocket Eight-Eight Cafe	William M World
Restaurants	1209 N Cove Blvd (1950)	Smith's Drive In	Simon Smith
Restaurants	911a N Cove Blvd	Stephens Cafe	Mrs Willie M Stephens
Restaurants	910 N Cove Blvd	Wayside Grill	Leola Moody
Restaurants	911 N Cove Blvd	Welcome Inn	Mamie Waldon
Restaurants	725 E 9th Ct	White Rose Cafe	Perman Baker
Theaters	525 E 15th	Gulf Drive In Theatre	Marion D Adams (mgr)

Theaters	1125 N Cove Blvd	Lincoln Theater	Irvin Smith (mgr)
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**1960**

Beer Gardens	815 E 15th	Rocket Eighty Eight Cafe	William M World
Hotels	1700 N Cove Blvd	Pamela Denise Hotel	Lauvenia Holmes
Liquor and Wines - Retail	565 N Cove Blvd	Beverage Shop	Roy J Blackburn
Liquor and Wines - Retail	912 N Cove Blvd	Harlem Bar	Ben Overstreet
Liquor and Wines - Retail	908 N Cove Blvd	Little Savoy	Roy J Blackburn
Night Club	900 N MacArthur Av	Twilight Casino	Irene Smith
Restaurants	619 Cone Av	Burk's Inn	Earl McGadney
Restaurants	817 ½ N MacArthur Av	Dew Drop Inn Cafe	Claudia L Martin
Restaurants	1302 N Cove Blvd	Grand Jerry Inn	Jerry Wyche
Restaurants	1308 N Cove Blvd	Lady Ethel Cafeteria	"Lady" Ethel W Spires
Restaurants	911b N Cove Blvd	Pauline's Snack Bar	Pauline Owens
Restaurants	815 E 15th	Rocket Eighty Eight Cafe	William M World
Restaurants	1209 N Cove Blvd (1950)	Smith Drive Inn	Laura J Smith
Restaurants	911a N Cove Blvd	Stephens Cafe	Mrs Willie M Stephens
Restaurants	910 N Cove Blvd	Wayside Grill	Leon Allen
Restaurants	911 N Cove Blvd	Welcome Inn	Mamie F Waldon
Restaurants	723 E 9th Ct (1945)	White Rose Cafe	Palmer Baker
Theaters	525 E 15th	Gulf Drive In Theater	Marion D Adams

			(mgr)
Theaters	1125 N Cove Blvd	Lincoln Theaters	Irvin Smith (mgr)

*\*Rocket Eighty Eight Cafe - Short orders, beer, soft drinks, groceries, open 5am to 12 midnight week days, open all night weekends - 815 E 15th*

**POTENTIAL CHITLIN CIRCUIT SITES: LINCOLN PARK MAIN STREET**

**Surviving Lincoln Park Properties for further research**

**901 - 903 Avenue D (Blue Front Liquor)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Liquor Dealers-Retail	1955 (901 Ave D)	Blue Front Liquor	Max Rauch
Liquor Dealers-Retail	1956 (901 Ave D)	Blue Front Liquor	Leo V Ustick (mgr)
Liquor Dealers-Retail	1957 (901 Ave D)	Blue Front Liquor	Bernice Weisenberg
Liquor Dealers-Retail	1958 (901 Ave D)	Blue Front Liquor	Bernice Weisenberg
Liquor Dealers-Retail	1959 (901 Ave D)	Blue Front Liquor	Bernice Weisenberg
Liquor Dealers-Retail	1960 (901 Ave D)	Blue Front Liquor	Bernice Weisenberg
Restaurants	1955 (903 Ave D)	Blue Haven Cafe	Adeline Natieol
Restaurants	1956 (903 Ave D)	Blue Haven Cafe	Adeline Natieo
Restaurants	1957 (903 Ave D)	Blue Haven Cafe	Adeline Natieo

*\*Building constructed in 1939 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser). Restaurant, beer and wine (1957 Blue Haven Cafe advertisement)*

Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)

**914 - 916 Avenue D**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1957 - 1960 (914 Ave D)	Palm Cafe	Joe Williams
Restaurants	1959 - 1960 (916 Ave D)	Better Food Cafe	Hattie Williams

*\*Building constructed in 1956 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)

**921 - 925 Avenue D (Lincoln Drive In)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955 - 1960	Lincoln Drive In	Jeff McDonald
Beer + Retail Sales	1955 (439 Dundas)	Sami C Glover	Sami C Glover

*\*Building constructed in 1953 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**931 Avenue D (Lincoln Beer Garden)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Beer + Retail Sales + Restaurants	1955	Lincoln Beer Garden	Lillie M Johnson
Beer + Retail Sales + Restaurants	1957	Lincoln Beer Garden	Lille M Johnson
Beer + Retail Sales	1955 - 1957 (438 N 10th)	Harlem Square	Ethel Wilder
Beer + Retail Sales + Restaurants	1958 - 1960	Lincoln Beer Garden	Lille M Johnson

*\*Building constructed in 1950 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser). Home cooking, sandwiches, bar-b-q, hamburgers, homemade pies, cold drinks, beer, wine (1960 advertisement)*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**1004 Avenue D (Silver King Tavern)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955 - 1959	Silver King Tavern	Jas Lucas

*\*Building constructed in 1950 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*



**1124 - 1132 Avenue D (Lincoln Theatre)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Motion Picture Theaters	1946	Lincoln Theater	Dr. C.C. Benton and Dr. Harry Center

*\*Building constructed in 1946 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser). According to [http://destinyhosted.com/fortpdocs/2014/CCCONFER/20140609\\_67/393\\_Program%20for%205-19-12.pdf](http://destinyhosted.com/fortpdocs/2014/CCCONFER/20140609_67/393_Program%20for%205-19-12.pdf), the theatre screened current movies and hosted live musical and theatrical performances on stage.*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**1228 - 1230 (1234 Today) Avenue D**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955 (1228 Ave D)	Robinson's Place	John B Robinson
Restaurants	1956 - 1957 (1228 Ave D)	Sam's Place	Sam L Glover
Restaurants	1956 (1230 Ave D)	Lillie's Cafe	Lillie M Sandifer
Restaurants	1960 (1230 Ave D)	The Grill	Willie L Johnson

*\*Building constructed in 1948 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**1233 - 1237 Avenue D**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Beer - Retail	1958 (1237 Ave D)	LaTropical Tavern	Geo J Ford
Beer - Retail	1958 - 1959 (1233 Ave D)	Little Joe's Tavern	Josephine Griffith

*\*Building constructed in 1952 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**1238 Avenue D (Ethel's Tavern)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955 - 1956	Ethel's Tavern	Ethel Bryant
Beer - Retail Sales	1957	Ethel's Tavern	Ethel Bryant
Restaurants	1958 - 1960	Ethel's Tavern	Ethel Bryant

*\*Building constructed in 1954 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**1705 - 1707 Avenue D**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Beer - Retail Sales	1957 (1707 Ave D)	Sky Lane Bar	Bessie M Gollett
Restaurants	1958 - 1960 (1707 Ave D)	Gollett Drive In	Eugene Gollett
Restaurants	1957 (1705 Ave D)	Brown's	Cad Brown
Restaurants	1958 (1705 Ave D)	T M Restaurant	T M and Mattie Sue Moore

*\*Building constructed in 1956 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser). Home cooking, homemade pies, sandwiches, cold beer, open every day (1958 advertisement for T M Restaurant)*

*Bar-b-q, home cooking, sandwiches, beer, wine, dancing (1958 advertisement for Gollet Drive In)*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**1706 Avenue D (Ponceanna Inn)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955 - 1958	Ponceanna Inn	Charlie Reeves

*\*Building constructed in 1951 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**1708 Avenue D (Cafe Society)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955 - 1958	Cafe Society	Minnie J Worthen
Restaurants	1959 - 1960	Society Cafe	Minnie J Worthen

*\*Building constructed in 1951 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**1807 Avenue D (Fuller's Bar-B-Q Drive In)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1957	Feller's Bar-B-Q	Owen W Feller
Restaurants	1958 - 1960	Fuller's Bar-B-Q Drive In	Owen W Fuller

*\*Building constructed in 1954 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*



**1907 Avenue D (Eddie's Bar & Grill)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955	Eddie's Bar & Grill	Eddie Asbury
Restaurants	1956	Eddie's Drive In	Eddie Asbury
Restaurants	1957 - 1958	Eddie's Bar & Inn	Eddie Asbury
Restaurants	1959 - 1960	Eddie's Drive In	Eddie Asbury

*\*Building constructed in 1950 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**2001 - 2005 Avenue D**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1960 (2001 Ave D)	Orphan Annie Cafe	Ida M Taylor
Restaurants	1960 (2005 Ave D)	Twin Palms Restaurant	Cleo E Sirmans

*\*Building constructed in 1960 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**311 N 8th Street (1953)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1956	Stone's Cafe	Cleve Nelson
Restaurants	1957	Stone's Cafe	Albert T Stone
Restaurants	1958	Stone's Cafe	Albert T Stone
Restaurants	1959	Stone's Cafe	Albert T Stone
Restaurants	1960	Stone's Cafe	Albert T Stone

*\*Building constructed in 1953 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**403 N 9th Street (Mrs Eva B Miller)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Beer + Retail Sales	1955	Eva B Miller	Eva B Miller

*\*Building constructed in 1940 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**510 N 13th Street (Starlight Cafe)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1956	Starlight Cafe	Hardy Pelt
Restaurants	1957	Starlight Cafe	Hardy Pelt
Restaurants	1958	Starlight Cafe	Hardy Pelt
Restaurants	1959	Starlight Cafe	Hardy and Ruby L Pelt

*\*Building constructed in 1952 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser). Home cooking, sandwiches, bar-b-que, homemade pies, cold drinks (1959 advertisement)*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**809 N 13th St (Red Top Bar-B-Que)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1955	Red Top Bar-B-Que	Mazie Williams
Restaurants	1956	Red Top Bar-B-Que	Henry Williams
Restaurants	1957	Red Top Bar-B-Que	Horace and Maggie L Williams
Restaurants	1958	Red Top Bar-B-Que	Horace Williams

*\*Building constructed in 1952 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**813 N 13th St (Fort Pierce Lodge No. 155 (FA+M))**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	1951 -	Ft. Pierce Lodge No. 155 (FA+M)	

*\*Building constructed in 1951 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**906 N 13th Street (Jake's Drive In)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Restaurants	1956	Jake's Drive In	Jeremiah and Daisy E Reddick
Restaurants	1957	Jake's Drive In	Jeremiah and Daisy E Reddick
Restaurants	1958	Jake's Drive In	Jeremiah and Daisy E Reddick
Restaurants	1959	Jake's Drive In	Jeremiah and Daisy E Reddick
Restaurants	1960	Jake's Drive In	Jeremiah and Daisy E Reddick

*\*Building constructed in 1952 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*



**907 N 13th St (Flamingo Bar and Grill)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Beer + Retail Sales	1952	Flamingo Bar & Grill	Levi B Baker
Beer + Retail Sales	1955	Flamingo Bar & Grill	Levi B Baker
Restaurants	1956	Flamingo Bar & Grill	Levi B Baker
Beer + Retail + Restaurants	1958	Flamingo Bar & Grill Motel	Levi B Baker
Beer + Retail + Restaurants	1959	Flamingo Bar & Grill Motel	Levi B Baker
Beer + Retail + Restaurants	1960	Flamingo Bar & Grill Motel	Levie B Baker

*\*Building constructed in 1951 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**911.5 N 13th Street (Baker's Pool Room)**



Type	Year	Name	Owner
Billiards and Pool	1955	Baker's Pool Room	Levi B Baker

*\*Building constructed in 1951 (St. Lucie County Property Appraiser).*

*Sources: St. Lucie County Property Appraiser, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)*

**Supporting Lincoln Park Research - U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 (Available online for Ft. Pierce 1916 - 1960)**

**Red = Building still stands**

**1916**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Name</b>
Billiards + Pool Rooms	314 Zetland	George Griffin
Colored Boarding House	113 N Railroad Way	
Boarding and Lodging	714 Tropical Avenue	Delia Sparks
Buildings and Halls	320 Zetland	Knights of Pythias Hall
Buildings and Halls	712 Tropical Avenue	Odd Fellows Hall
Eating Houses	107 N Railroad Way	Hattie Atkins
Eating Houses	804 Tropical Avenue	Bessie Broxey
Eating Houses	304 S Railroad Way	Colored Lunchroom
Eating Houses	810 Seminole Ave	Minnie Smith
Eating Houses	215 Zetland	Frances Washington
Eating Houses	216 Zetland	W M Wideman
Theaters and Places of Amusement	312 Zetland	High's Hall

**1918**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Name</b>
Boarding	113 N Railroad Way	Colored Boarding House
Buildings and Halls	320 Zetland	K of P Hall
Buildings and Halls	802 Tropical Avenue	Masonic Hall
Buildings and Halls	712 Tropical Avenue	Odd Fellows Hall
Eating Houses	216 Zetland	Janie Hall
Eating Houses	123 Zetland	Royal Cafe

Restaurant	312 Zetland	Minnie Smith
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#### Colored Societies

Masonic Lodge No 55, F and A M - meets every second and fourth Fridays in each month in Masonic Hall, 820 Tropical Av; Jas Seward sec	Odd Fellows Cherokee Lodge No 7270, IOOF - Meets every first and third Monday in each month in Odd Fellows Hall, 712 Tropical Av; John Willis sec	Knights of Pythias Silver Leaf Lodge No 76 KP - Meets every first and third Friday in each month in KP Hall, 320 Zetland; Geo Wright sec
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#### 1920

Type	Address	Name	
Billiards and Pool	125 N Railroad Way	T B Smith	
Boarding	113 N Railroad Way	Jos Jones	
Buildings and Halls	320 Zetland	Knights of Pythias	
Buildings and Halls	712 Tropical Av	Odd Fellows Hall	
Eating Houses	107 N Railroad Way	Hezekiah Bradley	
Eating Houses	216 Zetland	Janie Hall	
Eating Houses	728 Tropical Av	Mattie High	
Eating Houses	312 Zetland	Minnie Smith	
Eating Houses	125 N Railroad Way	T B Smith	

#### 1922

Tropical Avenue = Avenue B

Zetland = N 8th

N Railroad Way = N 9th?

Type	Address	Name
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Buildings and Halls	820 Avenue B	Masonic Hall
Eating Houses	326 N 9th	Hezekiah Bradley
Eating Houses	216 N 8th	Janie Hall
Eating Houses	728 Avenue B	Mattie High
Eating Houses	319 N 9th	O L Jones
Eating Houses	208 N 8th	Olympia Cafe
Eating Houses	312 N 8th	Minnie Smith
Eating Houses	322 N 8th	Ada Tucker

#### Colored Societies

Masonic Lodge No 55, F and A M - meets every second and fourth Fridays in each month in Masonic Hall, 820 Avenue B	Odd Fellows Cherokee Lodge No 7270, IOOF - Meets every first and third Monday in each month in Odd Fellows Hall, 712 Avenue B	Knights of Pythias Silver Leaf Lodge No 76 KP - Meets every first and third Friday in each month in KP Hall, 320 N 8th St	American Woodmen Camp No 80 Meets fourth Wednesday in each month in K of P Hall, 320 N 8th
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#### 1925

Type	Address	Name
Billiards and Pool	419 N 9th	Jas Kennedy
Boarding	Rio Fla	Ida Gilbert
Boarding	324-326 N 8th	C A Patrick
Buildings and Halls	428 N 8th	Knights of Pythias
Buildings and Halls	820 Av B	Masonic Hall
Buildings and Halls	720 Av B	Odd Fellows Hall
Eating Houses	426 N 9th	Hezekiah Bradley
Eating Houses	220 N 8th	Carroll's Restaurant
Eating Houses	429 N 8th	Mattie High
Eating Houses	728 Av B	Clara Lee

Eating Houses	807 Av C	Ludie Plummer
Eating Houses	746 Av B	Isaac Robinson
Eating Houses	412 N 8th	Minnie Smith

#### Colored Societies

Masonic 7 sections meeting in Masonic Hall, 820 Avenue B (Directory p106)	Odd Fellows Cherokee Lodge No 7270, IOOF - Meets every first and third Monday in each month in Odd Fellows Hall, 712 Avenue B	Knights of Pythias 2 sections meeting at hall, 320 N 8th St	American Woodmen Camp No 80 Meets fourth Wednesday in each month in K of P Hall, 320 N 8th
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#### 1927

Type	Address	Name
Billiards and Pool	413 N 9th	James Kennedy
Boarding	322 N 8th	Rebecca L Gordon
Buildings and Halls	428 N 8th	K of P Hall
Buildings and Halls	820 Av B	Masonic Hall
Eating Houses	426 N 9th	Hezekiah Bradley
Eating Houses	318 N 8th	Chas Graham
Eating Houses	429 N 8th	Mattie High
Eating Houses	218-220 N 8th	Esther Hill
Eating Houses	728 Av B	Clara Lee
Eating Houses	210 N 8th	Ellen Lee
Eating Houses	326 N 8th	C A Patrick
Eating Houses	746 Av B	Isaac Robinson
Eating Houses	202 N 8th	Royal Palm Cafe
Eating Houses	722 Av D	Minnie Smith

Furnished Rooms	202 N 8th	Mary Garrett
Furnished Rooms	418 N 8th	G A Griffin
Furnished Rooms	139 N 9th	Clara Hubbard
Furnished Rooms	313 Dundas Ct	Bertha Jones
Furnished Rooms	405 N 10th	G T Lowery
Furnished Rooms	123 N 8th	Leah M Moore
Restaurants	1217 Av D	William Baldwin
Soft Drinks	806 Av B	James Jenkins
Soft Drinks	421 Dundas Ct	William Perry

### 1931

Billiard and Pocket Billiard Rooms	412 N 8th	Geo A Griffin
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	429 N 8th	Geo Glintion
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	415 N 9th	Walker Jackson
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	306 N 8th	Chas Preston
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	814 Avenue C	Thomas John

### 1940

\*interestingly, beer dealers largely Black; liquor dealers were White

Beer Dealers - Retail	18 addresses are listed	
Billiard and Pocket Billiard Rooms	738 Avenue C	Louis B Baker
Billiard and Pocket Billiard Rooms	413 N 9th	Rochester C Gordon

Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	1216 Avenue E	Lucius H Hill
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	423 N 8th	Wm H Hilton
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	322 N 8th	Ora L Moore
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	500 N 13th	Mattie Moye
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	423 N 8th	Zephyr Singletary
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	935 Avenue D	Daisy Smith
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	736 Avenue C	Eliz Smith
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	502 Dundas Ct	Alberta Wells
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	300 N 8th	Mary White

## 1945

Beer - Retail	934 Avenue D	Harry Halaburton
Beer - Retail	415 N 9th	Walker Jackson
Beer - Retail	1507 Avenue D (1955)	Rachel Lee
Beer - Retail	1000 Avenue D (1950)	Lee Phillips
Billiard and Pocket Billiard Rooms	736 Avenue C	Cleveland Pratt
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	302 N 8th	Dennis Davis
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	904 Avenue D	Henry W Hilton
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	502 Dundas Ct	Henry Macon
Restaurants and Lunch	1019 Avenue D	Neal Stevenson



Rooms		
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	325 N 8th	Albert T Stone

**1947**

Beer - Retail Stores	1401 Avenue D	Frank Andrews
Beer - Retail Stores	300 N 8th	Edw Bailey
Beer - Retail Stores	934 Avenue D	Harry Halaburton
Beer - Retail Stores	415 N 9th	Walker Jackson
Beer - Retail Stores	1227 Avenue D	Geo Jones
Beer - Retail Stores	1220 Avenue D	Leopold McFee
Beer - Retail Stores	306 N 8th	Andrew D McGriff
Beer - Retail Stores	1000 Avenue D	Lee Phillips
Motion Picture Theaters	1124 Avenue D (1946)	Lincoln
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	1221 Avenue D	Lela Baldwin
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	302 N 8th	Dennis Davis
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	401 N 9th	Alex Floyd
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	904 Avenue D	Henry W Hilton
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	448 N 9th	Walter Jackson
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	1311 Avenue E	Wm A Jackson
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	374 N 10th	Lucius Lamar

Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	502 Dundas Ct	Henry Macon
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	322 N 8th	Ora L Moore
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	736 Avenue C	Cleveland Pratt
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	325 N 8th	Albert T Stone
Restaurants and Lunch Rooms	1019 Avenue D	Wm Wiley

### 1949

There's a women's history story to tell as well since there are establishments here with women listed as the main name.

Beer - Retail Stores	300 N 8th	Edw Bailey
Beer - Retail Stores	473-373 Dundas Ct	Grady Butler
Beer - Retail Stores	447 N 9th	Alexander Floyd
Beer - Retail Stores	426 N 25th	Mrs Eldora Gaskin
Beer - Retail Stores	459 N 9th	Florence Howard
Beer - Retail Stores	1227 Avenue D	Geo Jones
Beer - Retail Stores	1210 Avenue D	Adelle E Lee
Beer - Retail Stores	2019 Avenue D (1953)	Henry Macon
Beer - Retail Stores	1220 Avenue D	Josephine McFee
Beer - Retail Stores	306 N 8th	Andrew D McGriff
Beer - Retail Stores	811 N 18th	Patrick McPherson
Beer - Retail Stores	2003 Avenue D (1960)	Jas Melvin
Beer - Retail Stores	1246 Avenue D	Mrs Mattie Moye
Beer - Retail Stores	502 Dundas Ct	Jas Nabbie
Beer - Retail Stores	1000 Avenue D	Lee Phillips

Beer - Retail Stores	935 Avenue D	Mrs Daisy Robinson
Beer - Retail Stores	327 Dundas Ct	Mrs Sadie Rouse
Beer - Retail Stores	737 N 9th St	Tip Toe Inn
Beer - Retail Stores	372 ½ N 10th	Ethel Washington
Billiards and Pool	937 Avenue D	L B Baker
Furnished Rooms	940 ½ Avenue D	Mrs Lucy McNair
Furnished Rooms	505 N 13th	Mrs Mattie Moye
Restaurants	1108 ½ Avenue D	John Bass
Restaurants	452 N 9th	Blue Ribbon Cafe
Restaurants	622 (609) Dundas Ct	Cozy
Restaurants	904 Avenue D	John Everhart
Restaurants	934 Avenue D (1950)	Friendly Lunch Room
Restaurants	620 Dundas Ct	Harry Gillins
Restaurants	401 N 9th	Clifton Green
Restaurants	1008 ½ Avenue D	Booker T Herd
Restaurants	1311 Avenue E	Wm A Jackson
Restaurants	511 (517) N 13th	Johnson's Cafe
Restaurants	430 N 9th	Viola Jones
Restaurants	1222 Avenue D	Janette McFee
Restaurants	322 N 8th	Mrs Ora L Moore
Restaurants	1019 Avenue D	Silver Moon Cafe
Restaurants	417 N 9th	Springfield Cafe
Restaurants	325 N 8th	Albert T Stone
Restaurants	302 N 8th	Alberta Ward
Restaurants	1327 Avenue D	Geo H Williams
<b>Theatres</b>	<b>1124 Avenue D (1946)</b>	<b>Lincoln</b>

## 1952

No category in this directory has either a (c) or (\*) - looks like that is no longer included as a distinction in the directory. Some of the restaurants from 1949 are still listed in this directory but not noted as African American. I'm adding to this list based on what I think is in the study area or nearby.

Beer - Retail Sales	1130 ½ Avenue D	Dye's Bar
Billiards and Pool	1222 Avenue D	Green's Billiards
Billiards and Pool	1208 Avenue D (1991)	Peek's Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	1213 Avenue D	Twink's Pool Room
Restaurants	1327 Avenue D (1960)	E + L
Restaurants	934 Avenue D	Friendly Lunch Room
Restaurants	620 Dundas Ct	Harry Gillins
Restaurants	511 N 13th	Johnson's Cafe
Restaurants	437 N 9th	Mrs Viola Jones
Restaurants	322 N 8th	Mrs Ora L Moore
Restaurants	1019 Avenue D	Silver Moon Cafe
Restaurants	325 N 8th	Albert T Stone
Theatres	1124 Avenue D (1946)	Lincoln

## 1955

No category in this directory has either a (c) or (\*) - looks like that is no longer included as a distinction in the directory. I'm adding to this list based on what I think is in the study area or nearby - we should validate. Still seems to be accurate that beer-retail sales was still mostly AA, while liquor sales and cocktail lounges were mostly White.

This is the first year it looks like an AA hotel shows up in the hotel category. Also a couple of liquor retailers.

Beer - Retail Sales	435 N 9th	Cotton Club	Florence Howard
Beer - Retail Sales	1130 ½ Avenue D	Dye's Bar	Ken R Dye
Beer - Retail Sales	907 N 13th St (1951)	Flamingo Bar and	L B Baker

		Grill	
Beer - Retail Sales	429 ½ N 9th	Alex Floyd	Alex Floyd
Beer - Retail Sales	439 Dundas Ct	Sami C Glover	Sami C Glover
Beer - Retail Sales	438 N 10th	Harlem Square	Ethel Wilder
Beer - Retail Sales	423 N 9th	Sarah Holmes	Sarah Holmes
Beer - Retail Sales	931 Avenue D	Lincoln Beer Garden	Lillie M Johnson
Beer - Retail Sales	403 N 9th St (1940)	Mrs Eva B Miller	Eva B Miller
Beer - Retail Sales	904 Avenue D	Robinson's Beer Garden	Alberta M Robinson
Beer - Retail Sales	1401 Avenue D (1964)	Silver Moon Beer Garden	Kaper Wells
Billiards and Pool	911 ½ N 13th	Baker's Pool Room	L B Baker
Billiards and Pool	1230 Avenue D	Green's Billiards	
Billiards and Pool	1213 Avenue D	Twinks Pool Room	
Hotels	414 Avenue D	Fort Capron	Ivy M Porter (mgr)
Liquor Dealers-Retail	901 Avenue D (1939)	Blue Front Liquor Store	Max Rauch
Liquor Dealers-Retail	1130 Avenue D	Dye Package Store	Ken R Dye
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	1120 Avenue D	Cherokee (IOOF)	
Restaurants	903 Avenue D (1939)	Blue Heaven Cafe	Adeline U Natiel
Restaurants	409 ½ N 9th	Blue Heaven Cafe	Wm Glenn
Restaurants	2011 Avenue D (1959)	Blue Moon Cafe	Fred Pollard
Restaurants	1227 Avenue D	Busy Bee Cafe	D C Carter
Restaurants	1708 Avenue D (1951)	Cafe Society	Minnie J Worthen
Restaurants	2411 Avenue D	Drop Inn	Bonnie M Gamble
Restaurants	1321 Avenue D	E + L	

	(1960)		
Restaurants	1907 Avenue D (1950)	Eddie's Bar and Grill	Eddie Asbury
Restaurants	1238 Avenue D (1954)	Ethel's Tavern	Ethel Bryant
Restaurants	924 Avenue D	Friendly Lunch Room	Lee Cobb (mgr)
Restaurants	1239 Avenue D	Idle Hour Cotton Club	Geo Jones
Restaurants	925 Avenue D (1953?)	Lincoln Drive In	Jeff McDonald
Restaurants	401 N 9th	Mary's Coffee Shop	Lillie M Sandifer
Restaurants	2001 Avenue D	Mrs Carrie Melvin	Carrie Melvin
Restaurants	312 N 8th	Mrs Ora L Moore	Ola L Moore
Restaurants	1112 Avenue D	Palestine Cafe	Florine Colton
Restaurants	932 Avenue D	Paradise Inn	Calvin Holmes
Restaurants	1706 Avenue D (1951)	Ponceanna Inn	Charlie Reeves
Restaurants	1418 Avenue D	Ponto Pup Stand	Benj H J Davis
Restaurants	809 N 13th (1952)	Red Top Bar-B-Que	Mazie Williams
Restaurants	1228 Avenue D	Robinson's Place	John B Robinson
Restaurants	1004 Avenue D (1950)	Silver King Tavern	Jas Lucas
Restaurants	1019 Avenue D	Silver Moon Cafe	Rosa L Lewis
Restaurants	411 N 9th	Springfield Cafe	Walker Jackson
Restaurants	302 N 8th	White Eye Cafe	Alberta D Ward
Taverns	1241 Avenue D	Blue Shadows	Annie J Johnson
Theaters	1128 Avenue D (1946)	Lincoln Theatre	Walter J Pierce (mgr)

1956

(I know it's not part of the scope but there is a Midwives category and the names are in the study area and I think that's interesting. Also there is the one AA doctor - Clem Benton - who does show up under doctors, I read he is the one who treated Zora. History facts!)

Beer - Retail Stores	435 N 9th	Cotton Club
Beer - Retail Stores	501 N 13th	Cozy Corner
Beer - Retail Stores	429 ½ N 9th (1920)	Alex Floyd
Beer - Retail Stores	438 N 10th	Harlem Square
Beer - Retail Stores	1241 Avenue D	Johnson's Corner
Beer - Retail Stores	931 Avenue D	Lincoln Beer Garden
Beer - Retail Stores	904 Avenue D	Robinson's Beer Garden
Beer - Retail Stores	1401 Avenue D (1964)	Silver Moon Beer Garden
Billiards and Pool	1225 Avenue D	Boatwright Pool Room
Hotels	414 Avenue D	Fort Capron
Liquor Dealers - Retail	901 Avenue D	Blue Front Liquor Store
Liquor Dealers - Retail	1134 Avenue D	Dye's Bar + Package Store
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	1120 Avenue D	Cherokee (IOOF)
Restaurants	409 ½ N 9th	Blue Haven Cafe
Restaurants	903 Avenue D	Blue Heaven Cafe
Restaurants	1227 Avenue D	Busy Bee
Restaurants	502 N 13th	Busy Corner
Restaurants	1708 Avenue D	Cafe Society
Restaurants	1907 Avenue D	Eddie's Drive In
Restaurants	1334 Avenue D	El Chico
Restaurants	801 N 13th	El Morocco
Restaurants	1238 Avenue D	Ethel's Tavern
Restaurants	907 N 13th	Flamingo Bar and Grill
Restaurants	924 Avenue D	Friendly Lunch Room

Restaurants	1807 Avenue D	Fuller's Bar-B-Q
Restaurants	906 N 13th (1952)	Jake's Drive In
Restaurants	513 N 13th	Johnson's Place
Restaurants	1237 Avenue D	LaTropical Tavern
Restaurants	1230 Avenue D	Lillie's Cafe
Restaurants	925 Avenue D	Lincoln Drive Inn
Restaurants	2001 Avenue D	Orphan Annie Cafe
Restaurants	1112 Avenue D	Palace Diner
Restaurants	932 Avenue D	Paradise Inn
Restaurants	1706 Avenue D	Ponceanna Inn
Restaurants	1418 Avenue D	Ponto Pup Stand
Restaurants	809 N 13th	Red Top Bar-B-Que
Restaurants	1212 Avenue D	Rockin Palace
Restaurants	1228 Avenue D	Sam's Place
Restaurants	1004 Avenue D	Silver King Tavern
Restaurants	411 N 9th	Springfield Cafe
Restaurants	510 N 13th (1952)	Starlight Cafe
Restaurants	504 Dundas Ct	Mrs Rosetta W Stewart
Restaurants	311 N 8th (1953)	Stone's Cafe
Restaurants	932 Avenue D	Two Spot
Restaurants	302 N 8th	White Eye Cafe
Taverns	423 N 9th	Seaview Beer Garden
Theaters	1128 Avenue D	Lincoln Investment Enterprises Inc

1957



Beer - Retail Sales	502 N 13th	Busy Corner
Beer - Retail Sales	435 N 9th	Cotton Club
Beer - Retail Sales	501 N 13th	Cozy Corner
Beer - Retail Sales	1238 Avenue D	Ethel's Tavern
Beer - Retail Sales	907 N 13th	Flamingo Bar + Grill
Beer - Retail Sales	438 N 10th	Harlem Square
Beer - Retail Sales	1241 Avenue D	Johnson's Corner
Beer - Retail Sales	931 Avenue D	Lincoln Beer Garden
Beer - Retail Sales	1233 Avenue D	Little Joe's Tavern
Beer - Retail Sales	904 Avenue D	Robinson's Beer Garden
Beer - Retail Sales	423 N 9th	Seaview Beer Garden
Beer - Retail Sales	1707 Avenue D (1956)	Sky Lane Bar
Billiards and Pool	1225 Avenue D	Boatwright Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	1232 Avenue D	Gibson Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	930 Avenue D	Goodwin + Boatwright Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	409 N 9th	Squire's Pool Room
1225	414 Avenue D	Fort Capron
Liquor and Wines - Retail	901 Avenue D	Blue Front Liquor Store
Liquor and Wines - Retail	1134 Avenue D	Dye's Bar + Package Store
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	1120 Avenue D	Cherokee Lodge (IOOF)
Restaurants	903 Avenue D	Blue Haven Cafe
Restaurants	409 ½ N 9th	Blue Heaven Cafe
Restaurants	1705 Avenue D (1956)	Brown's
Restaurants	1227 Avenue D	Busy Bee Cafe
Restaurants	1708 Avenue D	Cafe Society
Restaurants	501 N 13th	Cozy Corner

Restaurants	1907 Avenue D	Eddie's Bar and Inn
Restaurants	1234 Avenue D	El-Chico
Restaurants	801 N 13th	El Morocco
Restaurants	1807 Avenue D (1954)	Feller's Bar-B-Q
Restaurants	924 Avenue D	Friendly Lunch Room
Restaurants	1905 Avenue D	Friendly Snack Bar
Restaurants	906 N 13th	Jake's Drive In
Restaurants	1230 Avenue D	Lillie's Cafe
Restaurants	925 Avenue D	Lincoln Drive In
Restaurants	312 N 8th	Mrs Ora L Moore
Restaurants	1401 Avenue D	Moore's Place
Restaurants	2001 Avenue D (1960)	Orphan Annie Cafe
Restaurants	1112 Avenue D	Palace Diner
Restaurants	914 Avenue D (1956)	Palm Cafe
Restaurants	908 Avenue D (1956)	Parris Inn
Restaurants	1706 Avenue D	Ponceanna Inn
Restaurants	1414 Avenue D	Ponto Pup
Restaurants	809 N 13th	Red Top Bar-B-Que
Restaurants	1212 Avenue D	Rockin Palace
Restaurants	1228 Avenue D	Sam's Place
Restaurants	1004 Avenue D	Silver King Tavern
Restaurants	1019 Avenue D	Silver Moon Cafe
Restaurants	411 N 9th (1953-56-56)	Springfield Cafe
Restaurants	510 N 13th	Starlight Cafe
Restaurants	311 N 8th	Stone's Cafe
Restaurants	932 Avenue D	Two Spot
Restaurants	302 N 8th	White Eye Cafe

Theaters	1128 Avenue D	Lincoln
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**1958**

Beer - Retail	502 N 13th	Busy Corner Cafe
Beer - Retail	907 N 13th	Flamingo Bar + Grill Motel
Beer - Retail	1241 Avenue D	Johnson's Corner
Beer - Retail	1237 Avenue D	LaTropical Tavern
Beer - Retail	931 Avenue D	Lincoln Beer Garden
Beer - Retail	1233 Avenue D	Little Joe's Tavern
Beer - Retail	904 Avenue D	Robinson Beer Garden
Beer - Retail	423 N 9th	Seaview Beer Garden
Billiards and Pool	1225 Avenue D	Boatwright Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	409 N 9th	Esquire Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	930 Avenue D	James Moore Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	1232 Avenue D	Randall's Pool Room
Hotels	414 Avenue D	Fort Capron
Liquor and Wines - Retail	901 Avenue D	Blue Front Liquor Store
Liquor and Wines - Retail	1134 Avenue D	Dye's Bar and Package Store
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	1120 Avenue D	Cherokee Lodge (IOOF)
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	813 N 13th	Fort Pierce Lodge No 155 (FA+M)
Restaurants	409 ½ N 9th	Blue Heaven Cafe
Restaurants	1227 Avenue D	Busy Bee Cafe
Restaurants	502 N 13th	Busy Corner Cafe
Restaurants	1708 Avenue D	Cafe Society
Restaurants	501 N 13th	Cozy Corner Cafe
Restaurants	1907 Avenue D	Eddie's Bar and Inn

Restaurants	1234 Avenue D	Elchico
Restaurants	801 N 13th	El-Moroco
Restaurants	1238 Avenue D	Ethel's Tavern
Restaurants	907 N 13th	Flamingo Bar Grill and Motel
Restaurants	924 Avenue D	Friendly Lunch Room
Restaurants	1807 Avenue D	Fuller's Bar-B-Q Drive In
Restaurants	1707 Avenue D	Gollett Drive In
Restaurants	906 N 13th	Jake's Drive In
Restaurants	931 Avenue D	Lincoln Beer Garden
Restaurants	925 Avenue D	Lincoln Drive Inn
Restaurants	312 N 8th	Mrs Ora L Moore
Restaurants	1401 Avenue D	Moore's Place
Restaurants	2001 Avenue D	Orphan Annie Cafe
Restaurants	1112 Avenue D	Palace Diner
Restaurants	914 Avenue D	Palm Cafe
Restaurants	932 Avenue D	Parris Inn + Beer Garden
Restaurants	1706 Avenue D	Ponceanna Inn
Restaurants	1414 Avenue D	Ponto Pup
Restaurants	809 N 13th	Red Top Bar-B-Q
Restaurants	904 Avenue D	Robinson's Beer Garden
Restaurants	1004 Avenue D	Silver King Tavern
Restaurants	411 N 9th	Springfield Cafe
Restaurants	510 N 13th	Starlight Cafe
Restaurants	311 N 8th	Stone's Cafe
Restaurants	1705 Avenue D	T M
Restaurants	302 N 8th	White Eye Cafe
Theaters	1128 Avenue D	Lincoln Theater + Sundry

		Store
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**1959**

Beer - Retail	502 N 13th	Busy Corner Cafe
Beer - Retail	907 N 13th	Flamingo Bar + Grill Motel
Beer - Retail	1241 Avenue D	Johnson's Corner
Beer - Retail	931 Avenue I	Lincoln Beer Garden
Beer - Retail	1233 Avenue D	Little Joe's Tavern
Beer - Retail	904 Avenue D	Robinson Beer Garden
Beer - Retail	423 N 9th	Seaview Beer Garden
Billiards and Pool	1225 Avenue D	Boatwright Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	409 N 9th	Esquire Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	930 Avenue D	Moore Jas Pool Room
Hotels	414 Avenue D	Fort Capron Hotel
Liquor and Wines - Retail	901 Avenue D	Blue Front Liquor Store
Liquor and Wines - Retail	1134 Avenue D	Dye's Bar + Package Store
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	1120 Avenue D	Cherokee Lodge (IOOF)
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	813 N 13th	Ft Pierce Lodge No 155 (F+AM)
Restaurants	1414 Avenue D	The Bergermont
Restaurants	916 Avenue D	Better Food Cafe
Restaurants	409 ½ N 9th	Blue Heaven Cafe
Restaurants	1227 Avenue D	Busy Bee Cafe
Restaurants	502 N 13th	Busy Corner Cafe
Restaurants	501 N 13th	Cozy Corner Cafe

Restaurants	1907 Avenue D	Eddie's Drive In
Restaurants	1234 Avenue D	Elchico Restaurant
Restaurants	801 N 13th	El-Moroco Restaurant
Restaurants	1238 Avenue D	Ethel's Tavern
Restaurants	907 N 13th	Flamingo Bar Grill + Motel
Restaurants	924 Avenue D	Friendly Lunch Room
Restaurants	1807 Avenue D	Fuller's Bar-B-Q Drive In
Restaurants	1707 Avenue D	Gollett Drive In
Restaurants	906 N 13th	Jake's Drive In
Restaurants	931 Avenue D	Lincoln Beer Garden
Restaurants	925 Avenue D	Lincoln Drive Inn
Restaurants	1233 Avenue D	Little Joe's Tavern
Restaurants	312 N 8th	Mrs. Ora L Moore
Restaurants	1401 Avenue D	Moore's Place
Restaurants	2001 Avenue D	Orphan Annie Cafe
Restaurants	932 Avenue D	Perry Inn + Beer Gardens
Restaurants	904 Avenue D	Robinson's Beer Garden
Restaurants	1004 Avenue D	Silver King Tavern
Restaurants	1708 Avenue D	Society Cafe
Restaurants	411 N 9th	Springfield Cafe
Restaurants	510 N 13th	Starlight Cafe
Restaurants	311 N 8th	Stone's Cafe
Restaurants	302 N 8th	White Eye Cafe
Theaters	1128 Avenue D	Lincoln Theatre

1960

Beer - Retail	502 N 13th	Busy Corner Cafe
Beer - Retail	907 N 13th	Flamingo Bar + Grill Motel
Beer - Retail	931 Avenue D	Lincoln Beer Garden
Beer - Retail	904-906 Avenue D	Robinson Beer Garden
Beer - Retail	423 N 9th	Seaview Beer Gardens
Billiards and Pool	1225 Avenue D	Boatwright Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	930 Avenue D	Busy Bee Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	1232 Avenue D	Eddie's Pool Room
Billiards and Pool	409 N 9th	Esquire Pool Room
Hotels	414 Avenue D	Fort Capron Hotel
Liquor and Wines - Retail	901 Avenue D	Blue Front Liquor Store
Liquor and Wines - Retail	1134 Avenue D	Dye's Bar + Package Store
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	1120 Avenue D	Cherokee Lodge (IOOF)
Organizations - Benevolent and Fraternal	813 N 13th	Ft. Pierce Lodge No 155 (F+AM)
Restaurants	916 Avenue D	Better Food Cafe
Restaurants	409 ½ N 9th	Blue Heaven Cafe
Restaurants	1227 Avenue D	Busy Bee Cafe
Restaurants	502 N 13th	Busy Corner Cafe
Restaurants	501 N 13th	Cozy Corner Cafe
Restaurants	1907 Avenue D	Eddie's Drive Inn
Restaurants	1234 Avenue D	El Chico Restaurant
Restaurants	801 N 13th	El-Moroco Restaurant
Restaurants	1238 Avenue D	Ethel's Tavern
Restaurants	907 N 13th	Flamingo Bar, Grill + Motel
Restaurants	924 Avenue D	Friendly Lunch Room
Restaurants	1807 Avenue D	Fuller's Bar-B-Q Drive In

Restaurants	1707 Avenue D	Gollett Drive In
Restaurants	1230 Avenue D	The Grill
Restaurants	906 N 13th	Jake's Drive In
Restaurants	931 Avenue D	Lincoln Beer Garden
Restaurants	925 Avenue D	Lincoln Drive Inn
Restaurants	1213 Avenue D	Little B Restaurant
Restaurants	312 N 8th	Mrs. Ora L Moore
Restaurants	2001 Avenue D	Orphan Annie Cafe
Restaurants	914 Avenue D	Palm Cafe
Restaurants	930 Avenue D	Perry Inn + Beer Gardens
Restaurants	1004 Avenue D	Silver King Tavern
Restaurants	1708 Avenue D	Society Cafe
Restaurants	411 N 9th	Springfield Cafe
Restaurants	311 N 8th	Stone's Cafe
Restaurants	2005 Avenue D	Twin Palms Restaurant
Restaurants	302 N 8th	White Eye Cafe
Theaters	1128 Avenue D	Lincoln Theatre



## **Appendix B**

# **They Never Stopped Rockin': A Brief History of the Chitlin' Circuit, Mississippi, and Their Effects on American Music**

Spring 5-2019

## **They Never Stopped Rockin': A Brief History of the Chitlin' Circuit, Mississippi, and Their Effects on America's Music**

Warren Beebe  
*University of Southern Mississippi*

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The University of Southern Mississippi

They Never Stopped Rockin': A Brief History of the Chitlin' Circuit, Mississippi, and  
Their Effects on America's Music

by

Warren Cooper Beebe

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of Honors Requirements

May 2019

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School of Humanities

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Ellen Weinauer, Ph.D., Dean  
Honors College



## **Abstract**

This work focuses on the development of one of America's first musical tour routes: the Chitlin' Circuit. While its name may sound strange, the Chitlin' Circuit was responsible for the development of numerous distinct musical genres throughout the United States, such as blues and rock and roll in the twentieth century. Southern roadhouses, dive bars, and juke joints proudly showcased performers that gained initial fame touring with old medicine shows. As these artists gained recognition for their new musical stylings and elaborate showmanship, the owners of these local nightspots began to exchange contact information to better capitalize on these highly sought-after acts, forging business and travel links spanning throughout the South. Many well-known Southern cities were home to countless venues on the circuit, but there were also many rural towns that showcased these tough and gritty nightspots.

When recording technology improved, individual acts on the Chitlin' Circuit gained national attention with their popular record releases, spreading the music of the circuit to the rest of the country. These new forms of music served as early precursors to rock and roll, and some were even used for commercial advertising purposes. The recording stars and their record companies that were born out of necessity would go on to become industry giants. The success stories that emerged from the circuit would inspire future generations of musicians to come, as the Chitlin' Circuit was the home of America's music.

Keywords: Chitlin' Circuit, Blues, Mississippi, Hi-Hat Club, Hattiesburg, Rock and Roll

## **Dedication**

*To my Mother, Father, Amanda, and all of my friends and family -*

*Thank you all for supporting me in my endeavors.*





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I would first like to thank the Honors College at the University of Southern Mississippi for allowing me to further my knowledge on a particular subject that I found quite exciting and entertaining. The research for this thesis would not have been completed without assistance from multiple organizations, professors, and editors alike. I am incredibly thankful to all of the individuals who took time away from their chaotic schedules to aid me in compiling all of the information that I included within my work.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Much can be said about the fabled Chitlin' Circuit. A simple definition of the Chitlin' Circuit is that it was the South's ultimate gift to American music and entertainment, honing in on the country's African American musical influences, specifically blues and jazz, that could be found down South. A more complex explanation can be found in the published description of music journalist Preston Lauterbach. He describes that, "For generations, 'chitlin' circuit' has meant second tier-brash performers in raucous nightspots far from the big-city limelight." Lauterbach's work mainly "focuses on how the chitlin' circuit for live music developed during the 1930s and nurtured rock' n' roll from the early 40s to the mid-1950s." These hot and rowdy night spots served "as the top moneymakers" during an era where "new sounds grew on the road and in night clubs, through the dance business rather than in the recording studio." The Circuit, Lauterbach writes, "intertwined stories of booking agents, show promoters, and nightclub owners, the moguls who controlled wealth throughout the black music business" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 12).

During this specific time in America, hardworking musicians toured from Southern town to town, performing to crowds for little-to-no compensation. The audience did not have cell phones to capture or stream the performance, and the artists performing did not acquire fame via social media. While many of these entertainers have now perished, their legacies and contributions to the nation's music will certainly never be forgotten. These brave men and women fled their rural homes and upbringings to establish a name for themselves on one of America's original musical tour routes: The Chitlin' Circuit. These rowdy nightclubs and shady venues littered throughout the southern region of the United States were where many early musical entertainers in America got their start. These

establishments and their artists played cutting-edge rhythm and blues and other similar musical styles, drawing direct inspiration from earlier genres like "race" and "old-time" records made by both black and white, male and female entertainers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The music and showmanship that was displayed by artists on the tour route would ultimately give way to the emergence of rock and roll, as this genre stems from the fusion of all of the musical arrangements and stylings that were played on the Chitlin' Circuit and eventually recorded. Though there is no one person entirely responsible for the development of the Chitlin' Circuit, its roots can be traced back to a small handful of street-savvy businesspeople and their intriguing endeavors that spearheaded the origins of the recording industry.

Without the Chitlin' Circuit, the popular musical genre of rock and roll would not have taken center stage and would certainly not have been such a runaway success. Rock and roll's popularity has certainly experienced its peak, as growing genres like rap and hip-hop now overshadow it, but all of these growing and expanding genres owe a large debt to those original blues and jazz artists that aided in establishing the Chitlin' Circuit. While my studies highlight the development points and crucial artists that helped forge the Circuit as it stands today, I also purposely chose to highlight several key nightspots located in and around my native state of Mississippi. These venues served as crucial stops on the Chitlin' Circuit running through the South.

The methods I applied to develop my thesis were numerous. I read several published scholarly works about the development of Southern music, its roots, and its identity to cultivate a sense of understanding behind some of the musical choices and stylings that were favored and played on the tour route. Some other sources I used were

published and shared online, while others (such as interviews from periodicals) were retrieved via email correspondence with Jim O'Neal, co-founder of the magazine Living Blues. However, to better trace the origins and development of the actual Chitlin' Circuit, my studies led me to rely heavily on one published text in particular, as there are limited sources of this caliber that pertain to the subject. Throughout my thesis, the reader will find that Preston Lauterbach's *Chitlin' Circuit and the Road to Rock' N' Roll* is cited on many occasions, as his important work traces and highlights the history and legitimacy of the touring route. My investigation of the Chitlin' Circuit also found me traveling throughout the state of Mississippi, as I utilized sources about the blues and historical recordings within or around the state at the University of Mississippi's Blues Archives at the J.D. Williams Library. As Mississippi is the birthplace and home of countless blues artists, there are various museums that are entirely devoted to the subject within the state. I visited the B.B. King Museum in Cleveland, where I was able to unearth more information with his involvement on the circuit, as he was one of the real, master authorities on the blues. By the end of my thesis, the reader will discover that American Music is undoubtedly more substantial than any racial connotations or barriers, as both black and white musicians collaborated alongside Jewish record producers to share and blend their distinctive styles to formulate rock music.

The first chapter highlights the origins of the Chitlin' Circuit by first examining popular musical stylings of the late nineteenth century. In order for one to fully understand and appreciate the rich, organic history of the Chitlin' Circuit, there first must be a background study and explanation behind America and the South's choice of music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This background provides a vivid, mental

picture that aids in understanding how this backroads touring situation was born. Traditional work songs that were used to regulate the pace of labor arrived in the United States from West African tribes during the era of the slave trade. Another popular genre that existed in the late nineteenth century was the ballad. Ballads or "hillbilly" songs emerged from White settlers located in the Ozark Mountains. These country-dwelling communities crafted intricate songs that told stories reflective of their folklore with stringed instruments like the guitar, banjo, mandolin, or fiddle.

It would be the combination of these two distinct genres that would ultimately give way to the development of the blues, as African American musicians fused basic, rhythmic elements from their native homelands with the Western instruments used by ballad singers to develop the new genre. The Blues allowed the working man to create simple songs that reflected on a variety of socio-economic class differences or negative relationship experiences, as these songs often express a particular form of discontent directed against an authority figure or an ex-lover. Laborers who wrote music and played instruments had a unique opportunity to escape the monotony of an agrarian lifestyle and create a sustainable career with traveling medicine shows. These shows displayed crucial cultural and musical interactions that were shared by both black and white performers and audiences alike, as these vital exchanges helped reduce the height of preexisting racial barriers that existed primarily in the South.

When the popularity of these medicine shows dwindled, the musicians continued to travel and tour throughout the South, promoting themselves to further their musical occupations. The reader will find that many early, traveling musicians relied on methods of compensation for their performances that were not always financial, as these payments



could be in the form of other necessities, such as food or transport. This chapter recalls stories from early blues artists as they describe their experiences with both black and white audiences at the different social functions and events that they performed at. The end of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of recorded media, and with it came the birth of the recording artist with the advent of the phonograph machine. These new recording artists were the same black and white men and women that toured with medicine shows or other syndicates. While these phonographs were initially released via one label, Okeh Records, by the year 1920, competing record labels scrambled to sign blues and ballad singing artists. The recording industry created a high demand for commercial blues and ballad tunes, and it would be these two genres of music that would solidify what would eventually become rock and roll in the years to come. However, the public response to these new genres was not always positive, as older members of society felt that this new music lacked proper morals. Nonetheless, these brave artists that traveled with a medicine show and on their own recorded the music that would spearhead the development of legitimate tour routes that would eventually morph into the Chitlin' Circuit.

The second chapter traces the actual development of the Chitlin' Circuit from its inception. Two notable brothers, Denver and Sea Ferguson, vacated their rural, southern home in Kentucky to establish key businesses in the northern state of Indianapolis. As a young man, Denver published a local newspaper with his printing press. After migrating up North after the First World War, Denver and his brother opened a printing firm. Denver's first clients ran a numbers game, and after gaining initial success with printing the illegal betting slips, he decided to start his own betting game to generate more revenue. In the early 1930s, Denver and Sea combined their business assets to purchase more real estate

and expand their sphere of influence in their African American community. Their combined business endeavors allowed them to open the Ferguson Building, which served as brokerage firm to aid with local business loans.

The brothers eventually found themselves in the entertainment business, as they opened a venue, known as the Cotton Club, that showcased modern performers that played the music that was desired by the community. This chapter also contains a short interview conducted by author Preston Lauterbach with an older gentleman named Sax Kari. Kari worked with Denver Ferguson during the 1940s when the Chitlin' Circuit was in full swing as a promoter for touring bands. He assisted in developing relationships with the rural, low-budget venues that were willing to showcase talented acts.

One of the first official Chitlin' Circuit acts was a Vicksburg native by the name of Walter Barnes. Barnes moved to Chicago and wrote for the popular newspaper, The Chicago Defender, contributing music critiques and promoting his band, the Royal Creolians. With the help from the infamous gangster Al Capone, Walter and his band became the first African American group to perform live over Chicago airwaves. During the Great Depression, Barnes was forced to downsize his backing band and rely on self-promotion. He continued to write for the Defender and became a regular performer at Denver's Cotton Club. Barnes continued to tour the United States, primarily in the South, where he gained the most notoriety. He and his band received high acclaim as they toured the Chitlin' Circuit until they met their untimely demise following a fatal fire at a performance in Natchez.

Another fatal blow hit the Circuit's forefathers as government officials cracked down on the illegal gambling racquets and practices that Denver and his competitors

engaged in after a deadly shooting occurred across from the Ferguson Building. This forced the brothers to establish a more legitimate business, so they formed the Ferguson Brothers Agency in 1941. This corporate entity booked, promoted, and sponsored musical touring acts on the Chitlin' Circuit. During this time, Denver became business associates with a Texas native named Don Robey. Robey and Denver shared similar business interests involving the promotion of touring acts on the Chitlin' Circuit, and together they further solidified its legacy.

Chapter three traces the career developments of more Chitlin' Circuit stars as they were forced to adapt to rationing laws and general price increases during the Second World War. Fuel rationing and inflation forced touring stars to reduce the size of their band to travel lighter than they did before. Performing acts were also booked to appear in pairs, as promoters believed that this would entice potential customers to spend the extra money to see two bands rather than just one. The popularity of records dwindled during the 1940s due to the country's demand for shellac. With this being said, the Ferguson Brothers and other promoters increased the size of their talent rosters to add variety to an expanding sphere of entertainment influence.

A popular Chitlin' Circuit attraction, himself, Louis Jordan pieced together a small band that he dubbed "The Tympany Five," and together they changed music history on the Circuit. Jordan was a charismatic performer dressed in slick suits who performed in front of his small band. Because of his vivacious stage personality and excellent singing delivery, Louis Jordan is strongly considered to be the first frontman in the group in the music business. His band also contributed to the changing of musical stylings and arrangements through the introduction of wailing saxophones. Other famous acts like Joe Turner and T-

Bone Walker made the electric guitar the star of the stage. A Houston native, T-Bone honed his craft alongside the blues musician Blind Lemon Jefferson.

T-Bone inspired one young man, in particular, Clarence Brown after he saw him perform in San Antonio. He admired his guitar playing so much that he committed himself to learn his songs almost note for note. There was even one night in which Clarence performed an impromptu opening for his idol after he failed to appear on stage at his designated time due to ulcers caused by alcohol abuse. When the time arrived for the show to begin, T-Bone's manager (and friend of Clarence) ushered him to the stage where he played his idol's very own guitar. After that fateful night, Clarence devoted the rest of his life to performing on the Chitlin' Circuit.

This chapter also traces the life of another Chitlin' Circuit star that shared the same last name as Clarence, named Roy Brown. Roy was a Louisiana native who originally worked as a boxer, but after he sang for a touring artist in Texas, was encouraged to jump to a less violent, but still entertaining, career. Roy started his stint on the Circuit performing in New Orleans. When he began his touring days, he chose a backing band from the City to accompany him. He and his band proved to be a force to be reckoned with, as the songs that he released were credited to be some of the first rock and roll cuts produced. Brown's captivating new music style also catalyzed Billboard's choosing to change "Race Records" to "Rhythm and Blues."

Roy was also considered to be the first "front man" of the band. Many rock and roll bands are known for their charismatic lead singer, commonly referred to as the front man. He and his band were so successful on the Chitlin' Circuit that he was able to purchase a fleet of vehicles for his band, ranging from tour buses to limousines. Brown and his outfit

are considered to be the world's first rock and roll band, as they inspired Elvis Presley and even allowed him to cover one of their songs. But Brown's legacy did not end with Elvis. Towards the end of the section, I feature an interview from the eighties in which Roy was compared to Michael Jackson.

In the fourth chapter, I shift my focus to the Chitlin' Circuit's involvement with Memphis, Tennessee. An African American street vendor named Sunbeam Mitchell was largely responsible for the City's musical growth. After World War II, Sunbeam and his wife, Ernestine purchased an old juke joint on Beale Street and converted it into a hotel. Sunbeam originally did not help his wife in running their boarding business, as he was a fan of the touring musicians that would travel to the City to play. This naturally upset Ernestine, so she decided to bring the music that he enjoyed to their location.

The duo converted the downstairs space of their hotel into an entertainment space called the Domino Lounge. The lounge concept turned out to be a runaway success for the couple. Sunbeam cooked and served chili every night, welcoming any group that desired to play. It was here where the blues artist B.B. King would get his start, but there were also countless other musicians that gained initial fame at these hallowed grounds. Mitchell became business partners with Don Robey out of Houston, and the two exchanged artist contacts to boost their notoriety. To generate more additional income, Sunbeam also served whiskey under the table and allowed prostitutes to frequent his hotel, as Ernestine allowed customers to rent certain rooms at an hourly rate.

Another famous musician that performed in Memphis and gained initial fame on the circuit was Ray Charles. Ray served as the pianist for a band led by a man named Lowell Fulson. Ray Charles was largely responsible for the group's rise in popularity and

ascent to fame. Though he had physical blindness, Ray was able to visualize musical notes, allowing him to pinpoint the band's mistakes during their rehearsal time better. Because of this, Ray was able to communicate with the group regarding the improvement of their playing. During his time with Fulson's band, he was known as "Blind Ray Charles."

B.B. King's first breakout recording was a Lowell Fulson tune entitled, "Three O'clock Blues," and it even features a young Ike Turner on piano. The two were lifelong friends, as King had plugged Ike's band's song, "Rocket 88" on his Memphis radio program. This song is strongly considered to be the first highly successful rock and roll song, as the record flew off shelves and was even played by a car company to advertise the vehicle that the song was written about.

The Memphis native Sunbeam also convinced Milton Barnes of Hattiesburg, Mississippi to get into the entertainment business. Barnes opened the Hi-Hat club outside of City limits in an area called Palmer's Crossing. As the establishment was located in a dry county, Mitchell supplied Milton with bootlegged whiskey to discreetly sell. The Hi-Hat showcased Chitlin' Circuit acts like B.B. King on multiple occasions, and the Club was not only trendy, but also extended the length of the Circuit. Barnes went on to open two more establishments on the Gulf Coast, and he also exchanged artist contracts and bookings with a club in New Orleans.

The final chapter of my thesis focuses on the development of rock and roll music alongside the record industry's transition out of the vernacular South. One man, in particular, a Jewish immigrant named Leonard Chess, recorded Mississippi musicians like Muddy Waters and Bo Diddley, exponentially boosting their careers as their record sales would soar. In the 1940s, the state of Mississippi lost about a fourth of its population as

many residents immigrated to Northern cities like Chicago bringing their culture and musical stylings with them. African American blues had intrigued Chess since he was a child. He empathized with the melancholy lyrics that reflected social isolation because he hailed from a Jewish background in a city that was not very accepting of his foreign heritage. He entered the workforce as an attendant at a liquor store. It was here where Leonard would socialize with his black companions after hours, listening to them play the guitar as they drank together. Chess knew that he could do more with his life and the community, so he quit his job at the liquor store and opened a nightspot in Chicago's Bronzeville called the Macomba Lounge.

The Lounge generated public appeal with the various acts that performed there. However, it also served as a location for the purchase of narcotics, creating the occasional hostile atmosphere when brawls ensued. Chess' nightclub investment would lead him to the record business when he began speaking to the talent scouts that frequented the lounge. Being the capitalist that he was, Chess brokered a contract with one of his usual entertainers to record with a local company known as Aristocrat. Its owners were another married couple, Charles and Evelyn Aron, and Chess allowed them to record Tibbs if they showed him how to record, an agreement they gladly made. With these new skills under his belt, Leonard left the nightclub venture to start his label, Chess Records.

My thesis ends with a short epilogue in which I discuss an event that I attended in November of 2017 where I was able to briefly talk with a genuine Chitlin' Circuit performer from its heyday. I also highlight an Preston Lauterbach's 2003 interview of a more modern Circuit star named Bobby Rush. Through both of these interviews, the reader will find that

the Chitlin' Circuit has drastically changed from what it once was. Many of the old establishments that showcased new acts have faded away into memories.

Tourists who seek out the Chitlin' Circuit and its music can still do so through attractions like the Mississippi Blues Trail, as it serves as a statewide memorial to many blues artists and the juke joints of days gone by. These locations are honored with special highway markers that signify their importance to the development of America's early forms of popular music. With this being said, some of the genre's authenticity has been lost to modernization. Most of the former Circuit locations that now serve as restaurants, bars, and hotels boast modern amenities such as indoor plumbing and air conditioning for the contemporary traveler.



## Chapter 2: Unassuming Origins

If one were to compare the methods that were used to promote, record, and distribute music during the early, middle, and even later eras of the twentieth century and relate them to any modern recording artist, it would be like comparing a horse to an automobile. They simply are not the same. I draw attention to this modest comparison, as the same sentiments could be shared with respect to the evolution of America's popular music. Genres consistently evolved with the alongside changing times and shifting racial barriers. Author Karl Miller indicates in *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music In the Age of Jim Crow* that cooperation in composition actively diminished racial barriers. Miller writes that:

"Common work experiences could foster this kind of interracial musical exchange. Levee and lumber camps, railroad projects, textile mills, mines, and large farms often found black and white workers in close proximity even when jobs and living spaces were segregated. White and black workers traded music to a significant extent considering the violent politics of race in the New South" (Miller, 2010, p. 82).

Many lower-class black and white laborers sang during work hours and played music afterwards to help occupy their time. These labor songs can be traced back to West African tribes, as they sang impromptu tunes to "coordinate collective labor in the fields and domiciles" (Barlow, 1989, p. 14). When these Africans were forced to leave their native lands and come to North America, they brought the cultural tradition of the work song with them. Miller indicates that the relevance of the music to the everyday work of those listening made for an effortless familiarity. Miller writes:

"In this paradigm, work songs were a component to the labor process. They were thus deeply connected to people's everyday lives and explicitly functional. Songs sung during work served a number of purposes, from regulating the pace of labor or communicating across the worksite, to

building collective identity among workers or lodging protests about work conditions" (Miller, 2010, p. 56).

These songs allowed laborers to voice "social concerns that arose in the daily lives of African Americans" (Barlow, 1989, p. 4). As time went on, these labor songs evolved into standard tunes that would deeply reflect and recall the common practices and beliefs of that specific group of people. These work songs also "became an important component of early rural blues" (Barlow, 1989, p.14). The melodies were then passed down orally to future generations in a fully conscious effort "to perpetuate traditions, to keep values from eroding, and to begin to create new expressive modes" (Barlow, 1989, p. xii).

Another popular genre of music in the South called folk ballads aided in the formation of the early blues culture. Ballads originally derived from Anglo-Americans in the Appalachians, as they concocted long stories of "epic proportions, about a momentous event, a tragic love relationship, or an ill-fated folk hero" (Barlow, 1989, pp. 18-19). African Americans who heard these ballads were inspired to create their own renditions of the genre, adding "the needs of their own people and culture" (Barlow, 1989, pp. 18-19). Like the work songs, ballads were passed down orally to proceeding generations of African Americans as a way to preserve their traditionally African alongside newly American culture. However, as the reader will understand by the end of my thesis, American music and the music industry were larger than any preexisting racial barriers or formalities, as both black and white musicians collaborated, shared, and even mixed their own distinctive styles together to give way to one of the most dynamic and tremendously successful genres of all time: rock and roll.

But even rock and roll, played live and adored by a sea of screaming fans in gargantuan venues, came from humble beginnings. Before the Chitlin' Circuit existed and

gave way to rock and roll, there were traveling medicine shows. Ironically, these so-called “medicine” shows were anything but. Men posing as doctors would bring their caravans from town to town, attracting and enticing local attention with white entertainers performing songs, skits, and dances in blackface. Medicine shows in the South reached their height between 1880 and 1906, when few food and drug regulations affected the industry. Regardless, these shows existed well into the twentieth century. After the entertainment portion of the show, the "doctor" would then proceed to pitch their new cure-all wellness elixir. Of course, the medicine aimed at the unassuming public was merely a potent concoction consisting of water and powerful narcotics like cocaine or heroin. On many occasions, "patent medicine 'doctors' were little more than traveling street performers themselves, setting up a box in a corner and employing one or two actors or musicians to help draw a crowd" (Miller, 2010, p. 68).

These travelling blackface shows were indeed archaic, but society's standards during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries permitted these offensive portrayals to be a part of the standard medicine show routine. Miller explains that:

“Blackface characters played a contradictory role in relation to the patent medicine 'doctor,' granting him prestige through both association and distance. On one hand, performing minstrel songs established the credibility of the medicine show by forging links to more 'legitimate' and popular forms of theater. Most audiences were intimately familiar with tropes and songs of the minstrel stage, having learned them from traveling shows, national media, and sheet music. Blackface performers supplied the comic and sentimental songs of the day” (p. 69).

However, it would be incorrect to assume that these white entertainers would be given more opportunities for success than any African-American musicians during that era, as few of these travelling performers net significant profit. Many entertainers played and performed for mere coins that were donated to them by individuals passing by.

Black musicians that toured throughout the South on these medicine shows did so for a myriad of reasons. After the Civil War, black sharecroppers throughout the South were emancipated and free to create obtainable futures for themselves. However, while slavery was now abolished, the new Jim Crow laws arrived just in time to undo all of the progress that was put forth in emancipating a whole race of people in the United States. Black sharecroppers in the South were fully aware of what the reality of the situation was, and it did not guarantee a bright and successful future like the Kentucky-born president promised. These sharecroppers turned to their hobbies, such as music, to earn a livable wage and the opportunity to escape from Jim Crow legislations. Miller states that entertainers, "...who had honed their skills performing on the street and freelancing parties could graduate to the semiregular employment of the medicine show. Medicine shows could offer musicians entry into the world of organized, paid performance" (Miller, 2010, p. 68).

But merely being able to perform and play live for folks was only half of the equation. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these musicians did not have managers to focus on developing a repertoire for the artist. Many simply acted on their own behalf, becoming their own representatives. Artists who wanted to increase their chance of success began creating relationships with numerous audiences. Miller observed of the relative inequity that, "Many southern, working class musicians did not have access to the most fruitful gigs in urban theaters, opera houses, and nationally touring shows. They nevertheless, created opportunities to get paid wherever they could" (Miller, 2010, p. 62). Occasionally, payment loosely translated into things rather than money, because travelling musicians had to eat like everyone else.

The roaming fiddle player, Bill Broonzy, utilized his talent for house parties, where he would receive food, or even clothing, as compensation. He was born in 1893 in a little town called Scott, Mississippi, where he experienced the harsh realities of segregation early on during his life. Like many young African Americans, Broonzy assisted his family and nearby local community in any way possible, in a desperate attempt "to escape the cyclical debt that was the common curse of black sharecroppers." At the tender young age of ten, Bill crafted a homemade fiddle in an effort to "use music to mitigate and circumvent Jim Crow" legislations that denied any solid, feasible future for blacks in the South. (Miller, 2010, p. 281)

After constructing his instrument, he swiftly gained a reputation for being an astute entertainer. He was so talented that he eventually saw his dream come to fruition when "local white residents soon noticed his skills, and they asked him to play for their dances and 'two-way' picnics attended by the area's white and black communities." Bill Broonzy had accomplished a rare achievement in those days, as "performing for white listeners had its advantages. 'We would be playing and sitting under screened porches while the other Negroes had to work in the hot sun,' Broonzy recalled." There was even an instance in which he was gifted a real violin at a white function. The 1920s would find Broonzy living in Chicago, helping establish the Blues up North. He would gain national notoriety, as "the promoter John Hammond included him in the famous 'Spirituals to Swing' concert at Carnegie Hall. During the Great Depression and the Second World War, Bill (and many other popular musicians) were cast aside during these decades of national and international crisis. However, "by the 1950s, Broonzy was a popular performer on the folk revival

circuit, playing not only country blues that he recorded while in Chicago but a wide variety of American popular and folk songs." (Miller, 2010, p. 281)

McKinley Morganfield, another notable bluesman from Mississippi who would later migrate to the Windy City earned his living in a fashion similar to Bill Broonzy. Born in the small Delta town of Rolling Fork on the Cottonwood Plantation, Morganfield received little formal education and worked long and strenuous hours outside tending to agrarian needs on the plantation. (O'Neal & Singel, 1985, pp. 155, 158). After a hard week of laboring, Muddy Waters would perform at "suppers" that he called "Saturday Night Fish Fries" with a secondhand Stella guitar (O'Neal & Singel, 1985, p. 159). On some occasions throughout the year, Morganfield would play at private events for white audiences at Stovall Planation in Clarksdale. He stated that he and his backing band would "always get a white dance, somethin', three or four times a year, you know. My boss [Howard Stovall] really liked that kinda carrying on. He'd give a party, and he'd get me, you know, to come do his things for him." These parties could potentially last all night and carry on into Sunday until late in the evening (O'Neal & Singel, 1985, p. 168). These grueling hours forced early blues musicians like Muddy Waters to expand their knowledge of desired musical tastes, as well as their ability to endure long hours of performing during the weekends, only to return to planation work during the week.

According to Miller, the blues musician (and cousin to the legendary blues artist, B.B. King) Bukka White also made his living performing "at similar African American functions around his native Huston, Mississippi, when he was a young child." White would play at houses, plantations, or communal buildings at events called "frolics" or "suppers," depending on how much food was for sale. White explained, "they had square dancin'-

what they call it now. But now you see at the suppers then they would dance, and . . . at the end of the set everybody would carry their partner to the table and treat 'em'. That's the way they made their money. Which sardine was a nickel, you know, and two apples for a nickel and they were payin' me fifteen cents a night and two apples and a box of sardines'" (Miller, 2010, p. 65). Another popular method of compensation for performances aided musicians in their travelling needs. Miller also stated that two other notable blues musicians named Huddie Ledbetter and Blind Lemon Jefferson "similarly played music in exchange for free train travel around the Dallas area in the years after 1910. Ledbetter recalled in conversation recorded in Miller's work that, 'We didn't have to pay no money in them times. We get on the train; the driver takes us anywhere we want to go. Well, we just get on and the conductor say 'Boys, sit down. You going to play music?' We tell him, 'Yes!'" These drifting musicians bartered their musical abilities in order to bypass any formal, financial transactions in exchange for a meal or travel arrangements (Miller, 2010, p. 62).

While all of the previously mentioned roaming musicians and entertainers were African American, they were still fortunate enough to score performances at white functions like Bill Broonzy and Muddy Waters so famously did. Miller said that black and white entertainers knew that, " A diverse repertoire enabled musicians to appeal to a broad selection of different audiences across the South. Musicians who could overcome differences in race, class, or region stood in the best position to get paid." With this being said, African Americans playing at white functions would more than likely receive have a higher rate of compensation, as "the economic disparity between black and white southerners deeply affected the terrain upon which such interracial musical interaction took place." (Miller, 2010, pp. 71-72)

Miller includes the recollections of performer Sam Chatman in order to present that:

“...[M]usicians would usually receive about two dollars for playing at a black house party. Out of this income they would have to buy their own food and drink. White parties, on the other hand, could bring in an average of five dollars per musician as well as a plate of food. In addition, the white parties Chatman remembered usually wound down before midnight, while black functions could go well into the morning hours. For struggling musicians like Chatman and his brothers, the early end of a party could mean a few extra hours of sleep before having to wake up for their day jobs the next morning.” (Miller, 2010, p. 65)

According to Miller, early traveling musical artists "...prided themselves on their ability to perform for both black and white audiences. They, and other artists, built local and national careers by appealing to multiple audiences, constantly shaping and shifting their presentation and image in order to touch listeners from a variety of subject positions" that more than likely involved musical stylings and lyrics that would have a positive appeal towards the select audience that would be listening at that particular point in time (Miller, 2010, p. 78).

Early African American performers like Bill Broonzy, Muddy Waters, Bukka White, and Sam Chatman chose careers that did not guarantee monetary success in the South, as many African Americans opted to earn their living in agricultural pursuits throughout the region. But even in the best circumstances, sharecropping and farming provided minimal sustenance and profit to those who toiled away in the fields. Music Historian William Barlow indicates in *Looking Up at Down: The Emergence of Blues Culture* that, "A high percentage of these first-generation blues musicians came from poor farming families, and their choice of vocation figured in a larger rebellion against the established white social order" (Barlow, 1989, p. 5). These artists opted for a mobile lifestyle that would find them on the road, hopping from venue to venue, eventually landing touring and recording contracts that would inspire others after them to do the same.



When the 1920s rolled around, Miller stated that "black and white dance practices were becoming more distinct than they had been a few decades earlier" (Miller, 2010, p. 76). Blues music allowed African Americans during the early twentieth century the ability to preserve "the historical legacy of a people still confined to the lowest echelon of the social order" by voicing their personal opinions on current political and social occurrences that affected them and their surrounding communities (Barlow, 1989, p. 4).

The Blues earned its legendary title from an old colloquial term dating back to the English language of 1500s. Individuals who were nervous or in a "troubled state of mind" were thought of as "looking blue." By the 1600s, this phrase was associated with "blue devils," simply referring "to evil spirits that brought depression or despair" to people. Barlow traces that the use of the term "blues" to describe African American musical stylings emerged in the "early 1800s, at which time it seems to have been used interchangeably with the phrase 'blue devils' to describe a mood of low spirits and emotional stress." African American blues songs generally spoke of negative "current social contexts" that they were forced to endure during and after the Reconstruction Era. These lyrics were accompanied by a simple guitar arrangement that lasted for eight, twelve, or sixteen bars until it repeated again. The music stylings utilized in blues "established the groundbeat and chord progression and also responded to each vocal line," prompting the lyrics and the music to work alongside one another to help drive the overall tone and message home. (Barlow, 1989, pp. 8-9)

The Blues genre became popular after the black composer W.C. Handy allowed a trio of local musicians to play a few numbers for a white audience requesting some down-home notes at a dance in Cleveland, Mississippi in 1903. At the time, Handy and his brass

band were only well-versed in Broadway tunes and Tin Pan Alley standards, so when the audience requested Blues music, they simply could not deliver. When the black trio took the stage, the white audience responded with tremendous positivity. "The audience showered coins on the stage. Handy was astounded. 'There before the boys lay more money than my nine musicians were being paid for the entire engagement'" (Miller, 2010, p. 76).

After that fateful night, W. C. Handy committed the rest of his life to learning the Blues, performing them, and publishing Blues standards. He "framed the music as a commercial genre, both in its local Southern habitat and in the Nation at large" (Miller, 2010, p. 254). Some of his most famous works include "Memphis Blues" (1912), "St. Louis Blues" (1914), "Yellow Dog Blues" (1914), "Jogo Blues" (1915), "Joe Turner Blues" (1916), and "Beale Street Blues" (1917). These songs sold successfully in the South, gaining notoriety throughout the United States. "Their subsequent popularity soon put the Blues in a new cultural context." Handy proved that the blues was a force to be reckoned with, as his records flew off shelves across the country. Not only did Handy establish himself as a writer of blues standards, but he also established "his reputation as an authority on the history and meaning of the genre" in his published articles during the early twentieth century (Miller, 2010, p. 148). For his contributions to the art, Handy is forever endowed with the prestigious, honorary title, "The Father of the Blues."

The new arrival of the Blues as a popular and sought after musical genre produced a revolution comparable to the advent of rock and roll, as it challenged various musical forms, as well as social and moral convictions at the time. The Blues affected the traditional square dance formats that were immensely popular before the guitar took the center stage, and African Americans living in the Mississippi Delta collectively agreed that it was time

to retire square dancing in order to make room for a newer shade. Miller said the Mississippi-born violinist Tom Dumas found this out the hard way, when he moved to the Delta only to discover that "African American residents complained that he played 'white folks' music.' He soon stopped playing altogether." (Miller, 2010, p. 77) It is interesting to notice that African American populations living in the Delta favored the guitar over the violin, as they associated the violin with a style of music that was not favored by this specific community.

However, the emergence of the blues as a desired genre was criticized as well. A Mississippi native named Luscious Smith dismissed the blues as a genre lacking in decent morals. He stated that:

“[T]he blues done ruined the country. It just make 'em go off like random, I'd say frolicking, random, you see. Now such as 'Walking in the Parlor' and all them older pieces, that's dancing on a set . . . calling figures, promenade, swing your right partner, all that, you know . . . But the ' Memphis Blues' and all that, it done brought about a whole lots of it, you know, I'd say trouble.” (Miller, 2010, p. 77)

The advent of the blues as a desired genre challenged the traditional conventions of preexisting musical genres. Smith "associated the new sound of the blues with the drinking, cacophony, and chaotic movements of young revelers" (Miller, 2010, p. 77).

Luscious was technically not wrong in describing the blues as a musical variety containing troubling content, as the lyrics were often suggestive or explicit. "Blues musicians and audiences collectively participated in a cultural ritual that was often cathartic," by the accounts of Barlow. Social events that showcased Blues music encouraged audience members to shout, stomp, clap their hands, and dance. This loose and rowdy atmosphere allowed participants to "release pent-up emotions and act out their feelings" in an act of rebellion (Barlow, 1989, pp. 4-5).

Lyrics that may have contained sexual phrases or slurs were first originally strictly reserved for black performances, as these could be potentially risky for African Americans to share with white spectators. With this being said, Miller stated that white audiences who sought this genre probably enjoyed listening, noting that, "Laughing at blues innuendo allowed them to collude vicariously with the black performer whose 'I' momentarily became the white audiences 'we'". But the white audience's thirst for the blues was not solely based on sexual desires. White listeners appreciated these "songs for their authenticity and sought them out in order to feel the thrill of peaking behind the veil of the color line, sharing in a critique of segregation" (Miller, 2010, p. 79).

White musicians were inspired by blues musicians; they intently "listened and learned from black musicians and then used the blues to express their own feelings of longing or loss, joy, or desire." The Meridian, Mississippi-born Jimmie Rodgers developed his distinct "blue yodel" style of singing by listening to "old-time blues recordings" and "through musical contact with his fellow black railroad workers." (Miller, 2010, p. 234)

After his death, Rodgers would be lauded as the "Father of Country Music," but his legacy was rooted within blues. Because of the runaway success with early recording stars like Jimmie Rodgers and W.C. Handy, the blues would soon find its way out of the Delta, enticing black and white audiences alike. In the 1920s, white audiences requested blues music from both black and white performers. Miller said, "when African American artists began making blues records in the 1920s, white southerners bought them in large numbers. Store ledgers from rural white neighborhoods reveal that blues records by the likes of Blind Lemon Jefferson sold just as well as those by white fiddlers and hillbilly singers." This era

of time marked a "new sound of black authenticity in the American music industry."  
(Miller, 2010, p. 147)

But the Blues was not just strictly a boy's club, as popular singers of the genre, such as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith (also known as the "Blues Queen") recorded, and performed at sold-out theaters and dance halls to both black and white audiences. Rainey was born in 1886, making her older than many of her other Blues contemporaries. In fact, Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey were some of the first individuals to incorporate distinct elements of the Blues into their music, while also composing "Blues years ahead of their male colleagues" (McGinley, 2014, p. 23). Another pioneering blues woman and veteran vaudeville performer from Ohio named Mamie Smith (unrelated to Bessie) is worth mentioning too, as she was responsible for cutting a standard entitled, "Crazy Blues" in 1920 with the first African American recording label, Okeh Records. Early record companies like Victor and Columbia did not take the African American market seriously, as they thought recording African Americans and their songs would not yield a substantial amount of revenue.

In 1918, a German man by the name of Otto Heinemann founded the record label Okeh in an effort to record African Americans and their music, which he was particularly fond. Kenney said his label "followed its founder's conviction that a vast and swiftly growing potential market for popular music records awaited development in America" (Kenney, 1999, pp. 114, 116). Okeh was bound to be different record company than most from its inception. The manner in which they produced their records allowed playback "with minor adjustments, on any brand of Phonograph," giving Okeh a slight technological advantage over its competitors (Kenney, 1999, p. 115). But Okeh also broke away from

other record companies, as Otto had the zeal to record and distribute entirely new recordings from African American musicians for listeners to enjoy. Together, Heinemann, Smith, and her early manager and close friend, Perry Bradford made recording history when Mamie sang "Crazy Blues." The trio also were responsible for employing a marketing method that other phonograph companies would attempt to replicate, as her hit song was labelled as the first "race record," meaning "discs by African American performers" (Miller, 2010, pp. 187, 190). This specific category of records grabbed the Southern market by storm simply due to Bradford's business pitch.

Bradford had been struggling to book Mamie Smith for recordings, as many record producers in that day did not imagine that the South (or the rest of country) desired this new music sung by an African American, especially when it was delivered by a woman. But Perry predicted a high sales rate when he negotiated Smith's recording contract with Okeh. Miller stated that he informed the label's musical director, a Mr. Fred Hager that, "There's fourteen million Negroes in our great country, and most lived in the South. The southern whites will buy them like nobody's business. They understand blues and jazz songs, for they've heard them blind-men on street-corners in the South playing guitars and singing 'em for a for nickels and dimes ever since their childhood days'." As Perry continued to explain the untapped market potential, Fred was sold, and history was in the making. Bradford recalled, "what really got the butter and sold Mr. Hager was the big surprise of learning about that big Southern market that no one up North had ever thought of" (Miller, 2010, p. 192).

Soon after, race records like "Crazy Blues" "grew into a significant segment of the market" as they contained "show tunes, urban religious services, and Smith's vaudeville-

inspired Blues to an assortment of sounds associated with the South: jubilee choirs, country blues, the occasional black string band, and many others" (Miller, 2010, p. 200). Smith's tune would sell over half a million records just a year after it was cut. More importantly, the new tune made the duo famous throughout the country. Even the executives at Okeh were pleasantly surprised to see their new recording artist had generated such an impressive amount of revenue. Hagar's assistant, Ralph Peer admitted:

"We didn't know it. We don't know where these records were going.' He only later discovered that African Americans quickly developed their own word-of-mouth campaigns and distribution networks. 'The porters on the Pullman trains would make a fortune just by carrying the records out.' Peer recalled. 'They'd pay a dollar a piece for them. Sell them for two dollars, because Negroes in the South had money.'" (Miller, 2010, p. 192).

With this being said, it was Peer who coined the term "race records" when he was helping with the "Crazy Blues" recording sessions. The title would remain "the designation for Black music, by black artists indented for a black audience until 1949 (Garofalo, 2006, p. 395).

With the runaway hit under Okeh's belt, other competitors attempted to release better arrangements of the sensational song. Miller said, "almost every recording company produced its own version of 'Crazy Blues' within months of the Okeh release. Labels like the previously mentioned Victor and Columbia scurried to add at least one African American singer to their rosters. Indeed, Mamie Smith was a force to be reckoned with, as she personally altered the racial barriers that once encroached and trapped previous African American composers and recorders. "Smith hadn't opened a door, she had knocked it down. Overnight, being black did not mean being barred from the record business. Black recording artists rushed to support the African American composers who had pioneered black participation in the national music industry and eased the way for race records"

(Miller, 2010, p. 193). Smith was now lauded as the "Empress of the Blues," after she charged through the racial divide that existed in the recording industry in the 1920s (Garofalo, 2006, p. 393). Even the black, Chicago-based publication *The Chicago Defender* praised Smith and her timely success. They described Mamie's "capable vocal recording notable because it cracked the industry color line, not because it necessarily signaled a significant shift in the sound or meaning of Blues recordings" (Miller, 2010, p. 192).

But it should be noted that there were indeed white, female Blues singers as well, like the vaudeville-trained actress and singer Marion Harris. Marion was a Kentucky native, but she packed her bags and headed up North to Chicago, where she dreamed of becoming an actress. Fate would find her moving again to New York, when she decided to try her hand at recording. Marion "began making phonographs for Victor in 1916." She sang some Southern standards like "There's a Lump of Sugar Down in Dixie" and "I Always Think I'm Up in Heaven (When I'm Down in Dixieland)." But she also "recorded a significant amount of Blues-related material. Some of her early songs represented black music as an emotional and physical release from the confines of white respectability." These blues songs included "Paradise Blues" and "When I Hear That Jazz Band Play." Harris even covered W.C. Handy's famous "St. Louis Blues" with Columbia Records. "Her recording reveals a relatively nuanced and controlled interpretation that displayed some familiarity with African American blues performances. She tended to push her relatively weak but clear voice to capacity, achieving a light growl when attacking notes and sliding smoothly between pitches." (Miller, 2010, pp. 152-153)



Marion credited her gutsy, soulful voice to her upbringing in the South, where she listened to African Americans sing and chant their Blues songs. In fact, she replicated the black singing voice so accurately that W.C. Handy himself said, "She sang the Blues so well that people sometimes thought that the singer was colored." Another noteworthy quote reminiscent of Harris' capacity to belt out the blues can be seen in the introduction to Handy's 1926 book, *Blues: An Anthology*, as the author Abbe Niles wrote in the introduction, "Marion Harris has the manner so at her command that thousands of Negroes make a point of buying her records, under the impression that she is one of them." (qtd. in Miller, 2010, p. 154)

Harris and other white women such as Gilda Grey deeply contributed to the transformation of the Blues genre on the national music scene as "they got the music of a new group of black composers onto phonograph records." This prompted African Americans to acquire these specific "...Blues records by white artists when they were the only ones available" (Miller, 2010, p. 154).

Essayist Hale writes in Brundage's (Ed.) 2011, *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930* that by the late 1920s, Blues music served as "the most important music within the broad commercial category of 'race records,' which identified the race of the performer and not a clear musical style." From this time period onward, the blues "referred both to songs with a variety of structures that somehow conveyed a Blues tone or sensibility and to a specific song structure." Regardless of the style of Blues, it was ultimately up to the performer to properly convey the message that they desired to communicate (Hale, 2011, p. 247).

Another emerging genre that phonograph companies created for marketing music to the American public were recordings of "'old familiar tunes,' 'old-time,' or 'hillbilly' music" that "captured white fiddlers, guitarists, and banjo pickers" who had performed in medicine shows and towns around the South (Miller, 2010, p. 187). Crichton notes in a 2014 essay, "Thar's Gold in Them Hillbillies," that when the Okeh recording star Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" was overshadowed by the arrival of Bessie Smith with Columbia, "Okeh was under the necessity of digging up a new sensation." Ralph Peer and some assistants ventured to Atlanta to scout for talent. While they did not find any African American musicians that suited their needs, they did record a white violinist named Fiddler John Carson. Carson played with a traveling circus and he "had a repertory of hillbilly songs that never ended." Peer was not necessarily impressed with what he heard, but he and his team set up some recording equipment outside to capture Fiddler John sing and play after he struck a deal with a local record vendor that promised to sell the recordings. Carson performed two songs during this session: "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" and "The Old Hen Cackles and The Roster's Goin' ta Crow." (Crichton, 2014, p. 27)

When they were finished, Peer and his associates returned back to Okeh in New York, initially sending the vender 1,000 copies of the record on a Thursday afternoon. Peer and Okeh did not expect the record to sell, so they did not even give it a proper serial number. But the record company received a call the same night from the vendor, requesting that they send more copies of the now sold-out hit. Okeh wasted no time sending more records, as they sent 5,000 records via express mail and 10,000 more by railroad. "When the national sale got to 500,000," Okeh decided to invite Fiddler John Carson up to New York to professionally re-record his songs. They then gave these new records a legitimate

serial number and they dubbed him "Fiddlin'" John Carson. Peer had coined the term "race records" when it came to African American releases, but he also named the category of early country music "hillbilly records," as he was a Kansas City native who was "well acquainted with the Ozarks" and their rural culture. Ralph was also responsible for starting Jimmie Rodgers' recording career when he found him playing in Bristol, Tennessee. Naturally, other record companies desired to enter this new market, as Victor signed an artist named Vernon Dalhart who would record "The Prisoner's Song," that sold an 2,500,000 copies, making it the most successful "hillbilly" record of its time. (Crichton, 2014, p. 27)

Miller notes that it would ultimately be the combination of this white, "old-time," "hillbilly" music and black Blues that would give birth to rock and roll. As one of Columbia's record scouts, Frank Walker, contended that "the color line was permeable" in the South and that "black and white musicians often influenced each other. 'They would pass each other every day. And a little of the spiritualistic singing of the colored people worked over into the white hillbilly and a little of the white hillbilly worked over into what the colored people did, so you got a little combination of the two things there.'" (Miller, 2010, p. 217).

During the 1920s, "...[r]ace and old records launched a new way of organizing American popular music, and by extension, the American public. By the end of the decade, legions of black and white southern artists had recorded commercial discs" (Miller, 2010, p. 188). While the phonograph business emerged into a viable commercial industry, the audio playback quality was poor, and live music was certainly a rarity that was still highly sought after. The development of the Chitlin' Circuit as a legitimate tour route for aspiring

entertainers allowed audiences that were seeking music played live to attend concerts with lively shows and entertainers.

### **Chapter 3: The Birth of the Circuit**

The Chitlin' Circuit and its rich heritage would indeed not exist today if it was not for the two notable men responsible for its inception: Denver Ferguson and his younger brother, Sea. The two brothers were born at the turn of the twentieth century in Brownsville, Kentucky, a small, country town located on the Green River of Edmonson County. As its name suggests, Brownsville was a majority black community. Residents in this rural Kentucky town mainly labored in the tobacco fields for little to no money, as sharecropping served as a popular alternative method to paying the African-American workers for their demanding tasks. But most importantly, Brownsville was where the brothers Ferguson learned from their father just how difficult and intolerant the world can be towards African Americans, as the margins for a successful and profitable life in the impoverished community were slim. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 17)

In his late teenage years, Denver had a linotype machine that allowed him to print "a weekly broadside called the Edmonson County Star," which served as the only news distribution channel in his community. When the First World War broke out, Denver saw this as a golden opportunity to leave his home, so he enlisted in the military. After the war, "Denver joined the hundreds of thousands of African-Americans who left the south." He migrated north to the city of Indianapolis "with enough money to open the Ferguson Printing Company." As a strapping young man, Denver Ferguson probably never expected his life to travel in the direction that it would. However, when opportunity knocks, one should always be willing to stick their neck out for success, and this is precisely what Denver Darius Ferguson did. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 18)

Lauterbach noted that the first businessmen to work alongside Denver "ran a street lottery in New York known as the numbers game." These racketeering games were usually run underground, as anti-gambling laws that were passed in the early years of the nineteenth century cracked down on these betting practices. Denver knew that a black man's options for success in a racially segregated world were minimal, but this new and exciting business prospect provided him with a way out. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 21-22).

As time went on, Mr. Ferguson decided to invent his own numbers game, cleverly disguised as baseball scorecards and tickets. He knew that local authorities were closely monitoring his community; however, if they stopped a gentleman with a chunk of change in his pockets only to find a baseball ticket and a scorecard, they would not have enough evidence to lock him up, or worse. "Numbers runners spread out to collect tickets and bets and to distribute winnings, while hangouts like billiard halls and the ubiquitous barber and beauty shops housed policy stations for walk-up business and the latest results. Participation among the poor citizenry was nearly universal." With over two hundred employees on the payroll, Denver ran a pretty impressive numbers racket "in an area no larger than twenty city blocks." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 23-24)

But success breeds competition in a healthy, capitalist marketplace, and 1923 two Jewish-Russian immigrants named Joe and Isaac Mitchell opened a dive bar directly across from Denver's printing company. This would lead to a life-long rivalry between the two racketeering parties. The two organizations would feud with one another from time to time, but what the Ferguson brothers did not know is that it would ultimately be Jewish record producers (Leonard and Marshall Chess, to be exact) who would go on to produce

and promote the same African-American Blues artists that grew notable and famous touring on Denver's Chitlin' Circuit. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 25)

Two years later, Denver's financial success with his numbers running business outgrew his capacities, so he recruited his younger brother to run the legitimate side of his business. Lauterbach noted that Denver veered away from the limelight, but Sea "cultivated a reputation for generosity and good cheer among the Avenue citizenry. Sea opened a real estate brokerage, and he and Denver became community developers." Together they "extended loans and credit for their constituents to rent or buy property and launch legitimate concerns. They gave generously to charitable causes, functioning as a de facto community foundation." The brothers' philanthropic endeavors eased the crushing financial burdens that plagued many African-Americans who inhabited Indianapolis Avenue. Denver and Sea "were applauded as race men, whose wealth, power, and openhandedness lifted all Negroes." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 26-27)

In 1931, the Fergusons acquired enough wealth from their lottery game to purchase the old headquarters of a former social club that no longer existed. The brothers renamed it the Ferguson Building, and at three stories tall, it stood "at the corner of Senate and Vermont, diagonal Indiana Avenue shot right past it, and therefore it was considered of the Avenue." Sea capitalized on his newly acquired space, housing his brokerage business on the bottom floor. Combining legitimate business earnings with revenue from the lottery game, the men were able to either buy out or create more conglomerates on the strip. "Already awake with music, laughter, fights, the Avenue got dressed up as the Fergusons transformed black Indianapolis into Bronzeville." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 37) The

new community that Denver and Sea cultivated with their businesses and charitable donations improved the African American resident's quality of life.

However, the Avenue still lacked a certain something. In his work Lauterbach wrote that Denver received "many requests for a clean, decent, respectable place to spend leisure time." So, he pulled his resources together with Sea to open the Cotton Club, a "...round-the-clock joy spot" that occupied most of the lower level of the Ferguson Building. The club boasted a "courteous and immaculately uniformed staff, professional entertainment, and tasty cuisine," ultimately setting the tone for other future nightspots to come. Little did they know that it would be this black dance business that would lead them to solidify the formation of the Chitlin' Circuit (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 37-38).

In the opening of *The Chitlin Circuit and the Road to Rock'n'Roll*, author Preston Lauterbach recalls the occasion in which he paid a visit to an older gentleman by the name of Sax Kari at his trailer located in Seffner, Florida, back in 2004. Lauterbach was informed by a colleague, Jim O'Neal (co-founder of the publication *Living Blues*) that Mr. Kari worked with Denver Ferguson back in the Circuit's heyday, and he decided to use an interview with him as the catalyst for his research. During Preston's visit, Sax informed him of his experiences with the father of the Chitlin' Circuit:

"I met Denver D. Ferguson out of Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1941. I had run away from home, and I got a gig working there for a funeral parlor. There was an affair at this big nightclub, dance hall, the Sunset Terrace. Taylor Seaths--he ran the Sunset Terrace for Denver--told me that Ferguson also had a booking agency. The Lady who ran the [agency] office was Twyla Mayfield. Aside from all of [Ferguson's] gabbing, she was the one who handled all the booking. She introduced me to the old man." (p. 9)

Denver was a tough man who made deals on his own with promoters as he made his way from town to town. After contacting these promoters, he would encourage them to



reach out to others, cleverly labeling these individuals as "shadow promoters." They would take up money at the door. Every band that came in had a road manager who worked for Ferguson and sat by the promoter at the door and counted the money. Sax Kari continued to discuss his experiences with Mr. Ferguson, as he stated:

“In the '40s, there were about twenty-two black promoters on Denver Ferguson's list. The top man was Tom Wince, who was in Vicksburg Mississippi. The next top man, Ralph Weinberg, was in Bluefield, West Virginia. Don Robey was in Houston. Howard Lewis in Dallas. Before you go out onto the road, your whole tour was booked. Black promoters only worked with black acts, and Ferguson was the only black booking agent at the time.” (pp. 9-10)

These early promoters did not necessarily work together, but they all worked hard to get their fair shares of the profit as Kari said, "The promoters respected one another's territory. Tom Wince would do about twenty to twenty-five dates a year. Weinberg would do about twenty, and Lewis would do whatever he could get'." Indeed, some gentlemen were more fortunate with their promotional business endeavors, but it was a tough business to get into.

Sax continued to say that "this became--for the people that worked for him (Denver)--the Chitlin' Circuit." Over time, Denver was fortunate enough to build up the Chitlin' Circuit by establishing life-long contacts with these black promoters (especially Don Robey), and together they changed the face of popular music. However, the Chitlin' Circuit did not simply guarantee success to any aspiring artist. As the circuit itself was centered around the Southern region of the United States, the popular hotspots for bands and artists to perform at were dive-bars, roadhouses, and juke joints located in the poorer, segregated African American side of town. In his description of the early years of the Circuit, Kari told Preston:

“Back when you had big bands, anywhere from ten-to twenty-piece bands that had to squeeze themselves into a corner if there was no bandstand. There were no inside toilets at many of the places; you had to use toilets. Now, when you got to a place that had running water inside, why you were fortunate. They sold ice water. They didn't have air conditioners; they had these big garage fans: two on the bandstand and one back at the door. These were wooden buildings outside of town; there were very few concrete buildings or places in town. It was seldom you'd find anyplace for blacks that would hold more than six hundred. The people'd be damn near on top of you.” (p. 10)

The mere fact that big bands playing in these cramped environments managed to fit all of their players on stage should stand as a testimony to these hard-working musicians. Not only did these bands sacrifice much-desired elbow room, as they stayed squeezed and crammed together to play for about two and a half hours, take a thirty-minute break, and then play again for another hour and a half.

But keep in mind, these band functions served as necessary forms of entertainment. "In the south, there was nothing but farming, tobacco fields, rice fields, sugar cane, cotton fields. [African Americans] worked all week, and Saturday night was their night to howl, get drunk, and fornicate. They just wanted to know when the next dance was gonna be!" Kari concluded his interview with Lauterbach stating that Denver was like a father to him:

“He taught me everything I know today, and kept me from getting screwed in so many ways, I worked in the office, out of the office, anything he wanted to be done, 'Sax do it.' He was grooming me to take his place, but I never wanted an office job. I doubled as a bandleader, road manager, whatever it took to make money out of the agency. Denver never kept any records. The first thing he taught me was, 'Don't ever write anything down. Avoid big municipal auditoriums--that's where the IRS man is going to be there with you on the door counting tickets. Go to nondescript places.” (p. 11)

While Denver's business methods were shady, to say the least, he was a small fish in a big pond looking to establish a reputation for himself and those entertainers that he represented. One of the first artists to work with Ferguson on the Circuit was Walter

Barnes. Denver had "answered a Chicago Defender columnist's summons to promoters and clubs interested in first-class dance attractions, and showcased Walter Barnes and his Royal Creolians" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 38).

Lauterbach said that Walter Barnes was "born on July 8, 1905, in Vicksburg, Mississippi, one of fifteen children. He grew up and got music in Mississippi, then landed in Chicago in 1924." Like Denver Ferguson, Walter Barnes was a shorter African-American man that only took directions from himself. His vertical challenges would act in his favor, eventually gaining him the nickname "midget maestro." Barnes also wrote weekly in the Chicago Defender, discussing orchestras and their leaders, occasionally taking time to stroke his ego. By 1927, Barnes assembled his swing band, The Royal Creolians, a "fourteen-piece orchestra" that would play live shows for white audiences (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 31-32).

A year later, Barnes and his Royal Creolians would record for Brunswick Records, allowing his name and his band to reach new heights in the big city of Chicago. A local gangster by the name of Al Capone caught wind of Walter Barnes' sound, and he invited him to be the band leader for his local venue, the Cotton Club. Lauterbach writes of this uncanny pair:

"Capone was truthfully a regular guy, though, Barnes said. Capone called Barnes 'Brother,' the maestro's family nickname, and flexed his ballyhooed reputation to Barnes's advantage once, with important consequences. The midget maestro went to a radio station to see about arranging a live broadcast from the Cotton Club. The station manager dismissed Barnes summarily: 'We don't air colored.' Back at the club, Capone asked, 'What'd they tell you brother?' Barnes explained, and Capone went with him to follow up. 'But we don't air colored,' the station manager repeated. 'You do now,' Capone said." (p. 32)

While many would consider the Chicago Kingpin gangster Al Capone to be a dastardly criminal, he kindly contributed to Walter Barnes's development as a groundbreaking musical force. In a way, one could ultimately consider Capone a founder of the Chitlin' Circuit, as he enabled Walter and his band to perform live over the air in Chicago. However, as the Great Depression reared its ugly head, many of these prominent band performers that had gained solid ground found themselves seeking new opportunities for employment elsewhere. By 1930, they were no longer able to support themselves by performing in large club venues. Walter's gangster friend was unable to assist him, as he was preoccupied with legal matters and jail sentencing.

Lauterbach stated that "Brother Barnes, till then a strictly local, exclusively for-white band leader accustomed to extended residencies, needed to get creative. While Capone went to trial to face federal contempt-of-court charges in February 1931, Walter Barnes and his Royal Creolians left Chicago on tour." His personal relationship with Capone would come to a screeching halt after Capone "plead guilty to charges of tax evasion and Prohibition violations," casting him away to a federal prison in the same year. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 35)

Barnes knew that the times were changing. He continued to write in the Chicago Defender, stating that big bands now found themselves traveling on the road. Lauterbach recalls that, "in one published article, [Barnes] wrote that 'There's more money on the road and in barnstorming, even in one-night jumps...'" Barnes was fortunate enough to sign a management contract with "the white-run Chicago talent agency Music Corporation of America (MCA), which had booked jazz combos throughout Capone's speakeasies before assuming a more prominent status in the jazz business." With this new exclusive contract,

Walter was now touring during the fall and summer months, gigging in Northwestern states like Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the Dakotas. Barnes's tour also marked one of the first times that African-American performers played for white audiences. But like Al Capone, Walter Barnes would fall on hard times. In 1932, the MCA nixed the deal that they had signed with Barnes and his band. "Without heavy agency booking or his white underworldly consorts, ofay dances were over. He still had the Defender on his side, though, and with its readership, his reach could extend across black America." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 35-36)

He reached out to his readers, merely saying that he "would like to communicate with all promoters and clubs who are interested in first-class dance attractions" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 36). Upon seeing his advertisement, Denver Ferguson cordially invited Barnes and his Royal Creolians to perform at his club in the Ferguson building, the Trianon, on March 29, 1932 (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 38). After his Indianapolis show, he migrated back to the South, as the Great Depression continued to strain the United States. Black musicians and performers stayed in the South, only touring "...as far as their reputations and broadcasts carried" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 40).

Lauterbach notes that musical acts traveled leaner due to the Depression, writing that, "Their size and flexibility allowed them to move on fast from a dead town. Around these acts grew the basic infrastructure of the Southern black dance business: dusty dance halls, hustling dance promoters, and hucksterish advance men, who went around drumming up gigs and publicity" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 40).

Many of these new era acts reached out to Barnes in the Chicago Defender, informing him and his readers when and where they would be playing in the South. "Barnes

rapidly became the central dirt dispatcher for traveling black jazz bands. Though Barnes didn't mind helping, he sensed possibilities for himself in the territory-band movement. If they could pull the audiences down South, why couldn't he outperform them?" Using a business tactic that his old buddy Al would have approved of, he only agreed to write and publish black southern touring acts' information "in exchange for road intelligence: dance hall locations, promoter contracts, colored friendly lodgings and eateries." With this new information in stow, Barnes was able to better promote his "band into the territory-band network and focused these previously separate entities into a more cohesive whole." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 40-41)

In his published articles, Barnes negotiated favors with businesses and individuals with funding who could potentially assist him. After all of this, Walter was still not satisfied with his publicity campaign, so he cast aside his other black contemporaries (such as Duke Ellington) to label himself as "the brightest star in the South" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 41). With this being said, however, both Duke Ellington and Walter Barnes served as important and crucial figures during the jazz age. Preston wrote that he:

“[I]ncorporated the Walter Barnes Co. Music Corp. in the spring of 1932-- Duke Ellington's career belonged to the most powerful forces in the entertainment business, the big money bloc of talent management firms-- including Barnes's former rep, MCA--the musician's union, and the mob, known as 'the syndicate.' Out of necessity, Barnes worked a lower stratum of the black swing world. While he performed at the Barn on Beale Street in Memphis, Ellington delighted the London Palladium and sipped gimlets with the Prince of Wales.” (p. 42)

One could argue that Walter would have switched places with the Duke in a heartbeat, however without his contributions to the original Chitlin' Circuit, the blues (and eventually rock and roll) may have sounded a lot different.

The next few years touring on the road would be anything but easy for Barnes and his band. They traveled from town to town crammed into his Cadillac, catching up on much-needed sleep as Walter drove them through the wee hours of the night. While coming home from a gig in Ohio late one evening, Walter fell asleep at the wheel. He, along with six other musicians, awoke to the Cadillac upside down. Luckily, no one was seriously harmed. Barnes knew that, in order to generate feasible income, they would have to keep traveling, so sleep was not an option while out on the road. Black entertainers like Walter and his group bravely confronted financial disadvantages. "Well known popular bands have been receiving guarantees from \$350 and up, and get one-third or one-half up front," Barnes recalls in an interview with Lauterbach. But a key distinction to note is that these comparatively popular acts were managed and backed by white agencies. Lauterbach explains that "Bands that lacked organizational muscle, such as the Royal Creolians, were typically asked to work for the first money in the door, leaving them broke and hungry in the event of a poor turnout. But Barnes's crew earned well enough to keep the caravan rolling through Bristol, Knoxville, Atlanta, Vicksburg, and Memphis." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 43)

Being the smart businessman that he was, Walter realized that he had gained a solid and devoted following in the South Lauterbach said he "established winter headquarters in Jacksonville, Florida, from where he could conduct his now annual late-fall-to-spring Southern tours." Barnes toured the region extensively, meeting lifelong friends and avid supporters of his music, creating the contacts and routes that would soon become the Chitlin' Circuit. "In Barnes's own words, dirt-road hustlers became financiers or capitalists, and their burlap-curtain, sawdust-floor joints were ballrooms. Big-city folks

might have disparaged Barnes's tour route as the Chitlin' Circuit, but you'd never hear such terminology from him." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 48-49)

He even stayed "committed to modernity," updating and upgrading his band members and their respective instruments. Swing jazz had overturned Dixieland as the preferred musical style during the 1930s, so Barnes replaced the banjo with upright bass, added a guitarist, and beefed up the rhythm section with a few more trumpet, trombone, and saxophone players. What was once Walter's Royal Creolians now evolved into the Kings of Swing. This update, of course, added more band members to his ever-traveling group, but "the Barnes caravan grossed thousands of dollars--at eighteen dollars a show for five-to-seven nights a week, the musicians earned well above the union-mandated sixty dollars a week." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 49)

The year 1936 would prove to be a successful year for Barnes and his new Kings of Swing. "Barnes had patched and webbed his network of territory-band promoters and dance halls across the entire South." He continued to write and advertise himself in the Defender, informing his readers where he and his band would be touring throughout the coming months. They traveled through various big and small cities in Southern states such as Texas, Oklahoma, Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, and Mississippi. In the state of Mississippi, Walter made appearances in towns like Greenville, Yazoo City, McComb, Vicksburg (his hometown), the capital city, Jackson, and Hattiesburg. He and his orchestra stayed on the road for three months, charging fifty cents for nightly admission to their shows. After these shows were concluded, they would migrate back home for a three-month recuperation period before packing up and hitting the road again. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 50)



Life on the road was far from glamorous. As Walter and his band were African-American men in the South during a time of extreme racial prejudice, they could not afford to create controversy. Lauterbach wrote, "Barnes was no activist anyway. He preferred to change the reality of black Southerners in a fantastic if fleeting way in print and on stage." Walter began to notice that many cities and towns that held a "sizeable black population grew a darktown," referring to any portion of a city that was predominantly African American. Walter cleverly nicknamed the main street in these little sections "the stroll." These streets and avenues showcased black businesses and performance attractions that proudly showcased artists like Barnes and others who arrived in town. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 51-52)

During his 1936 and 1937 tours with his Kings of Swing, Barnes "dashed off dispatches from every stroll he hit, leaving behind a neon and mud portrait of black Main Street in the South--the unfolding filaments of the Chitlin' Circuit." While others who were not African-American may have considered these "strolls" as lower-income, undesirable areas, they truly were a site of the American dream. One example of a "stroll" could be found in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in an area known by the locals as "Greenwood." This territory boasted hardworking musicians, dance promoters, and dance venues, but it also was the home of "dentists, barbers, pharmacies, cafés, cab companies, and lodgings, always stressing the up-to-date." Performers were treated kindly when they required lodging. They stayed in rooms that boasted modern amenities like hot water and indoor plumbing, which were certainly appreciated by those weary travelers who played hard throughout the night (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 51-52)

Lauterbach wrote that Walter found himself touring Mississippi in 1936, "with shows in a different town every night. First to Greenville, then on to 'Vicksburg, birthplace and stomping ground of yours truly,' Barnes wrote." In Vicksburg, he received endless praise from loyal fans and neighbors, as "members of the Cavalier Club sponsored the Barnes dance at the black-run Continental Ballroom there, corner of Washington at Jackson Street." His uncle Alan was a dance promoter in Vicksburg, and this ultimately allowed Barnes to easily book gigs throughout the state, performing in Jackson, McComb, Pascagoula, and Hattiesburg. Walter gained fame throughout the state of Mississippi as a top-tier performer, and he inspired countless other musicians who longed to play in front of an admiring crowd. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 53-54)

Meanwhile, Denver Ferguson opened another nightspot called the Sunset Terrace in Indianapolis in 1938. This nightclub was considered by Bronzeville journalists and fans alike to be "the swankiest nitery to hit the Avenue." The same year, "black newspapers across the country hosted mayor-of-Bronzeville races to bestow honorary titles on their most popular citizens." While black "attorneys, doctors, and church elders" received honor and recognition, Sea Ferguson was also revered at the ceremony, as he "had money, connections to elite black culture--and judging by the 'real' mayor's presence at his inaugural ball--downtown's attention." Sea was a more public business figure than his older brother. Denver was a present and powerful force in their Indianapolis Bronzeville, however, as he was a timid and shy individual, he allowed Sea to serve as the public face of their shared last name. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 60, 63-64)

Needless to say, the Fergusons continued to be successful in their individual and combined business ventures. The brothers knew that Barnes was a highly sought after

entertainer, and the two were able to coerce the "Midget Maestro" to drop by Denver's new club for a visit. "'Yours truly,' Walter Barnes wrote in the fall of 1939, 'stopped over in Indianapolis and found this town to be really jumping. Impressed with the strip's transformation since his gig at the Ferguson Building in 1932, Barnes and company made the stroll.'" Both Barnes and Denver realized that in order to achieve success, one must keep up with the change in demand. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 65-66)

The same year, Walter and his band were invited to play a "Baby Doll Dance" that was at the Rhythm Club located in Natchez, Mississippi. The Rhythm Club was like many other venues that Barnes had played down South, having a "wooden building frame" that had "sheets of tin nailed to either side" of the wood. Clubs and venues like these were also frequently heated by potbelly stoves, causing the room to heat up quickly due to the open flames. The venue was decorated for the occasion by adorning "dried Spanish moss through the Rhythm Club's rafters." The moss flowed down the wooden support beams, and it was "spritzed with a little kerosene to protect dancers from a less romantic feature of the bayou night: mosquitoes." The attendees "would enter the Rhythm Club and escape to a magical place, as if the white-tuxedoed maestro and his boys in their black bow ties were serenading them, backlit by the moon, on the edge of Pearl Bayou" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 67-68).

In order to better protect the privacy of the event, Lauterbach stated that promoters "boarded the club's windows and barricaded every door save for the front entrance on St. Catherine Street." It would be perfectly logical to obstruct the view of a performer from a window in the venue, as promoters did not want pedestrians passing by to get a free show. Promoters also purposefully limited access to the building so that patrons

could not attempt to sneak unpaying customers into the show. This technique was labeled by performing musicians as the "'toilet' setup," simply meaning "one way in, one way out." Little did everyone know that this "toilet setup," combined with the potbellied stove and the moss-coated kerosene, would ultimately lead to the untimely demise of Walter Barnes, his Kings of Swing, along with countless other patrons at the dance. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 67)

At around 11:30 in the evening, "Barnes called 'Clarinet Lullaby'," when one of the bartenders "heard scuffling near the lone door as the tune began, but thought nothing amiss; he had wondered what took the obligatory fight so long to break out." Scuffles at dances like this were extremely common, as partygoers would consume copious amounts of cheap beer or hard liquor and bumping into someone else, causing accusations and punches to fly. In the middle of "Clarinet Lullaby," the drummer "broke rhythm and tailed off. Barnes, incensed, glared at his band and saw their eyes widen. They lowered the horns from their lips as Barnes turned around and watched fire dance up the wall around the door." However, Barnes was not too worried, he "had played a thousand woodsheds and seen plenty of flames, spilling from kicked-over potbelly stoves or flashing from a tossed match. Fire was a constant worry to people who lived in tinderboxes with open heat, and they learned quickly and coolly, to snuff it or step it out." People at rowdy functions like this were so accustomed to stomping out flames, that accomplished and seasoned dancers on the floor could "douse flames with their setups without missing the beat" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 68).

But as this certain "Baby Doll Dance" had kerosene soaked Spanish moss, the flames spread more rapidly and violently, setting the entire wooden building ablaze.

Unfortunately, Walter knew that "he and the band were last in line to reach the door and had no choice." Barnes knew how to "play through chaos" from his previous stints "at Capone's Cotton Club--music soothed the savage beast. His breath quickened. He faced his band and directed them to start 'Marie,' a lilting Irving Berlin tune." Amidst the flames and screams, Barnes and his Kings of Swing played their last swan song. The drummer, still desiring to live and perform another day, "stood from behind his kit, picked his hammer up, walked toward a boarded window and smashed his way out. The other musicians played as flames scampered across the ceiling, tickling up the volume of the crowd's scream." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 68-69)

Patrons pushed, shoved, and trampled each other to get to the front of the Rhythm Club, where the only real exit was. Some folks near the back of the club took cues from the drummer and tore down the wooden barricades. Lauterbach wrote, "A brawny man elbow-punched through a boarded window and hurled his date through the shards onto St. Catherine Street." One woman even "tore off her clothing and hid in a refrigerator," in a desperate attempt to escape the smoke and rapidly spreading fire. Across the street, there stood a Catholic church, where an "assistant pastor, awoke to cries but rolled over and tried to back to sleep." He would later say that "negro women having a good time in the club frequently screamed like that." Walter and his well-seasoned band kept trudging through the increasingly hazy and oxygen-deprived building, fully aware that they would not make it out in time. Barnes and most of his band accepted their fate, quite literally going out in a blaze of glory. "With the final breath of his life, trumpeter Paul Scott blasted a note, just as the inferno gulped the remaining oxygen, collapsing the tin roof and walls, crushing every still-heaving lung. The building's support beams snapped, and the flaming ceiling slumped

over the stage, like a fiery curtain descending on Walter Barnes and his Kings of Swing." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 69)

Walter's brother and tour bus driver, Alan, saw the entire horrid event unfold from across the street:

“Firefighters and police smashed into the smoldering remains of the Rhythm Club and found young bodies 'stacked like cord wood' against the walls where death captured them- young ladies in clad in bobby socks, pedal pushers, baby doll dresses, pastel skirts, and pink scarves; men in boleros red bowties, and white bucks. As the police and coroners counted the bodies, Alan identified the man in white tails. Someone had already plucked the maestro's gold watch and about five hundred dollars, the night's gate, from the body. Walter Barnes was thirty-four.” (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 70).

Alan would find himself driving his brother's vacant tour bus to Chicago, while his band members' caskets traveled in every direction by train. At Walter's funeral in Chicago on April 30, Lauterbach stated that "Reverend Junious Austin compared Barnes's band to the heroic musicians who went down with the Titanic, still playing." The Chicago Defender memorialized their fallen columnist and musician writing that he was, "one of the first top-notch band leaders to exploit the Deep South. Coming from a section of the country (Vicksburg, Mississippi) where few of the big bands of the northern cities appeared, he struck upon the idea of making an annual tour of the South. Jacksonville, Florida, was his winter headquarters, and working out from where he covered every city and town of any size in the South. He soon became the idol of this section" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 70-71).

While Walter Barnes may have passed on way before his time, he and his touring bands inspired numerous acts to get out and hit the Chitlin' Circuit. He also made history with Al Capone, as he was the first black man to be broadcast live in Chicago, thus opening even more doors of boundless opportunities for aspiring African-American acts. His relationship with Denver and Sea Ferguson, along with the Chicago Defender, made him a

powerful Bronzeville idol that ultimately allowed him to become a force within the ever-changing musical entertainment industry during the 20s and 30s. Within weeks after his death, tribute songs poured out from artists that either knew Barnes or were inspired by him. He would even make a comeback in "in the 1950s and 60s," when "...Blues greats Howlin' Wolf and John Lee Hooker waxed their accounts of the event. The fire has endured as the greatest catastrophe theme in the Blues." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 72)

In 1940, another heavy blow would hit the black entertainment business and the Chitlin' Circuit, when a young man named Robert Chambers was murdered at the Indianapolis nightspot, the Mitchellyne. This particular club was owned by Joe and Tuffy Mitchell, the previously mentioned competitors of the Ferguson brothers. Chambers was gambling with one of his friends on the second-floor, winning a large amount of money on the craps tables. When a friend of Chambers "accused the house banker of shorting his winnings," a fatal fight ensued. Some eyewitnesses say that Robert drew a switchblade on the banker, but some disagree with this testimony. Whether it truly happened or not, the twenty-five-year-old was shot by the club bouncer, a man by the name of Justus McReynolds. Lauterbach wrote that neither Tuffy nor Joe Mitchell could be located at the scene, and when the police arrived, "they arrested Justus McReynolds and charged him with murder. They arrested Joe Mitchell and charged him with vagrancy. Meanwhile, detectives interrogated their briber Tuffy Mitchell and his secretary Henry Vance, both of whom had been in the Mitchellyne's ground-floor cabaret and missed all the fun." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 75.

In those days, it was not uncommon for Avenue authorities to be "bribed to their badges." However, after this July incident, respectable Indianapolis citizens and politicians

became more aware of the seedy underworld that was the Avenue. Lauterbach stated that the local paper wrote, "...[N]ever in the long and varied history of Indiana Avenue has there been such contempt for human life and safety...Since there are undoubtedly more joints, taverns, and smokers in colored sections than in any previous period, the matter of sufficient policing becomes of paramount importance, for person gambling and drinking under the same roof invariably are encouraged to violence!". In response to the public outcry, "Mayor Reginald Sullivan, a sixty-four-year-old Episcopalian Democrat, promised a stronger police presence in Bronzeville, including an influx of new (unbought) officers to the area." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 75-76)

While political campaigns always promised to clean up the streets like Indiana Avenue, the murder sparked a new era of racially-biased legislation known as Jim Crow laws. The Fergusons had their liquor licenses revoked from both of their nightclub businesses, The Cotton Club and the Sunset Terrace. Harry "Goosie" Lee, another African American who owned and operated a nightspot called the Oriental Cafe on the Avenue, also experienced troubles with the Alcoholic Beverage Commission. Lauterbach notes that only the "three black-owned nightclubs" on the Avenue had their liquor licenses seized, forcing Denver to alter his business practices. "With fierce competition gnashing at the local racketeering business, and white authorities' sudden interest in black nightclubs," Lauterbach writes, "the Indiana Avenue capitalist assembled his most ambitious and far-flung venture yet" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 76).

In 1941, Denver and Sea filed with the Indiana state secretary's office to officially create the Ferguson Brothers Agency, Inc. This new agency's listed purpose was "to engage in the business of booking agent, promoter, sponsor and artists' representative for bands.



orchestras, shows, revues, sporting, theatrical, and athletic acts, concerts, games, contests, dances, shows and all other kinds of amusement enterprises." They placed their office headquarters conveniently across from Denver's print shop so that they could easily collaborate together. The same year, Lauterbach wrote that Denver also entered business with Chicago's Bluebird Records stating that, "By now all the syndicate agencies had mutually exploitative record-company affiliations--bookers needed records to promote their bands, and record companies needed personal appearance tours to promote records" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 79).

However, Lauterbach said Bluebird Records produced genres of music like "hard Blues," which certainly did not appeal to white audiences. Denver knew that "popular Blues artists who sold a lot of records still could not snag big agency contracts. As the owner of a nightclub that syndicate bands played, he understood the syndicate-record company synergy. He proposed a similar scheme, pushing Bluebird's nationally known blues artists through Deep South blues country." About a half a year before Denver and Sea opened their booking agency, Denver had booked a band lead by a man named Jay McShann, who played blues music at his club. In having McShann's contact information, Denver was able to reach out to other touring syndicate bands to represent.

He divided his prospects into three categories, the first being "low-priority syndicate bands that believed themselves worthy of greater attention," acts like Tiny Bradshaw and Claude Trenier and the Bama State Collegians. Other groups, like the Carolina Cotton Pickers, King Kolax, Snookum Russell, Milton Larkin, Clarence Love, Gene Pope, and the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, "were territory bands of renown that Denver promised wider geographic exposure." Finally, the last group consisted of

"nationally known recording artists that who'd found hard blues acts were unwelcome within the syndicate's respectable circles." Performers under this category were "Doctor Clayton and the combo of Roosevelt Sykes and St. Louis Jimmy." Together, these groups and artists would forever change the face of musical history by touring on the Chitlin' Circuit. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 80)

King Kolax had a drummer named Earl Palmer "who would contribute rock 'n' roll's distinctive backbeat rhythm." John Coltrane also performed with King Kolax "during its time with Ferguson Bros. Annie Laurie, a big league beauty and Paul Gayten's duet partner on a few New Orleans rhythm and blues in the late 1940s, got her start beside Snookum on the Chitlin' Circuit." While not as famous as the others on this list, Lauterbach included the International Sweethearts of Rhythm that were founded in the "late 1930s as a moneymaker for the all-black Piney Woods Country Life School near Jackson, Mississippi. Piney woods founder Laurence Jones assembled the group and bestowed the 'international' tag to emphasize the Chinese sax player, Hawaiian Trumpeter, and Mexican clarinetist in addition to the fourteen African-American girls in the group." This particular group joined the Ferguson Brothers as one of their "first major acts." While this group did not stand the test of time, they inspired a young Southern boy by the name of Ike Turner when he saw them play live. "It was like 20 of them! But they could play, and they were doing big stuff like Count Bassie and Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, they were doing that kind of stuff. Yeah, they could play, it's a black college down there in Piney Wood, Mississippi, and we used to go hear them play man, and they was b-a-d man." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 81-82)

The brother's booking agency also booked a few "middle-shelf swing bands," like Roosevelt "The Honeydripper" Sykes. He and his fifteen-piece orchestra played under the Ferguson Bros. contract, meaning they played "a pair of two-hour sets" that ultimately forced them to learn "old standards" to accompany their more bluesy style. Another notable swing performer, Doctor Clayton was already a "Bluebird recording star." He "wore his hat a size small, a shrunken suit, and lenseless white glasses, looking as though he'd been kicked off a minstrel show in 1919." One could consider him the first "shock value" artist, as he performed a 1942 concert in Houston "too trashed to sing." Lauterbach wrote that the drunken singer made his way to the stage:

“...[W]ith his hair standing on his head and suit wrinkled as if he had been sleeping in it for a week,' the Houston Informer reported. 'Then when instead of singing, he began to holler and clown, the patrons wouldn't stand anymore. Bottles, paper cups, and everything else were hurled at him. Words of indignation were shouted to such an extent that the massive City Auditorium became a turmoil of confusion. Policemen were forced to rush him off stage to prevent his seriously being injured.' His orchestra stepped from the stage onto their bus with the drunken Doc, and left.” (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 84-85).

By 1942, Denver Ferguson had assembled a booking agency that had fruitful contacts, along with an exclusive record deal with Bluebird to record these artists. However, he still needed to market the groups that were not famous. For this issue, he turned to a colleague named J. St. Clair Gibson. "Known on the Avenue as 'The Saint,' Gibson cranked the Ferguson publicity machine from his office at the Indianapolis Recorder." But the artist and repertoire work that Gibson did for the Ferguson Brother's Agency, Inc. was not honest for the most part, as he "concocted stories about Ferguson clients and placed them on the Associated Negro Press wire, a news service for the country's black papers." In doing this, "The Saint" was able to promote to black audiences

across America in papers like the Chicago Defender and the Pittsburg Courier. "Gibson urged dance promoters to contact him about 'the best bands in the country'." To entice readers even further, he often published "...news briefs to convey the life of a Chitlin' Circuit star. It was Walter Barnes publicity program, magnified." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 85-86)

Denver knew that there was money to be made down South. Lauterbach summarizes Denver's thoughts in noting that, "The syndicate controlled black bands in big Northern cities. Unlike the syndicate, Denver put the black audience first, a simple variation at the core of his innovation." As he was a Southern man, he knew the region was racially segregated, meaning that in every town there would surely be an all-black district that would have its own "stroll concept" that Walter Barnes so described. But he also realized that "the negro individual lacked financial resources, but the stroll possessed collective wealth in nickel and dime increments. Add those nickels and dimes, multiply by numerous bands playing different joints simultaneously with a percentage of proceeds from each flowing back to Ferguson, repeat nightly, and you come to see, as Denver correctly surmised, that there was serious cash down there." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 87)

While Ferguson had already been plugging his roster of artists through print media, he also "laced together a vast network, mostly down South, of agents embedded in black communities." Denver was a keen businessman found of raking in big money from his touring acts on the Chitlin' Circuit, so if the shadow promoter failed to deliver on their end of the deal, he would just cut ties with them and "drop them from the circuit. He wanted his freelancers, either on the street or on the circuit, to recognize the long-term value of their arrangement. He wanted them to see that they could make thousands of more dollars

with him over time than a few hundred they'd make off with by disappearing with the proceeds of a single dance." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 88)

Arguably the most famous and important promoter Denver worked with was a biracial man from Houston, Texas named Don Robey. Born in 1903, "he would come to believe his biracial background had endowed him leadership characteristics from both cultures." Robey was indeed a powerful leader in Houston, hailing from a respected family, and owning his own nightclub called the Harlem Grill. What Denver mostly liked about his future partner is that he was also involved in running a numbers game, meaning they both shared similar schools of thought pertaining to financial matters. Like Denver, Robey also worked tirelessly to "give his people what they wanted. Determined to bring the best bands he could from outside Houston, raising Houston's showbiz profile." On March 1, 1936, Robey and his business partner, Morris Merritt opened the Harlem Grill. The local newspaper, the Houston Informer bragged that it was "'Houston's and the entire south's finest, most colorful and modern amusement spot.'" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 93, 95-96)

That same year, the Midget Maestro himself performed at the grill on Thanksgiving weekend. Lauterbach stated that a week after this performance, "Robey brought in Don Albert, "a New Orleans Creole, who had established a territory band working out of San Antonio, Texas." They toured extensively throughout their Texas state, but they also performed in neighboring states such as Louisiana and Mississippi. By 1941, "the Robey ring was set. Don Robey had much to offer Denver Ferguson: Houston avenues of all sizes, a sizzling band, and the ring of Gulf dance halls. Denver realized he didn't have to make Robey as a promoter, so much as to enlist him. In fact, Denver owed his early success to Robey." A year after Walter Barnes' death, "Denver ventured to resuscitate the

Chitlin' Circuit." The first booked band to tour on the circuit was a group called Lil Green's Quartet, and they traveled across Robey's established route. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 98-100)

The promoters and agents that promoted Denver's acts had to accommodate their travel needs as well. "Working on the circuit required playing places too small to support black hotels." Instead, musicians stayed in the homes of the townspeople, who were always more than willing to help out. Whether it was cooking meals, providing lodging, or simply giving directions and advice on how to stay out of trouble in deep Southern states like Alabama and Mississippi, these down-home, Bronzeville folks acted as hospitable ambassadors to Denver's performers. Denver knew that proper performance venues were lacking in the South, so he "taught his homegrown promoters to press a tobacco barn, warehouse, or fraternal lodge into duty in the absence of a regular dance hall." He financially protected his touring acts, ensuring "that the act, and agent, got paid before anyone else regardless of attendance." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 90-91)

Gone were the days of unrepresented bands playing for change at the door like Walter Barnes. Had he still been around during this time, he probably would have not only worked with Ferguson Bros. but also would have thanked Denver for allowing him to receive rightful and fair compensation for his lively performances. However, Lauterbach did state that while "the Chitlin' Circuit touring model-one night stands, revolving through promoters' respective hubs and spokes-was built to sustain itself, Ferguson's big bands operated with little room for error." Everything from bus fuel, food, wardrobe, instruments, and salaries all required a steady flow of revenue. "A single cancellation--and there were always cancellations--stranded bands. Invariably, they wired back to headquarters for help." Denver still made big money from his baseball ticket gambling racket, so he

transferred those profits to the group that needed it. "Every sucker who crumbled a losing baseball ticket into the Avenue gutter did his part to help the future inventor of the backbeat, and the messengers of bop survive another day in the music business."  
(Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 91-92)

## Chapter 4: Major Players

When the United States entered the Second World War in 1942, businesses across the country were forced to comply with new government wartime regulations, therefore Denver and his performing acts that he supported adapted accordingly. Fuel rationing meant that there were no longer as many tour buses in use to transport backing bands and their extensive collection of musical gear. Lauterbach recalls one Circuit musician in particular, an Arkansas native named Louis Jordan, as he “developed the best little band in the country.’ When Jordan, the former big-band alto saxophonist, went solo, he couldn't afford to maintain a full orchestra, so he organized a compact combo he called the Tympany Five.” Just a month before Pearl Harbor, Jordan and his new group “recorded ‘Knock Me a Kiss’ and ‘(I’m Gonna Move to the) Outskirts of Town.’ This new band format, its unique sounds, and ballsy originality would revolutionize music.” (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 101-102)

Louis Jordan's performances were laced with “minstrel-show moves” that reflected the shows he saw as a youth in the South. But Jordan was also a modern gentleman, as “his dazzling wordplay and lavender suit let everyone know it was okay to grow into something else.” Similar to Duke Ellington, Louis would go on to inspire numerous African-American artists who would emerge in the years to come. Musicians with diverse repertoires and extensive song catalogs like “Charles Brown, Fats Domino, B.B. King, and James Brown, for starters, all acknowledged their debt to him.” (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 103)

While his studio recordings grossed average sales, Jordan's career and fame grew on the Chitlin' Circuit. With help from his manager, Berle Adams, both men scheduled a tour in the South in 1942. Both men knew that “Jordan would need to accumulate impressive ticket sales, which called for gigs in large nightclubs and auditoriums.” Enter



Denver Ferguson's partner Don Robey, the man who "had just the combination of cash, constitution, and contacts Jordan and Adams's scenario called for." Robey scheduled some tour dates for Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five on circuit venues throughout Texas and Louisiana, but since Jordan's band was smaller than the average group, he figured that patrons would not desire to pay full price on an admission ticket for less of a musical experience. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 103-104)

Lauterbach said that in order to combat this issue, "Denver Ferguson set Robey up with Claude Trenier and his Bama State Collegians, thereby getting his cut of one of the most important stars in Chitlin' Circuit history." Jordan and the Tympany Five's Southern tour "success had begun to transform black pop music." But not only did he drastically affect black music, his hit song "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby" shot to "the no. 1 spot on the country and western chart, meaning white people bought it." With a high-grossing hit under his belt, Jordan toured the Chitlin' Circuit to perform his songs for both black and white crowds alike, making him one of the first African American recording artists to achieve this accomplishment. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 114)

Indeed, he was a major star on the circuit. Robey's promotions of Jordan boasted - "They swing, they sing, and they clown. Louie is not only a topflight saxophonist and also became popular as a singer, dancer, leader, and composer." Being the early rock star that he was, Louis' shows were rowdy and rapacious. One show that he played at in Houston forced the manager of the auditorium to close the dance floor due to "a pile-up of broken beer bottles" that threatened the general safety of attendees. At another show, "Jordan played to a righteous mob one thousand strong at the Rhythm Club in New Orleans. Louisiana Weekly reported, 'several persons who went to the dance emphatically called the

affair a wild, drunken orgy.'" Fights, and even one stabbing eventually ensued, causing the police to arrive on the now scattered scene, only to find one bartender and the owners of the nightclub, "the Mancuso brothers, longtime entrepreneurs of the New Orleans night," who simply stated "that all in attendance enjoyed a 'lovely time.' Even the three policemen local authorities "on duty in the hall" claimed to "had seen nothing at all amiss." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 104-105)

While the rest of working America was forced to accommodate for a war that surrounded them, the conflict only boosted the Ferguson Bros. Agency's success even further. The record business was in the tank by 1943, and the prices for show tickets increased "from the 50- to 75-cent range in 1942 to the 75- to 99-cent range the next year" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 106). The Ferguson Bros. Agency knew that to stay afloat in an already extremely tough business, they needed to improve their roster. "Denver scrambled to develop new talent, or if not talent, new bands." He found his protégé, Sax Kari, this way. Ferguson ventured across the street of Indiana Avenue to Willis Mortuary, where he intently listened to a young Sax play piano, accompanied by a young and shy guitarist named Wes Montgomery. As the legend goes, Sax got the gig with Ferguson Bros., while Montgomery would stay behind and find fame elsewhere. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 107)

This particular era also found Denver a new business partner that would help solidify the importance and legitimacy of the Chitlin' Circuit. Lauterbach said the previously mentioned Carolina Cotton Pickers that were employed under Ferguson "commanded the highest fees, played the most dates, and earned Denver more cash than any other big, raggedy road band." A black Chicago native named Joe Glaser was instantly attracted to the Cotton Pickers the minute he heard them play. Glaser was the owner of a

local nightspot, the Sunset Cafe, and he knew what a hot band sounded like, as he worked alongside performers like Louis Armstrong during the 1920s. In 1943, Joe reached out to Denver in order to combine their exquisite performance rosters together. The pair worked together flawlessly, as they were about the same age and shared similar business and personal characteristics. "They shared a worldview, plenty of acquaintances, and tastes. Denver admired Glaser. He had named his Sunset Terrace after Glaser's renowned Chicago joint." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 108, 110).

Joe had also recently acquired "the troubled genius," Billie Holiday. And as a representative of popular syndicate acts like Holiday, he promised Denver that he would place the Carolina Cotton Pickers on the fast track to fame. In exchange, Denver was to book syndicate acts like Billie Holiday to perform down South on the Chiltin' Circuit, "en route through the entertainment capitals of the East, Midwest, and West Coast. Denver initially declined Glaser's proposition, purportedly telling the syndicate boss, 'You can keep New York, I have the entire South.'" But by the springtime of 1944, the Chicago Defender published a story featuring a "Glaser-Ferguson tie-up, noting that Glaser had booked the Carolina Cotton Pickers into Detroit's Paradise Theatre." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 110-111)

In 1946, Louis Jordan and his band had grown into the perfect storm. Lauterbach said, "His personal appearance fee had skyrocketed from \$350 to between \$1750 to \$2000 per night. His blend of down-home diction and uptown tempo had yielded six no. 1 records on the race charts." The same year, Jordan and the Tympany Five released twelve songs that never peaked below the third spot on the national charts. He and his group even paved the way for music videos in the entertainment industry, as they "garbed up as dandy cowboys, singing to a stable of livestock for 'Don't Worry 'bout That Mule'--that were

distributed throughout the country's movie theaters." Jordan was a popular music trailblazer, as he drastically changed the way musical acts travel, perform, and promote their content. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 114-115)

Because of his influence, touring bands were smaller, and all the attention was shifted to the singer, or rather the front man. Later charismatic front men like Elvis Presley, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Freddie Mercury, Ozzy Osbourne, Bon Scott, and Robert Plant definitely all owe a debt of gratitude to Louis Jordan. While Louis Jordan created the famed front man position, his small band setup also paved the way for similar acts to record and receive recognition for their contribution to the new era of music: rock 'n' roll. "The term rock, deployed in a musical rather than sexual context--it was black slang for coitus going back to at least the 1920s--gained popularity right around the time Louis Jordan and his small band blew up in the summer of 1942." Jordan's music also helped contribute some of the distinct sounds that would be forever associated with rock and roll, as he instructed his band to throw "a little grit over the smooth swing horn sound, paving the way for the staccato, honking and screaming style of saxophonists in the next era." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 117)

While record companies are traditionally thought to have control over the artist, in those days it was the booking agents that pulled the proverbial strings. As stated earlier, Jordan's backing band was significantly smaller than the standard swing bands of the era. Lauterbach said that this smaller band setup "simply required less cash flow to tour than did big bands--fewer members meant fewer uniforms to buy and clean, fewer instruments to buy and maintain, fewer vehicles to fuel and rooms to rent, which translated neatly into lower performance fees, with the savings passed down the line to cash-strapped partiers."

These industry improvements also gave way to promoters at local venues to hype-up the new rock 'n' roll trend. And "after decades of big-band music, audiences were ripe for novelty. The few surviving Chitlin' Circuit big bands adapted to the new style." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 116)

Performers now "stormed onto the national black music scene with electric guitars and wailing saxophones." This new and improved musical model also allowed for individuals to gain fame traveling without backing bands. Early rock and roll pioneers like Joe Turner, Wynonie Harris, T-Bone Walker, Cecil Gant, and Ivory Joe Hunter all became popular powerhouses on their own without backing bands. Lauterbach stated, "dives could afford to book cheaply traveling single attractions. Consequently, the top names--not just fringe players like King Kolax, Christine Chatman, and Snookum Russell--appeared in rural joints and small-town nightclubs on the Chitlin' Circuit." After they gained a steady following touring on the circuit, these small acts could then tour bigger venues, ultimately allowing them to record, catapulting them into the national spotlight (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 116)

These rocking performers' "new sound spread quickly along a specific geography, and occurred hyperactively in Houston, New Orleans, and in between, where all the right people mixed with just the proper friction." Houston served as an early "major hub for rock 'n' rolls early businesspeople and artists. By 1946, Don Robey had caught the nightclub fever. He opened the Bronze Peacock in Houston in February (Lauterbach, 2011 p. 112). Being the business-savvy man that he was, Robey "cycled hot small bands like Joe Liggins and the Honeydrippers, and Johnny Moore and the Three Blazers, through the Houston City Auditorium, and every musician in town gathered at the Bronze Peacock for the

afterparty." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 126) The opening weekend, Denver Ferguson slated a performer named Joe Turner, "an illiterate barkeep," who played rock 'n' roll "fifteen years before [it] appeared as a pop-music marketing term. As his musical stylings were obviously ahead of their time, his audience paid no attention to his attempted interactions with them. As he played at the Bronze Peacock he "hollered 'My Gal's a Jockey,' his current version of the motif that would become 'Shake, Rattle, and Roll.'" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 120)

However, this is not Joe Turner's only claim to early rock history. As a singer in a bar in Kansas City during Prohibition, Turner had a powerhouse of a voice that could cut through the noise and din of a speakeasy. In 1938 when he played a gig at Carnegie Hall, he "sang that night as he did in the barroom, without a microphone. His song predicted Arthur Crudup's 1946 'That's Alright Mama,' a tune we wouldn't be talking about if not for the rendition Elvis Presley recorded in Memphis in 1954, the greaser's debut on commercial wax." But "That's Alright Mama" shares even more history with the state of Mississippi. When the late Walter Barnes toured in Mississippi during the developing stages of the Chitlin' Circuit, he would stay in Jackson at a local brothel that was owned by Montgomery's girlfriend. In October of 1936, "Little Brother recorded 'Something Keeps A-Worryin' Me,' which includes what became nearly verbatim, the opening stanza of Crudup's, and later Presley's version of 'That's Alright Mama'." However, it is more than possible that Little Brother Montgomery was simply repeating or recreating lyrics that he had heard from another performer, but "that answer was embedded in long-decayed slots of Vicksburg cathouse and turpentine camp commissaries from Natchez to Hattiesburg." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 119)

Lauterbach wrote about another previously mentioned single-touring act that gained enormous popularity at Don Robey's Bronze Peacock was T-Bone Walker. T-Bone, or Aaron Thibeaux Walker, hailed "from up the road in Conroe, Texas, north of Houston." Born in late May of 1910, T-Bone was inspired by another notable Texas bluesman and close family acquaintance, Blind Lemon Jefferson. The two spent a lot of time together, "as the name suggests, Jefferson needed help getting around, and Walker guided him to the bustling street corners where a handicapped musician might pick up a little change." Walker was a devout Pentecostal, and during church services, he would listen to the hymnals and everyone clapping to the rhythm. "He learned to tap dance and lit out with traveling medicine shows and vaudeville troupes. Walker's corrupted middle name became his moniker: T-Bone. Back in Dallas in the early 1930s, he won a talent show at the Majestic Theater, and with it a week-long stint in Cab Calloway's group." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 123)

It was during this crucial time that Walker's showmanship evolved into what it would be during his later touring years. Calloway's bandleader "let the teenager perform a banjo routine that T-Bone completed in the splits. No one wanted to follow that finale, especially after T-Bone had matured into a sharply attired leading man, and dropped the banjo for a solid-body Gibson electric guitar." By the early 1940s, Walker found himself playing in Los Angeles, where he "separated woman from their undergarments using only his guitar." Later on, he was even fortunate enough to perform at the heavyweight boxer, Joe Louis' Rhumboogie Club. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 123)

By 1946, "T-Bone was at his acrobatic best" when he arrived at the Bronze Peacock to perform. The following year, he played again to a larger crowd. "T-Bone, wearing his

smooth process and pearly white tails, had fans reaching for the smelling salts, the local press reported. 'His blues singing and 'geetar' playing 'send my very soul' as one lady elegantly put it." If Louis Jordan was the Jim Morrison of his generation, then T-Bone was surely to be reincarnated as not only Robert Plant, but also Jimmy Page as well:

“As his show reached its climax, T-Bone pushed his guitar above his head, still playing, extending his arms, building to the song's crescendo. As he inched the guitar down behind his head, he spread his feet and slid his slender legs farther apart, still playing, the room's ecstasy building. Now the guitar ran parallel to T- Bone's shoulder blades, he popped a last pyrotechnic note, and as he landed the splits, the floor around him was covered with cash and feminine undergarments.” (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 131)

His bandleader, Johnny Otis (and probably a handful of curious men) watched how the star-struck women in the crowd tossed their unmentionables. "The chicks didn't snatch their drawers off and throw them,' Johnny Otis noted, a little disappointed maybe. 'They brought extras in their purses. I know because I was watching like a hawk" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 131).

Lauterbach also wrote about two other notable musicians that emerged during the late forties from Louisiana shared the same last name but were not related to one another. A fresh, young man who was named Clarence Brown "idolized T-Bone, whose effect on an audience bewildered and inspired him." This entertainer was driving young women crazy years before the Fab Four or the Rolling Stones would. Brown said,"[he] had the people just screaming and hollering, women falling out, knocking down walls, tearing down chandeliers' and I said, 'God Almighty, what is this guy doing to these people?' " Like any young man that saw Walker work his magic onstage, he was instantly attracted to the life of a new rock star. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 132)



Originally, Clarence played a variety of Cajun-style instruments like the mandolin, banjo, bass, and the guitar. He traveled with his "father's string band. Playing swamp-side house parties for five years with his father. Gatemouth amassed the courage to pick up Cajun music's first instrument, the fiddle." However, while the fiddle may have been his favorite instrument, he "eventually realized there was more money to be made on guitar." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 133-134) To beef-up his performance chops, Brown "followed T-Bone, asking for pointers and begging to sit in." His time to shine would come in 1947 when he landed an impromptu gig before T-Bone's show. However, to best accurately convey this story, there requires a background explanation first.

In San Antonio, Clarence was working for a liaison to Don Robey at the Keyhole Club. He and a buddy from New Orleans were playing in the house band when Don dropped in to check out the spread. "Robey gave the young man a business card, embossed with the Bronze Peacock's sparkling, feathery logo and address, 2809 Erastus Street." He instructed Clarence to stop by when he was in Houston. After a long journey of hitchhiking, he made it to the Peacock on a Thursday night, March 13, 1947, to be exact to see his idol, T-Bone Walker. As this was Walker's ninth appearance at the venue, he was comfortable with space (not to mention the flowing alcohol) that surrounded him. Unfortunately, "T-Bone suffered from chronic ulcers thanks to youthful binge drinking and Texas homebrew." Clarence, wanting to soak in the show and his hero's presence, situated himself up close and personal with the stage.

As he approached the stage, T-Bone's ulcers got the best of him, causing him to unstrap his sax in order to race back to his dressing room. Naturally, the audience became curious and upset upon seeing this. When he saw his star exit the stage, Don Robey became

frazzled, but when he noticed that Clarence was in the audience, he barked at him to get up there and play. One could argue that this particular moment in Clarence Brown's life was fate or divine intervention; that T-Bone was meant to be ill just at the appropriate moment for a young, budding entertainer to stake his claim in the jungle that is the music business. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 132)

Regardless of what it was, Brown picked up the guitar that was left onstage and started to play. Knowing only one key, E natural (the essential Blues key) he began strumming and singing, "My name is Gatemouth Brown and I just got in your town. The repeated first line of Blues gives the performer a moment to plan ahead, which can come in handy when making up a song on the spot in front of five hundred people as if your career depends on it. My name is Gatemouth Brown and I just got in your town/If you don't like my style I will not hang around." At this point, the obligatory audience explosion-reaction kicked in right on cue, but rather than have women's undergarments hurled at his general direction, it was a hard rain of "cash and coin."

After Clarence finished his jam, T-Bone was more than ready to perform. However, he was not very pleased with the events that had just unfolded. Being the early rock star that he was, Walker had developed the infamous super-ego that inevitably comes with it. He "marched on stage and seized the guitar from Gatemouth. 'As long as you live and breathe, don't you ever pick on my guitar again'," he demanded. But in all honesty, Clarence, now known by his stage persona, Gatemouth, probably did not care what T-Bone had to say about the matter. He arrived broke in Houston, but after his knock-out performance, he was six hundred dollars richer in just a matter of fifteen minutes. Of course, there are other accounts of the story that was just told. Gatemouth recalls

strumming and humming in a pinch to try to quickly brainstorm a song. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 133) To be a fly on the wall that night at the Bronze Peacock would surely be interesting.

Brown's performance not only won him an adoring public, but it also caught the eye of a vigilant reporter from the Houston Informer. A scoop was published, mainly highlighting his guitar playing abilities and the resulting hail-shower of coins, that helped boost his name to regional fame. This was a perfect storm for Don Robey too, as he was now evolving into a Denver Ferguson-esque entertainment tycoon. He used Gatemouth's legendary first performance at his nightclub to his advantage. The morning after, Gatemouth signed a contract with Robey. Like the true rock star that he was, Brown had his picture taken for a poster showcasing his residency at the Peacock. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 134) Lauterbach wrote that he was decked out "...like a birthday party magician in black tails and cummerbund, white starched collar and bowtie, wearing a black top-hat cocked to the northeast, tall enough to hide a full-grown rabbit. The price tag hung from a tuning peg of the Gibson L-500 that Robey bought. Gatemouth grinned broadly, nervously, his feet spread as if straddled across a rumbling fault line." Though his name was misspelled on the poster, "Clancece (Gatemouth) Brown'," he was a runaway success.

He played at the Bronze Peacock some nights until almost five o'clock in the morning. Don was already piling on the dough, but he knew he had an opportunity to cash-in on his newfound goldmine by putting him on a record. "Gatemouth spent late spring and early summer playing Houston, mostly at the Peacock, and building his set. Robey hooked Gatemouth up with L.A.'s Aladdin Records, where another Peacock alum, Amos Milburn, rocked. Gate's debut on wax was the tune he'd improvised as T-Bone's ulcers flared up, 'Gatemouth Boogie'" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 135-136).

The second notable Louisiana showman that shared Gatemouth's last name hailed from "a Cajun prairie town called Eunice, Louisiana, on the other side of Baton Rouge." Roy Brown was indeed a poor boy. Only having his mother, True Love Brown to take care of him, the two moved often. As a devout Southern Christian, True Love attempted to fill her son's fatherless life with Jesus, the ultimate moral, male figure. However, like many of the previous entertainers that I have listed, Roy was only interested in the music and the reactions that it created. However, he also knew a chance to excel in show business could allow him to flee his rural upbringings.

One day at their church house, Roy "had organized a quartet and wrote a song called 'Satan's Chariots Rolling By.' With the power of the Lord, and six to eight ounces of blackberry wine behind them, Roy and his boys sang it in church and had the sisters clapping, tapping their feet, and shouting." During the festivities, Roy's angry mother stormed in to yank him out of the holiest of houses in order to deliver an unholy beating on his behind. "At the house, True Love told Roy to snap a limb off the peach tree near the front step and disrobe. 'I'm gonna teach you to jazz up spirituals,' she said, and whipped him." To help financially support his mother, Roy worked hard days "in the boggy sugarcane and rice fields, battling relentless heat and mosquitos among the cypress knees between Morgan City and New Iberia." At the young age of fourteen, he lost his mother to pneumonia. At that point, Roy decided to stop his formal schooling and head out to Los Angeles to try and get a piece of the action. He always knew he wanted to shine bright in the spotlight, so he decided to chase his dream. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 139)

As his mother beat him for singing, he began his career in the entertainment business as a boxer. Ironically, he did not like the sight of blood, so "he went against his

late mother's wishes and began to sing." And so Roy Brown began his newfound singing gig covering jazz staples by white singers such as Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby. He eventually drifted down to Galveston, Texas when he found more steady employment at a local hotspot. The joint was owned by a fierce woman who was called Mary Russell. This woman in particular, "according to Roy, ran brothels, sold dope, paid off police and mayor, and, of course, all good musicians at her Club Grenada." Roy was part of "a six-piece unit and dubbed themselves the Mellodeers." The Mellodeers did it all. They played music when they were told, and then they fetched "patrons' orders for reefer, and ran to the stash spot during intermission." Mary paid the local radio station to play Roy and the Mellodeers as a way to advertise for her club. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 140)

Similar to Gatemouth, Roy was a quick thinking, jamming musician that created memorable characters and lyrics at just a moment's notice. Lauterbach said he composed a song appropriately entitled "Good Rockin' Tonight," which was a smash hit. But there is always more to the story. Apparently, Roy had been sleeping around with "the wife of a Club Grenada backer," so after the ad aired on radio, he headed for New Orleans. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 140)

It almost seems as if fate had a role in both of Brown's entertainment careers. When Roy arrived "on Sunday, April 6, 1947, he scribbled the lyrics of his Galveston whorehouse jingle on a brown-paper grocery sack in hopes that he could peddle it to his role model, who happened to be in town." Brown was a huge fan of Wynonie Harris, and he was scheduled to appear at the Rainbow Room, which was conveniently tucked away on the local Bronzeville strip on the corner of LaSalle and Seventh Street (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 141). He confidently approached Mr. Harris, pitching his song to him. Tired of hearing

songs from nobodies, he simply said, "Don't bother me, son'," as he "slithered off, sneering over his shoulder." The hurt young Roy exited the bar with a bruised ego. However, he shook it off as he continued down the street to another hotspot that doubled as a restaurant and hotel called the Dew Drop Inn. As he walked in, he saw the popular Chitlin' Circuit star, Cecil Gant performing, "dressed in starched khakis to remind fans of his wartime fame as Private Cecil Gant, and sported a black tie with his first name spelled down it in white block letters." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 142)

While he did not have the best voice, he played the piano with due diligence, singing in a voice that caught Brown's attention. "Roy recalled, 'but he had something in that voice, something catchy. . . He made you feel what he was trying to convey to you. He was terrific, he was beautiful, he was responsible for my career'." After Gant wrapped up his set, he smoked a cigarette as he walked towards the bar. Seeing this moment as an opportunity, Roy caught up with the performer to pitch his song to him. "Gant liked 'Good Rockin' Tonight,' not just the words, but the voice as well." Even though it was 2:30 in the morning, Cecil phoned the president of DeLuxe Records in New Jersey, Jules Braun, who had Roy sing it twice over the telephone for him. Being the record executive that he was, Braun smelled a hit. After Brown sang his tune, Cecil grabbed the phone from him, only to hear Jules ordering him to cough up fifty bucks, as he demanded him to keep Roy locked down. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 142)

The next month saw Roy playing in swanky juke joints like the "Black Diamond, a club at the corner of North Galvez and Conti Streets in New Orleans's Tremé section." He had written three more songs to help improve his artist portfolio, titling the new ditties "Lollypop Mama," "Long About Midnight," and "Miss Fanny Brown." With these three

new compositions, combined with the powerhouse "Good Rockin' Tonight," Rockin' Roy Brown made sure that the audience knew just exactly what was on his mind at the time. But here is where the tale of the two Browns gets even more interesting. The backing band that Rockin' Roy performed with "at the Black Diamond, Bob Ogden's Flashes of Rhythm, was the same group that had backed Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown the night Don Robey first saw Gatemouth in San Antonio." Because of Roy's influences, Louis Jordan and Joe Turner, his music sounded like early rock 'n' roll. "Pounding piano, chanting lyrics, rhythmic hand clapping, and frantic sax drove Roy Brown's songs." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 143) It hailed from blues roots, but rather than utilizing the traditional AAB song structure. Roy wrote songs "on a hook-heavy narrative quality," by the recollections of Lauterbach.

Lauterbach wrote that Roy had popularized the genre of rock by 1947, "no longer exclusively a stunt word for intercourse, but as a more musical, good-time catchall." Needless to say, the lyrical content in these new songs was anything but squeaky-clean, as each song contained a plethora of innuendos that suggested any or all of the three crucial elements involved with the circuit lifestyle: sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. "'Good Rockin' Tonight' carried a more than linguistic consequences. Roy Brown would spread the sound and aesthetics of rock 'n' roll well beyond its Gulf Coast bastion, farther than Joe Turner or Wynonie Harris ever ventured" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 144). Do you recall our dear friend Mr. Harris, the entertainer that shot down Roy's original pitch for his breakout hit? About eight months after, he recorded a cover of "Good Rockin' Tonight," and to the chagrin of Brown, his new rendition of the song became a bigger hit than Roy's original on Billboard's Best-Selling Retail Race Records and Most-Played Juke Box Race Records indexes, placing high, staying long on both, feeding fire to the rockin' phenomenon in black music.

Wynonie's cover would finish 1948 as the third most-played "race" record according to Billboard (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 157).

Just a few years later in 1954, the King of rock 'n' roll, Elvis Presley would go on to record his rendition of the song as his second single with Sun Records (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 144). By June of 1948, both Roy and Wynonie's versions of the song "were among the top-15 race records sold" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 157-158). By 1948 the circuit's top acts--Wynonie Harris, Joe Turner, Amos Milburn, and Charles Brown, while Jordan reigned supreme--were some of the top artists in black music as a whole, with national reputations. Some of these artists in particular, like Roy Brown, may have had national spotlights on them at some moments, they were mainly still touring in the South near their local residencies. "Roy continued tearing up New Orleans while jumping at chances beyond his home turf." New Orleans was a vital spot on the Chitlin' Circuit (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 158). On the topic of the city (as well as the change from big bands to solo touring acts), Ella Fitzgerald said, "every artist who has made any real money, particularly bandleaders, has made it on the Southern one-night circuit'." Touring artists like Cecil Gant, Joe Turner, Wynonie Harris, and T-Bone Walker, who traveled solo and cheaply were able to reap the benefits of hiring local pick-up bands for gigs, eliminating the need to hire a backing band permanently. "In 1947 in New Orleans, the top ticket price to a Wynonie Harris show cost \$1.00; for Duke Ellington, \$3.10. New Orleans was perfectly suited for the new-style Chitlin' Circuit action" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 138).

By late 1948, Roy Brown had signed with a gentleman named Ben Bart who had founded Universal Attractions talent agency at the end of the Second World War. It is interesting to note that this man worked closely with one of Don Robey's first Mississippi



contacts, Tom Wince. Lauterbach stated that Wince was located up in Vicksburg, as he owned a nightclub called the Blue Room "and booked bands through a dozen more small-towns joints; including Jones Nite Spot in Indianola, Red Ruby Edwards' in Leland, Casa Blanca in Greenville, and the Harlem Nightengale in McComb, Mississippi." But unlike Tom Wince, Bart envisioned Roy's performing career moving North to the big cities with "big-capacity theaters" in New York and Chicago. "Bart sold blocks of Brown dates to the Chitlin' Circuit most powerful promoters--Howard Lewis in Dallas, B.B. Beamon in Atlanta, Ralph Weinberg, and Don Robey--and booked Roy 'Around the World,' at the upper-echelon Northern black theaters, Harlem's Apollo, Baltimore's Royal, Washington's Howard, the Paradise in Detroit, and the Regal in Chicago were collectively known." (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 158-159)

This tour would surely prove to be a challenge for Roy, but he was more than ready for it. Before beginning his journey, Brown assembled his all-New Orleans backing band, the Mighty Mighty Men, who were named after a clever lyric found in no other than "Good Rockin' Tonight," but it also eventually morphed into its own song as well. Lauterbach wrote, "by organizing a band and taking it on the road, Roy chose artistry over money. He could have easily worked as a single act, demanding the same guarantee and earning the same percentages, while performing with local pickup bands at his shows." This process was the industry standard used by newly-single acts that roamed the Chitlin' Circuit. But Roy must have known that if he had a band that regularly toured and played behind him when it came to cut a record, his Mighty Mighty Men would know just exactly what and how to play. By December of 1948, Rockin' Roy Brown and his band were blazing the

trail, first stopping in Memphis to play for a few months at a place called the Palace. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 166)

After spending the first month of the new year in Memphis, the gang headed up to the Big Apple where they would play at the renowned Apollo. Being used to playing at rowdy clubs in New Orleans, the band hit the stage with full force. The sax player, "Batman" Rankins swooped down from the rafters." One could easily compare Rankins' onstage antics with the high voltage, guitar-wielding maniac, Angus Young. "He 'flew around with that tenor sax,' Roy recalled. 'He walked the tables, he walked the bars'." Anywhere they played, the crowd simply could not get enough of not only "Batman" Rankins, but another sax player with the Mighty Mighty Men, John Fontenette. The group even went as far as changing their swanky and loudly colored suits in-between each song to up the ante-"red for 'Good Rockin' ' and blue for 'Mighty Mighty Man'." They danced in-step with one another while rocking the house down, but "no one outworked the leader. Roy sweated through four suits an hour." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 166)

Lauterbach said the men were living like rock stars, as Roy purchased a fleet of expensive vehicles and took his meals freshly prepared upon ordering them. "Roy bought a Cadillac limousine for the band, a Ford van for their instruments and uniforms, a station wagon for wives and girlfriends, and a Fleetwood for himself. His payroll hit \$565 a night, and he often cleared twice that. Roy's after show meal consisted of two whole fried chickens, two orders of fries, and three bottles of Jax beer. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 160) In hindsight, Brown's meal requests were simple and Southern. I guess even when one can afford the finest champagne and caviar that money can buy, the old traditions and habits of the home can still take precedence over any amount of cash.

There seemed to be no stopping Roy. Deluxe Records "released another wrinkle on the theme, 'Rockin' at Midnight,' in the early spring of 1949." He cut another hit tune entitled "Young Man's Rhythm" that had a lyric that very well may have predicted his everlasting stardom as it simply stated, "Good Rockin', that's my name, they're gonna put my rock in the hall of fame" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 161). He continued touring with help from his contacts at Universal Attractions, as they "...followed the Walter Barnes-Ferguson Bros. publicity model, flooding black papers with press releases. As dance promoters and black club owners typically financed the black entertainment pages, and scribes knew who buttered the bread, the publicity blasts ran everywhere that held a financial stake in a forthcoming stop of the Good Rockin' revival." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 161)

He played a plethora of shows in a myriad of towns throughout the North and South, with more than generous media coverage surrounding him and his tour. Lauterbach said, "Denver Ferguson saw that Brown releases appeared in the Indianapolis Recorder, Don Robey placed them in the Houston Informer, and Roy's New Orleans manager, Rip Roberts, supervised the Legend's local inflation. Readers all over the country followed Roy's crusade. "It is amazing that so many people working in the various fields throughout the entertainment industry made so much capital because of one man who sang to the masses. But then again, Rockin' Roy Brown was not the first entertainer to receive national attention. However, his rapacious and rocking style of music gave birth to an entirely new genre of music, and with it new opportunities for the entertainment industry to capitalize on it." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 161)

During the summer of 1949, "Billboard renamed its African-American music bestseller list from 'Race Records' to 'Rhythm and Blues Records.' The chart change

belatedly confirmed what the industry players knew--the sound Louis Jordan pioneered and popularized in the early part of the decade had all but pushed jazz out of the black pop culture" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 162).

Gone were the days of chart-topping black entertainers like the Ink Spots, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, and Ella Fitzgerald. Lauterbach stated, "by the fall of 1948, rockers had almost fully taken over the Race Records chart. The last race charts in early 1949 read like the results of a revolution. Amos Milburn, Roy Brown, and Wynonie Harris pushed Jordan, Ella, and Billy Eckstine to the end of the list, and regulated Ellington and the swing generation to nostalgia" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 162-163). However, it is important to note that the term rhythm and blues did not exactly mean rock 'n' roll. It was, in all honesty, a corporate "...marketing phrase, shorthand for black popular music in whatever form happened to be selling. The standard definitions of rock 'n' roll, courtesy of institutions such as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Rolling Stone magazine, emphasize a fusion of black rhythm and blues and white country-western sounds, as if the two styles brought distinct elements to a new mixture" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 162-163).

While there were undoubtedly other rhythm and blues acts to perform at nationally recognized stages in 1949, the real stars were Roy Brown and a "foot-stomping Houston pianist" named Amos Milburn. Milburn was represented by a "Chicago-based black talent agency" called Shaw Artists, after its founder, Billy Shaw. Amos had "two of the top 3 spots on Billboard's bestseller list in early 1949" with his two songs "Chicken Shack Boogie" and "Bewildered." In the middle of the same year, Lauterbach wrote that "Billboard ranked Roy Brown (no. 2) and Amos Milburn (no. 3) as two of the top 3 best-selling race recording artists, behind Paul 'Hucklebuck' Williams, another new act, and

comfortably ahead of Louis Jordan (no. 12), Wynonie Harris (no. 14), and T-Bone Walker (no. 31). Rock 'n' Roll was energizing the black music business from the Apollo to its Southern barrelhouse roots." In the autumn of 1949, Roy and his band played in Ferriday, Louisiana at a small hole-in-the-wall club called Haney's Big House, cleverly named after its black proprietor, Will Haney. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 164)

Will was a World War I veteran who sold insurance to Ferriday's African-American population. He then opened a barbeque stand, eventually adding a barroom in the 1930s. His business grew, and he converted his business into the what was now the Big House, but as he was a black man in a small Southern town close to the Mississippi River, he had to enlist the help of a local baron named Lee Calhoun. "Calhoun was Ferriday's feudal lord. He owned the land under Haney's club and much of the rest on Concordia Parish. Calhoun protected his tenant from Ferriday's Klannish white populace and redneck cops," Lauterbach describes (p.165). Lee Calhoun had a rebellious nephew that roamed around town, particularly in Bronzeville, where he saw black entertainers perform through the window of Haney's Big House.

The young teenager was named Jerry Lee Lewis, and of Haney's, "Jerry Lee would say, 'It was giving birth to a new music that people needed to hear. Rock & Roll-that's what it was'"(Lauterbach, 2011, p. 166). Jerry Lee Lewis would later proceed to rock the youth of a nation with blazing fast piano licks that would, in turn, inspire countless other future musicians, such as John Lennon and his band, the Beatles. Similar to Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis also made his first breakout recordings at Memphis' Sun Records. To be honest, both men even shared comparable love interests, as the women that they courted were fresh, young teenagers at the ages of thirteen and fourteen.

Lauterbach wrote that in October, Roy hit his old stomping grounds of New Orleans "...to play two shows for promoter Don Albert, Don Robey's old San Antonio sidekick dating to Walter Barnes's days, and former proprietor of the Keyhole Club, where Amos Milburn and Gatemouth Brown were discovered" (pg. 167). After New Orleans, Roy hit Monroe and Shreveport. He then headed to Mississippi to play in Vicksburg at the Blue Room and then in our own Hattiesburg at the Harlem Club. He and his band even traveled to Tupelo, the birthplace of Elvis Presley. They even went out West to Tucson, Arizona where "...members of the Choctaw nation ceremonially inducted Roy Brown into their tribe" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 167). The Choctaw bestowed Roy an Indian name that translated as 'Big Blow'. "Rockin' "Big Blow" Roy Brown and his Mighty Mighty Men may not be common household names when it comes to the subject of early rock 'n' rollers, but their impact on the genre is jaw-droppingly astounding.

In a 1984 interview for a newspaper in Macon, Georgia, the reporter questioned a man called Melvin Welch who worked in the Chitlin' Circuit during Roy Brown's heyday about a popular worldwide entertainer at the time, Michael Jackson. Keep in mind that this was right after Jackson won "eight Grammy's for the Thriller album. A comparison occurred to Welch. 'Every so often there comes an artist . . . with something different to offer, and he'll catch a wave and ride the tide for a while,' Welch said. 'Like Roy Brown when I was just a kid--he was the number one black artist . . . I used to go to the auditorium and serve Coca Cola just to get in and hear Roy Brown.'" Indeed, he "shook black popular music. He brought tough, lewd lyrics-- the essence of a Chitlin' Circuit song and a staple of rock 'n' roll ever since--from down in the barrelhouse to the top of the Billboard charts and from coast to coast across the country in 1949, two years before Cleveland disc jockey

Alan Freed initiated popular use of the phrase rock 'n' roll, four years prior to Bill Haley's 'Rock Around the Clock,' and five years before Elvis Presley covered Roy's composition, 'Good Rockin' Tonight.'" (qtd. in Lauterbach, 2011, p. 168).

While the Chitlin' Circuit in the 40s was prosperous and successful, it was not immune to the law. Back up in Denver Ferguson's Indianapolis stronghold, a local "negro patrolman named Jacque Durham" spilled the beans on "witnessed widespread corruption among his colleagues on the Avenue." Corruption was not news to anyone, but Lauterbach summarizes well that, "The Indianapolis elect needed to prove its cleanliness to white voters." Marion County prosecutor Judson Stark summoned the alleged bribers, including Denver, to city hall, where they mumbled, "I have never paid any bribes to any police officer of any rank and don't know who has'." The mayor, Robert Tyndall had the chief of police get rid of any gambling or racket establishments on the Avenue. This ultimately hurt Ferguson's pocketbook, like those men who partook in the typical vices of the street (drugs, alcohol, and gambling through his baseball ticket system) had to operate under closed doors" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 128-129).

In 1949, Denver had an encounter with the IRS that he barely escaped, only to have "the feds pick up his trail again in 1950." A power-hungry Tennessee Senator named Estes Kefauver "spearheaded an investigation of Indianapolis's gambling as part of his far-reaching crackdown on organized crime and political machinery." The investigation uncovered the fact that lottery operations within the city "grossed a combined ten million dollars annually. Federal tax agents followed one of the racket's revenue streams to Indiana Avenue." It was here where they cracked down on the numbers runners and "backroom policy house operators" in a collective effort to "uproot the city's resilient bribe system

from the street level to game bosses up to police and politicians." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 203)

By January of 1951, Indianapolis officials in Marion County had "introduced a bill in the state legislature to ban the printing or possession of numbers slips, the street lottery's unit of play, including the cleverly elusive baseball tickets that Denver had designed." The system had finally wised up to Denver's scheme, as Mayor Philip Bayt placed beat cops "outside known ticket stations 'round the clock, including the oft-raided one nearest Sunset Terrace." And when there is no money, there are no bribes; and when there are no bribes, there is no way to run a racket properly. Being the older gentleman that he was, Denver cut his losses and closed the doors on Ferguson Bros. and Ferguson Printing, selling the buildings for one more profit (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 204).

About the same time, down South in Houston, Don Robey had his hands busy in the record and booking business with some female assistance. Lauterbach wrote about Gatemouth Brown's tours "...through Texas's black nightclubs, and border-hopping to Louisiana rarely with a day off," noting that "Robey had realized that Gatemouth wasn't Louis Jordan" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 175-176). Robey felt that Houston star Amos Milburn's success came at a cost to Gatemouth. Both artists recorded for Aladdin Records, but that's where the comparisons ended." Amos was selling records, as he received far more promotion than Brown. Knowing this, Robey knew that if he wanted to get into the big leagues like Denver, he would have to "get Gatemouth out of the territory and into the national scene" (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 175-176). Robey's business manager phoned a woman named Evelyn Johnson who was quite the catch. She had attractive looks that complemented her able book-cooking skills.



Don knew he had to employ her at his Texas club, the Bronze Peacock. After Aladdin Records dropped Brown after "releasing only two Gatemouth couplings during their two-year contract," Don essentially said, "Screw you, I'll do it myself," and together, he and his business partner Evelyn Johnson formed Peacock Records in order to record and promote Gatemouth and other potential acts. "He developed a strategy for growing the Peacock brand, based on the old model that he and Morris Merritt had used to promote dances in the 1930s. He would establish partnerships in other places, with people who could get records on jukeboxes and sell dance tickets." Aside from their new recording label, "he and Johnson founded Buffalo Booking Agency, with Evelyn as its licensed agent, for the express purpose of booking Gatemouth Brown." With the new label and booking agency put in place, Brown was able to record two new songs entitled "Didn't Reach My Goal" and "Atomic Energy." Robey knew that to get the ball rolling with his new act he would have to "forge and expand alliances beyond his Texas-Louisiana territory" with the help of other promoters like Sunbeam Mitchell (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 177-178).

## Chapter 5: The City of Soul

Sunbeam was a Memphis native born in 1906. As a native of Beale Street, Mitchell evolved into a hustler as he worked alongside his father selling vegetables with a horse-drawn cart. Lauterbach wrote, "the closest thing to an education Sunbeam got took place behind the cart, where he learned to calculate his inventory and prices of various goods, the basics in mental arithmetic that would lay the foundation for his career." Sunbeam's experience towing a vegetable cart taught him the value of a constant street presence. Beale Street always had something going on at all hours of the day and night, so he worked hard with little to no time off. When he was fortunate enough to take a break, Sunbeam would listen to a "whorehouse pianist Money Clark, and a dance caller named Cat Eye" at the Savoy Club. Mitchell dreamed of working in the entertainment business, as he figured music would be a great way to try and strike it rich. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 183)

During the Second World War, Mitchell moved North to Detroit and worked at a factory where he could make more money and assist with the war effort. Afterward, he migrated back down to Memphis where he wed his wife, Ernestine McKinney. Similar to Don Robey and Evelyn Johnson, Mitchell and his wife would co-manage their own business. The couple had "leased two stories above the Pantaze Drug Store on the corner of Beale and Hernando opposite the Hotel Men's Improvement Club." The space that they leased used to be a tough juke joint named the Royal Gardens, where patrons would drink, curse, fight, and even throw people out of the third-floor window. Now it was a calmer space with rooms for rent for three to five dollars per week. Ernestine played the role as the vigilant bookkeeper. Sunbeam, on the other hand, was extremely disinterested in running a rental house, as "she wrote to a friend on January 15, 1945, 'Sunbeam, he won't

do anything but sleep, eat, go to the show, come in at 1-2, any time he'd feel like, and I don't have nobody to help me'." In writing this, she pondered as to how she could convince her show-going husband to stick around more, and then the idea hit her: bring the music that he actively sought closer to the both of them and their rental house. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 183-184)

On May 4, 1945, the couple renovated their space to create the Domino Lounge and Mitchell Hotel. Lauterbach stated that after this, "Sunbeam Mitchell would become the catalyst to black Memphis music's renaissance. Ernestine and Sunbeam's place had been like a Norman Rockwell soda fountain, only with blacks. Sunbeam and Ernestine were the pop and mom who kept a pot of chili on and their doors open for their adapted, nomadic children who might drop in broke or hungry at any time." They helped famous acts like B.B. King, Johnny Ace, Little Richard, and Bobby "Blue" Bland. Like the born hustler that he was, Sunbeam made a pretty penny selling whiskey, "making it more conveniently available than did liquor stores that closed certain hours of the day and days of the week." He even expanded his liquor market to the dry state of Mississippi, cleverly disguising his liquor selling caravans as traveling musical shows highlighting black touring musicians (while all the while selling liquor to those in need of it.) (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 185-186)

By 1946, the Mitchell Hotel was in full swing. For just fifty cents, one could patronize the Domino Lounge and listen to one of the two house bands: the first being led by a Louis Jordan-esque saxophonist called Bill Harvey, while the second one was conducted by a fellow named Richard "Tuff" Green and his band, Tuff Green and the Rockateers. Some Chitlin' Circuit artists even consider Green and his outfit to be the first real rock 'n' roll act. "Noted jazz pianist Mose Allison said, 'I always tell people that the

original rock-n-roll band was Tuff Green in Memphis . . . I used to go to the Mitchell Hotel, man, they used to sneak me in in '47 and '48.'" The venue was quite large, as it held two hundred people at maximum capacity. It was here where a man could cough up some change, get in, eat freshly cooked meals that were delicious, drink beer or hard liquor, and if he so wanted, rent out a room for the night with a willing woman of their choice"

Lauterbach wrote, "with thirty-five rooms in the Mitchell Hotel, and no more than ten boarders at a given time, Ernestine let several rooms out on a short-term basis, as a former regular Ford Nelson recalled, 'I would access some of those 'by the hour' rooms, have me a little fun back up in there.'" The Domino Lounge quickly became a hotspot for musicians to spend some time to eat, drink, and play. "Sunbeam's music contacts grew as his informal jam sessions, and cheap lodging became the exclusive spot for traveling black performers and their entourages." In 1947, Don Robey visited Mr. Mitchell to exchange contacts. The two hustlers were perfect together. "This association opened musical trade between Memphis and Houston that would boost these cities to the top of the black music world over the next two decades." The two men promoted each other's acts when they were in town, thus generating more success for both businessmen. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 187-188)

In 1949, the Mitchells opened another hotel and bar on the other side of town "By now, area band activity all ran through Sunbeam, as the Mitchell Hotel became an informal musicians' employment agency, a regional Chitlin' Circuit hub. Like New Orleans's Dew Drop, Dallas's Empire Room, and Indianapolis's Sunset Terrace, bandleaders organizing tours of the region would check in at Sunbeam's cantina to find musicians to hire" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 193).

Mitchell was not the only man to aid in revitalizing Memphis' black music. In 1948, a local station, WDIA 73, "was the first station entirely committed to programming for the black audience. The station's impact on Memphis music was profound and immediate." One of the first stars to give the station life was a young Mississippian born in the Delta in September of 1925. Lauterbach wrote about the young man receiving a Southern Christian upbringing, as he "grew up on spirituals and took up the guitar as the sanctified instrument of choice. He sang in gospel quartets around Indianola, Mississippi, and drove a tractor before fleeing for the city." In 1947, Riley King found himself in Memphis, Tennessee. He shared a living space with his cousin, an old bluesman that cut records back in the 1930s named Booker "Bukka" White. Aiming to become a recording sensation himself, Riley drifted to Beale Street where all the action was happening. He would frequent the W.C. Handy Park to watch the guitarists pick away in an attempt to pick up on previously undiscovered techniques. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 197-198)

King returned to the Mississippi Delta for a year to work and save up some money before he committed to moving to Memphis. But his first stint within the music business was not performing, instead it was a deejay gig at the black radio station, WDIA. He worked alongside another gentleman, Matt Williams who was a teacher and columnist that covered music on Beale Street. A young Riley scored the disc jockey gig after he came up with a jingle for an advertisement pertaining a medicine called Pepticon. The ditty was short, sweet, and to the point: Pepticon sure is good, (repeated three times) you can get it anywhere in your neighborhood (B.B. King Museum, 2018). Riley ditched his real name in exchange for a catchier moniker: Bee Bee (which was an even further condensed version of a nickname he had gained while playing at W.C. Handy Park: "Blues Singing Black

Boy"). When he finally developed the playing chops to perform live, it was Sunbeam that "booked the budding radio star into juke joints as far out as the WDIA signal traveled, and B.B. advertised his next appearance from the electric pulpit." B.B. performed in the Mississippi Delta and Arkansas settlements throughout various stretches of Highway 61, while also touring up and down Highway 51 to Tennessee destinations. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 199)

Though Sunbeam was in no way, shape, or form a musician in his own right, "he exerted artistic influence in his club, and that influence, however unwittingly, helped define his city's distinctive style for years to come." He was keen on knowing what both the musicians and the people want. The performers, playing with jazz styles, fused their previous influences and preferences with what the audience came night after night for blues. His style "was masculine, yet refined, blues stirred up with tight, polished jazz. This cocktail, whether called rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll, or soul-heard on record labels from L.A., Houston, and Chicago-would be a vital force in American popular music for three decades to come." In Houston, a former band leader for one of Mitchell's in-house groups named Bill Harvey collaborated alongside a recorder working for Don Robey, capturing Sunbeam's powerful and quintessential sound. Bill worked alongside a trumpet player named Joe Scott who would eventually end up producing Don Robey's "most consistent earner from 1955 to 1973," Bobby "Blue" Bland. It is appropriate to mention that Bobby "Blue" Bland was one of Mitchell's Memphis graduates. (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 200-202)

As the 1950s rolled around, Sunbeam had established a reputable name for himself. Lauterbach wrote, "his connections now ran from Memphis's leading businessman to the depths of the Negro underworld. Despite his dizzying responsibilities around Memphis,

Sunbeam sought new territory for his bootlegging operation and found a thirsty market due south of his home city" in Mississippi. Seeing as the state did not officially overthrow Prohibition until the sixties, "Sunbeam built a circuit of black nightclubs in the Magnolia State. He provided libation and song and persuaded people to join the business much as Denver Ferguson had done to begin the Chitlin' Circuit" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 202). One man that was inspired by Sunbeam to open a nightclub business was Hattiesburg's own Milton Barnes. Preston Lauterbach's article in issue 172 of Living Blues describes Hattiesburg's contribution to the Chitlin' Circuit and overall "blues history thanks in part to Milton Barnes."

But with this being said the city of Hattiesburg was no stranger to music history. In 1936, a group consisting of two singing, guitar playing brothers and one pianist known as the Mississippi Jook Band recorded a few tunes that were deemed by blues critic, Robert Palmer to be the first "fully formed rock and roll" songs consisting of guitar with a stomping rock and roll beat" (Komara, 2006, p. 696). These songs ultimately served as inspirations and reminders to those touring artists and acts that would perform at Barnes' club in town.

Born in 1915, Milton never graduated from high school, but he still developed a knack for business that would eventually shape him into the Chitlin' Circuit legend that he is today. Milton opened his first business in Hattiesburg in 1935. It was a dry-cleaning establishment that he called "Barnes Cleaners." Milton was also a philanthropist, donating both time away from his endeavors and money from his cleaning business to help create the baseball team, the Hattiesburg Black Sox, in the early forties. In 1944 Milton opened a nightspot in Hattiesburg called the Embassy Club after he acquired the venue from other associates when they argued over the division of profits that they earned after renting the

pool hall for a show featuring the entertainer Earl Hines. Barnes said, "I can do better than that," so he opted to purchase the pool hall with the money he had made from the concert (Lauterbach, 2004).

Milton's new Embassy Club "competed with the Harlem Night Club, on Highway 11 South, to present big-name acts during the segregation era" (Mississippi Blues Commission, n.d.). However, the local institution did not last long, as it caught fire and burned down in 1949. No one knows what exactly started the blaze, but Barnes did say that "The Elks started giving dances there, but the Elks always went to fightin'," potentially signifying that a rumpus occurred, thus ultimately sparking the fire. Of course, fire hazards at performance venues were plenty back in the day. The year after the Embassy shut down, Mitchell reached out to Barnes, imploring him to open another nightclub that sold hard liquor under the table. Sunbeam informed Milton about "the modern-day medicine show concept" that allowed Barnes to sell bootlegged whiskey snuck into his venue via Sunbeam, allowing Barnes to sell the supply during a show, with Sunbeam getting a final cut. "Barnes built the Hi-Hat Club in Hattiesburg around 1950, and in no time he was running joints, down to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, on similar principles" (Lauterbach, 2004).

Seeing as the Hi-Hat Club was outside of the Hattiesburg City limits in an area called Palmers Crossing, it was "subject to fewer restrictions than nightspots in town on Mobile Street, the center of much of Hattiesburg's earlier blues activity." The city of Hattiesburg would spawn numerous nightclubs out in Palmers Crossing after the opening of the Hi-Hat. Some of these spots were Club Manhattan, Thelma's Place, Dashiki, Club Desire, Aquarius, and the Elks (I.B.P.O.E.W.) Lodge (Mississippi Blues Commission, n.d.). But out of all these clubs, the Hi-Hat still reigned supreme. Milton recalled, "I had



B.B. King on a Sunday night, the place was packed. I had sold out tables, chairs, so we stacked Coca Cola crates. Everybody made money. White men came to buy whiskey." Whiskey was a money maker in operation. In an interview, Milton recalled an instance in which he traveled throughout the dry state to acquire the goods for his hustle.

"You see, they got tight on whiskey. I went up to Laurel, and whiskey's flowin'. I will never forget, Christmas come on a Thursday, and I ordered 22 cases, Laurel called me and said, 'man we ain't got much of nothing yet.' I gets up, go to Bogalusa, and get ten cases, come right through Prentiss, and we sold it all before Sunday night was out" (Lauterbach, 2004). With the availability of liquor at a show, patrons at the Hi-Hat Club would stick around to drink, smoke, and listen to the music. "Barnes territory became such a stronghold in the 1950s that B.B. King would call Hattiesburg his second home" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 223). But he was not the only Circuit superstar to grace the hallowed halls of the Hi-Hat Club. Other notable musicians that played at the venue were Louis Armstrong, Louis Jordan, Albert King, James Brown, Z.Z. Hill, Denise LaSalle, Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, Al Green, Ike & Tina Turner, Bobby "Blue" Bland and Ray Charles (Staff Reports, 2018).

This little roadhouse served as "the epicenter for black music in the hub city" (Lauterbach, 2004). It even "drew crowds of eight to nine hundred, sometimes in excess of a thousand." Barnes was, fortunately, able to book these famous artists through his connections with the popular New Orleans club, the Dew Drop Inn, because Hattiesburg is within proximity to the Crescent City, allowing traveling artists to book a gig in both cities with ease. Later on in life, Milton opened two more clubs in nearby Laurel, the Crown Club, and the Hut Drive-In. He also opened another Hi-Hat Club in Gulfport, Mississippi.

Unfortunately, like so many other relics to the Chitlin' Circuit, the original Hi-Hat Club in Palmers Crossing, Hattiesburg closed its doors in 1994. "And while memories of the Hi-Hat Club remain vivid among those who were once regulars there, little else remains except a historical marker at its former site on Airport Road in southeast Hattiesburg." The marker serves as the 102nd installment to the nationally known Mississippi Blues Trail that was created in 2006 under Governor Haley Barbour in Mississippi to commemorate the state's rich history involving the Blues (Mississippi Blues Commission, n.d.).

Meanwhile, Lauterbach stated that the City of Soul began to rock audiences by "hosting live rock 'n' roll and remote radio broadcasts" out of the Hippodrome, a local skating rink near the end of Beale Street. The WDIA station rolled out a new radio program slotted from the afternoon hours of one and two o'clock, hosted by B.B. King entitled, B.B.'s Jeebies. He had recently seen a group of budding young men calling themselves the Kings of Rhythm, led by a nineteen-year-old man named Ike Turner. Ike was a Mississippi native, hailing from Clarksdale. He played piano alongside Jackie Brenston, who played baritone saxophone. The two were accompanied by a drummer, tenor saxophone player, and a guitar player named Willie Kizart (who would accidentally and unintentionally revolutionize the way rock 'n' roll guitar was played forever). After seeing the group perform in Clarksdale, "on Sunbeam's cotton-town juke-house circuit," King approached the band and told them to visit a Memphis record producer, Sam Phillips (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 206).

Phillips worked at Memphis Recording Service, a business that he started on his own. Living his version of the American Dream, Sam "rented a shop at 706 Union Avenue amidst used-car dealerships, a few blocks east of downtown Memphis. He acoustic-tiled

the walls and ceiling, and bought a few microphones and a recording deck." Phillips would eventually subcontract for prominent record executives like the Chess brothers up in Chicago and Modern Records in Los Angeles. Sam was a white man living in the South, recording listening to and recording music that was primarily aimed at a black audience. At the time, one would surely say that Phillips was a strange man for doing what he did, but he indeed had a passion for music, and he desired to share that same passion with anyone willing to listen to this new genre slowly emerging from a new decade.

While Ike and his band were traveling up Highway 61, they hit a bump in the road that broke the internal cone speaker inside Kizart's electric guitar amplifier. When the Kings of Rhythm arrived in Memphis to record with Sam, they were forced to improvise on the spot to fix the broken speaker cone. Lauterbach stated, "they improvised a solution, placing a crumpled newspaper in place of the damaged speaker cone to help carry the guitar's sound." Jackie and Ike were toying around with a song idea while driving. The tune was called "Rocket 88," and the group cut the boogie-woogie-styled song at their session. The track was an instant hit, as the broken guitar amplifier created what modern guitarists would define as distortion. Of course, the rest of the band shined on "Rocket 88," as Jackie sang the song, Ike laid down a bass-like piano riff, and the tenor saxophone and drums kept the rocking and jiving beat going. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 207) This song is a perfect example of how successful musicians can create a hit with the help of a great band and just a little spur-of-the-moment inspiration.

Sam Phillips knew that if he could get the tune on-air, they would be sitting on easy street. He pitched it to a white disc jockey named Dewey Philips (who had no relation to

Sam), and they both decided that the singer, Jackie Brenston, was the man that could best be exploited for profit, as he was the charismatic and crucial front man of the group:

“The song stirred up a sensation in Memphis. Dewey used 'Rocket 88' as the theme song for his late night, 'Red, Hot, and Blue' program on the radio station WHBQ. Oldsmobile dealerships--a powerful Olds Super 88, with its fat fenders and V8 engine had inspired the tune--located a few blocks on either side of Sam Philip's Memphis Recording Service on Union Avenue, set public address speakers out, and blared 'Rocket 88.' Raymond Hill's shrieking sax echoed up and down the Union, and Kizart's guitar blended with the V8's rumble in traffic” (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 207-208).

However, it is essential to note that while "Rocket 88" was technically recorded by Ike Turner and Jackie Brenston's band, The Kings of Rhythm, when it was pressed, published, and sent to the general public, the group's name was changed to Jackie Brenston and his Delta Cats. Both Philips men promoted the frontman angle when they sent the demo of the song to Chess Records in Chicago, they changed the name of the group to better appeal to the current market trends. They also changed the group's name for a better market appeal, in a lucrative attempt to break out of the race record category. "The song made front-page news in the in the white Commercial Appeal on March 28, 1951." Though the news was not particularly positive regarding the new race record hit, it still showed that this new genre of music possessed the power even to turn the heads of white folks.

It is also important to note that while many music critics and historians alike generally agree that "Rocket 88" was considered to be the first real rock 'n' roll song, Brenston said himself in an issue of Jim O'Neal's Living Blues magazine that it was not. "By Jackie Brenston's reasoning, 'Rocket 88' was the second generation of black rock. The Kings of Rhythm (or the Delta Cats, depending on who you asked) cribbed the music from 'Cadillac Boogie' by Jimmy Liggins. Brenston would tell Living Blues and Lauterbach, many years later, 'If you listen to the two, you'll find out they're both the same. The words

are just changed." But the song is still important as it "was probably the first black rocker to cross over since Louis Jordan successfully marketed to white people or 'general popularity' in Sam Phillip's nice euphemism. A white deejay broke the song, a white company embraced its advertising power, and the white paper picked the story up, a rare combination of events." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 208)

After "Rocket 88," the city of Memphis and its new music were officially put on the map. The song "soared to the top of Billboard Rhythm and Blues charts in July 1951. Unfortunately for the Delta Cat Brenston, he could not replicate the initial success that he and his band reached with "Rocket 88." He arrived back at Sam Phillip's recording studio to cut a country tune entitled "Tuckered Out," but it would go nowhere. He was a young musician that had much to learn about the lucrative entertainment business, but unfortunately, he would only be remembered as a one-hit wonder. (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 209)

While Brenston had his time in the sun, another young and budding musician in Memphis was on his way to stardom. B.B. King already had his radio show going for him, but as a fellow aspiring bluesman himself, B.B. set his sights on covering a song from a man named Lowell Fulson. Both men worked under Bob Henry, as he was the promoter of Fulson and the manager for B.B. Lowell was "affable, overweight, and gold-tooth grinning." He was anything but a city-slicker, playing "loose, country blues." He also was not classically trained, as he could not read music (but neither could King). He had played Lowell's recordings on his radio show, as he enjoyed his particular style, and he desired to support Henry's touring acts.

One night in Memphis, at W.C. Handy Park, Lowell was scheduled to play a live gig for the public, thanks to B.B.'s planning. While he had no issue performing in other settings, this night would prove to be different. As his band started his original tune "Every Day I Have the Blues," Fulson saw the Memphis crowd in front of him, and he realized that the song "was one of the biggest rhythm and blues grooves going, he froze there in the wings all the same." After the band continued to vamp, and Bob Henry talked some sense into him, Lowell made his way to the stage and played the night away. Fulson may have had the pre-show jitters due to his phenomenal opening act. It is important to note that before Fulson went up to play, a "young twenty-one-year-old known by his impairment, Blind Ray Charles" blew the house down.

Like the previous circuit performers before him, "Ray made thirty-five dollars a week and lived the Chitlin' Circuit cycle, performing daily, chain-smoking and shooting dice on the bus between stops, and flopping in a furnished room" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 210). His lack of one of the major five senses heightened his musical abilities to an uncanny level. He "could hear every note played clearly as is isolated from the rest of the song. Keeping track of the composition as a whole, he identified and corrected mistakes during the group's rehearsal's, and tightened the Fulson band into a precise unit." This young man caught the eye of the press as he hit the road to become a star. After Lowell and Ray's W.C. Handy Park gig, B.B. approached Fulson, asking for a simple request, seeing as he helped book the gig in the first place. "'You the onliest one to fill this place,' King told Fulson after the show. 'I pat myself on the back 'cause I laid on your records.' Lowell thanked B.B. 'But I tell you what you can do,' B.B. continued, 'you can let me do that 'Three O'clock in the Morning.'"

Lowell cut that tune a few years back, but it did not receive the attention he thought it would. Fulson agreed to let him rerecord it, as he thought it would help B.B. make a name for himself as an entertainer. Lauterbach wrote, "B.B. wasted no time. Independent rhythm and blues record companies had scouts working around Memphis and could swiftly arrange ad-hoc recording sessions in makeshift locations, like Sam Philips's Memphis Recording Service, WDIA's cramped studio, Tuff Green's living room (where they hung blankets on the walls and windows to muffle the outside world), and the colored YMCA at the corner of Vance Avenue and Lauderdale Street toward downtown." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 211)

It would ultimately be the YMCA building where King and his group would record "Three O'clock Blues." This song would catapult B.B. straight into the limelight, as Lauterbach stated, "the Memphis sound's past, present, and future were well represented at the session. Tuff Green, a former student of Jimmie Lunceford and leader of many after-hours bands at Sunbeam Mitchell's, played bass." A man named Willie Mitchell graced the track with his trumpet playing, as he too gained fame jamming at Sunbeam's bar. Later on in his life, "he would achieve musical immortality in coming decades as producer-auteur at Hi Records in South Memphis. Mitchell would help to create Al Green in the 1970s, as well as the soul-stirring strings of Syl Johnson, Ann Peebles, Otis Clay, and O.V. Wright." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 212)

The legendary recording session that became "Three O'clock Blues" also had a former Delta Cat on the credit list. "Though barely twenty, pianist Ike Turner had already led a band on a hit. He was as tireless a talent scout and producer as he was a performer, and Memphis cats B.B. King and Bobby 'Blue' Bland-who, like Ike, are now Rock and Roll

Hall of Famers-would credit him with sparking their recording careers. In fact, Ike had connected B.B. to RPM Records out of Los Angeles, which supervised the session and released 'Three O'clock Blues'." This song would prove to be the start of King's celebrated and life-long vocation to the art of mastering the blues. It even surpassed a Ray Charles release entitled "Kissa Me Baby," as it placed "atop the charts for best-selling rhythm and blues singles and earning the most jukebox plays in the R&B category by mid-February."

It would be appropriate to mention that another one of Sunbeam Mitchell's regulars, Rosco Gordon, was the only artist that came close to topping B.B. with the Chess Records release of his tune, "Booted" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 213). King's manager, Bob Henry, knew that he could produce some serious revenue putting his new act on the road and that he did. "Henry signed B.B. up with Ben Bart's Universal Attractions, the agency that propelled Roy Brown's blockbuster 1949 tour." He was also generous enough to get his new act some fresh threads, as he "took B.B. to Paul's tailor shop on Beale and outfitted him in two suits, one merlot, and one lavender, with black and red shoes, a shirt, socks, and tie to match." (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 214)



## **Chapter 6: The Chess Brothers, Chicago, and the Big Leagues**

While cities such as Sunbeam's Memphis and Denver's Indianapolis inspired, cultivated, and contributed with their fair share of Chitlin' Circuit artists, when rock' n' roll arrived on the scene, the city of Chicago took center stage. Where the Midget Maestro Walter Barnes once graced gangsters and socialites alike, there was a new sheriff in town. Cohen wrote, "By the 1940s, the music business had shaken itself out into what we recognize as the modern record industry, a world dominated by a handful of companies that, like the movie studios in Hollywood, are big enough and strong enough to dominate the entire market" (Cohen, 2005, p. 51). Gone were the days of finding fame primarily through countless shows and tour dates; entertainers and promoters alike knew that there was a change in the air, giving way to fresh, albeit older faces like the Chess brothers. The Chess brothers were not your normal rhythm and blues/rock' n' roll enthusiasts, unlike the previous Chitlin Circuit promoters and managers that have previously been discussed.

The lucrative business behind the roots of rock music stemmed from musical contributions spanning all races. "By the mid-1920s, the city (Chicago) was crawling with Jews, second only to New York." Leonard and Phil Chess were merely two of thousands of Jewish babies born in the during the early 1900s. The younger Chess sibling, Leonard, was born and raised on the West Side, in a "Jewtown" that honestly "had been built up as a buffer" to shield the more prominent, White side of town from the Bronzeville that engulfed the Lower-West Side. Every day after school and on the weekends, Leonard would venture down to that side of town to check out the exotic sights and sounds. Cohen stated, "On Sunday mornings, Leonard would walk along Cottage Grove, drifting with the music from the church choirs, the soaring harmonies that drive away impurities and prepare

the soul for heaven. On Friday nights, on these same streets, members of these same choirs were singing dirty songs in the dives, casting off what had been so carefully earned in church, but of course, you have to get dirty to get clean, have to sin to be saved. In this way, Leonard, from his early years, developed a taste for black music" (Cohen, 2005, pp. 28-29).

After high school, Leonard and his older brother Phil worked with their father for a few years. He married in 1941, moving away from his parent's home to a new life in the city. The following year he had a son, Marshall, and three years after his son's birth, "Leonard took a job at a liquor store at 5060 South State Street, in the Black Belt." The establishment was known as Cut-Rate Liquors. At Cut-Rate, one would find a young, Jewish man chatting with his customers. Cohen wrote about the black population who grew comfortable around him, "Leonard came to know every part of black Chicago, mothers, and grandmothers buying wine for dinner, factory workers in denim jackets and boots, gangsters and corner boys-they came from the tenements on 47th and 50th and 53rd streets. Like Leonard, these were immigrants: Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, dirt farms and no-shit towns, a nation of men who reached their prime after emancipation but before civil rights, who channeled otherwise wasted energy into bar fights, feuds, music, a great tide that rolled up from the South." (Cohen, 2005, pp. 31-33)

In the time between 1940 and 1950, the state of Mississippi lost a fourth of its black population as they immigrated to Chicago, "packing up and leaving, taking along musical traditions that had been handed down for generations, long before records and radio, with every kid learning to play in the style of some forgotten slave-traditions that would turn up, as if out of nowhere, on records cut on the South Side," according to Cohen. Early

Mississippi blues artists like the legendary Robert Johnson would permanently capture the greatness of the city, with staple tunes like "Sweet Home Chicago." This particular song alone has been the subject of countless rock and blues covers spanning generations (such as Buddy Guy, Eric Clapton, and John Mayer). "In 1940, a black worker in Mississippi took home around four hundred thirty-nine dollars a year. In Chicago, the same worker could make over two grand. There was a cultural pull. Chicago was the home of the Chicago Defender, the oldest and most influential black newspaper in the country, a muckraking broadsheet sold across the South." (Cohen, 2005, pp. 36-37)

The reader has seen the importance of this publication as it supported the Chitlin' Circuit artists, and was even edited by Walter Barnes. But now it was Leonard's turn. His official entrance into the new music recording business that would soon evolve into one of the largest international industries known to man began on the Bronzeville streets of Chicago. In many ways, Sunbeam Mitchell, Denver Ferguson, and Leonard Chess were all kindred spirits, as they saw these black masses as an untapped market, waiting to be plundered. Cohen said, "the past is what they had come north to escape, and yet they never really could get away from anything: no matter what they did, there it was, in their music and in their language, especially when they were drinking." Leonard and Cut-Rate "were therefore holy as a church: the curse and the reward, the wound and the salt on the wound, the blind spot on the way to clarity." For many musicians, their vocation brings pain, and with it, unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as drugs and alcohol. (Cohen, 2005, p. 33)

As a genuine capitalist, Leonard used his sobriety to gain the upper hand in business ventures such as recording contracts. "As a rule, most of the first generation of record men did not drink, or drug, or do many of the interesting things that were a big part of the lives

of their artists. It played into one of the classic Jewish stereotypes, unfair, but kind of true: that Jews don't drink." But at the end of the day, stereotype or not, Leonard made the discernibly wise choice not to mix business with pleasure. (Cohen, 2005, p. 34)

Cohen wrote that "When a contract came up for renewal, he might just call an artist on the phone, offer favorable terms, then say, 'Just come on over and let's sign this thing.' He would make sure his office was well stocked with top-drawer scotch and vodka, set out an ice bucket and tumblers, then duck out. When the artist turned up, Leonard's secretary, as instructed, would say, Mr. Chess had to run out for a minute. He said to wait in his office. As the artist steps through the door, the secretary says, Help yourself to a drink. An hour later, Leonard calls in and asks his secretary, Is he drunk? If yes, Leonard races back, apologizes, says, We're so excited about this deal. Let's drink to it. He fills two tumblers, raises his glass, watches the artist throw his back." This is where sober the bait-and-switch technique comes into play. "Leonard then shakes his head and says, Now, you see, well, unfortunately, ahem, and you know, I have been in with the bankers all day over this, knocking my brains out, but we just can't come up with that kind of scratch-but how do you feel about white walls? I can really sweeten this deal with a boss set of tires." (Cohen, 2005, pp. 34-35)

In a similar fashion to Sunbeam in Memphis, Leonard purchased a restaurant in one of Chicago's many teeming Bronzevelles located "at 39th Street and Cottage Grove, the heart of the ghetto. Leonard and Phil rebuilt the restaurant into a nightclub, tearing out tables and countertops and classing it up, with velvet booths and a horseshoe-shaped bar, a barbeque pit, and a stage for bands. He called it the Macomba Lounge" (Cohen, 2005, p. 42). The soon-to-be-famous lounge opened its doors in 1949 when jazz music was still in

full swing. Cohen said, "This was before the Delta Blues hit the city. Most of the clubs still featured velvet-voiced singers who danced with the microphone and enunciated, music geared to the black middle class and the white slummers who claimed to find elemental power on the wrong side of town." Leonard and his brother Phil were in it for the long haul, as they took part in formerly mentioned illegal activities such as bribing police officers, ultimately allowing them to stay open later than they were supposed to. The Macomba was supposed to close at four in the morning, but if the event was lively, Leonard would pull down the shutters and keep the party going on through the dawn. (Cohen, 2005, p. 43)

Naturally, this seedy establishment also gave way to drug selling. "Exchanges in the bathroom, in the alley, right up front, a packet of cocaine taped under a stool." This trafficking issue would eventually force the Chess brothers to "check every chair, flushing what they found" when it came time to finally close down for the night, or in most cases, in the wee hours of the morning. These were not the only dangerous elements that Leonard and Phil would face, as the lounge was home to "threats, fights, and holdups." Someone even attempted to stab Leonard with a knife one particular evening, but his bodyguard, Big Gene intervened, having the blade pierce him rather than Leonard. Big Gene survived, but he would need seventy stitches to properly heal his wound. The chaos would not stop there. Cohen wrote, "Another night, Leonard brought Marshall to work-he was five years old-gunfire broke out. Marshall remembers his father tossing him over the bar and lying on top of him-an incident that probably convinced Leonard there was not much future in the nightclub business." (Cohen, 2005, p. 45) After this incident, Chess took to carrying a piece with him, a 44-caliber pistol to be exact. This would prove to be a wise move, considering that the Macomba was strictly a cash business.

Like Denver Ferguson before him, after closing time, Leonard would take the bags of cash out to his car (with his pistol holstered on his hip), drive across town to the bank, drop his hard-earned cash off, and then head home to fish with his son. All in all, owning a nightspot like the Macomba was indeed a risky business, but Leonard would soon discover a way out that involved the newfangled process of recording artists to a record. "Before long, a new type of patron had appeared at the Macomba: white men in dark suits who listened to bands with sharp-eyed detachment. Some carried pads and scribbled notes." These gentlemen would always pull Leonard aside, they would ask about the performances that would occur nightly "Leonard at first believed that these men to be aficionados, experienced collectors ahead of the tide, but soon realized that they were record men-small-time producers scouring the clubs." The business intrigued Leonard, as he soon found himself watching for these individuals enter his nightclub to scout out potential talent. Leonard himself acted as an "unpaid scout, steering them to artists, watching how a record man approaches a musician, works him, then, for chump change, presses a single that can be sold in the bars, the newsstands, the drugstores." As time progressed, Leonard saw a plethora of talent scouts flock to his establishment. With this, he soon realized that there was indeed a promising future in the record business if one knew how to turn the tides in their favor.

Cohen stated, "In 1947, when Sammy Goldberg, a black scout, came after Andrew Tibbs, who now and then sang at the Macomba, Leonard had a realization: Why recruit Andrew Tibbs so Sammy Goldberg can turn a dollar? Why not record Tibbs myself?" (Cohen, 2005, p. 46). Being the entrepreneur that he was, Leonard talked to his talent, Mr. Tibbs, and wrote a recording contract for him. Andrew was to record with a local,

independent record label known as Aristocrat. This record company was owned and managed by a wedded couple named Evelyn and Charles Aron. Leonard knew he had leverage, as "the Arons had the company and the experience, but Leonard had access to the talent" (Cohen, 2005, p. 47). "There were dozens of independent record men working in big cities in the Northeast and Midwest, Detroit, New York, Cleveland, wherever large immigrant populations were thrown together with blacks from the South-rural people reeling in the industrial landscape" (Cohen, 2005, p. 56). These men had names like Syd Nathan, Herb Abramson, Herman Lubinsky, George Goldner, and even two gentlemen who were known as the Schwartz brothers. Like Chess, they too desired a piece of the American dream by capturing the new sounds of the time (Cohen, 2005, p. 60).

These early record executives did not have the capital for lavish office spaces. The new "record men rented offices on the edge of the slums, DMZs where Jewish and Italian neighborhoods ran into the ghetto." But sometimes even these physical office locations were unaffordable to those starting out in the business with no money to their name. "The most desperate operated as nomads, what the writer A. J. Leibling called Telephone Booth Indians. As their office phone, they gave out a number for a pay phone in the lobby of a building downtown and would camp in front of the phone for hours. A girl was hired to answer calls: 'Hi Class Records!' And she shuffles some papers and hands the phone over to a sweating Telephone Booth Indian. 'Kaplinsky here. And make it quick, it's my busy time!'"

To further complicate the business, some opted to borrow start-up money from the mob. As dangerous as it sounds, acquiring a loan from the mob was the only way some executives could afford to stay in business. Cohen stated, "First Boston would simply not

loan some immigrant sheeny ten grand to record a Negro from Alabama. But the gonifs were always ready with a roll. That's what the mob does: loan capital to those without options." Many were fortunate enough to pay back what they were loaned, because if they did not, not only would they be forced to forfeit their business and contracts to the mob, they would more than likely lose a finger, toe, or limb at worse. (Cohen, 2005, p. 57)

Seeing as Leonard had experienced his fair shares with dangerous and life-threatening situations, he did not desire to enter the record business with funds from loan sharks. Rather, he teamed up with the local Chicago label, Aristocrat, which was operated by Charles and Evelyn Aron (Cohen, 2005, p. 61). To say that the duo shared the management and operating roles equally would be a stretch, considering Evelyn "recruited the artists and produced the records." By 1948, "Leonard approached Evelyn to form a partnership." As she herself was a raised a Jewish, she was immediately drawn to his presence, but not exactly in a positive light. "She knew Leonard from the Macomba, and from the scene," but she was not entirely sure that he could be partner material. But Leonard had a golden ace up his sleeve: the coveted and highly sought after recording contract of Andrew Tibbs. So, being the hustler that he was, Chess struck a deal with Evelyn, saying that Tibbs could record under Aristocrat, only if she taught him how to become a record producer. (Cohen, 2005, p. 62)

Chess still devoted some time to the Macomba, but he set his sights on recording. Enlisting help, Leonard recruited Sammy Goldberg. Cohen wrote, "the scout who first turned him on to Andrew Tibbs. Together, they would fill the roster of Aristocrat. It's funny, how this Polish immigrant, this kid who did not even learn English until he was in school, winds up at a company called Aristocrat. But that's America: no past, no pedigree,



the great ones give birth to themselves." Gone were Leonard's days of smuggling cash in and out of his lounge with a gun. He no longer had to check under the tables for narcotics or jeopardize his life and his career due to random acts of violence.

Getting started in the record business was simple enough for Leonard. "Overhead was nothing, Twenty, thirty bucks for rent, some chairs, a secretary, gas money." And in those days, recording artists only got a cut when they were finished recording, on top of an extra flat-rate of "\$41.25 for a three-hour session." Artists also recorded relatively fast, considering that "many of the early records were just one guy on a piano or guitar." Add this factor in with the twenty-dollar musician's union fee, along with "twenty-five to forty bucks an hour, and throw in a few hundred for pressing, and for three or four hundred dollars, you've got a record." For this recording price, the net income was almost always in their favor, considering that a record could "bring in a thousand dollars. And that was before he hit the real big time. (Cohen, 2005, pp. 63-64)

In the early days of Chess' Aristocrat employment, he would simply load his Cadillac car full to the brim with finished records and drive them around town (and even to adjacent states) to the record stores where they could be sold. Cohen wrote, "If a record flopped, Leonard was out a few week and some C-notes. But, if it hit, he might gross fifty, sixty grand; if it really hit, he might gross a hundred K-2 or 3 percent went to the artist in royalties (the majors paid closer to 5 percent), but the rest, depending on how honest he was with the government, was profit" (Cohen, 2005, pp. 63-64).

Cohen also said that Leonard's first major recording experience was with Andrew Tibbs at a rented studio space at Columbia Records. Being the businessman that he was, Leonard "tended to believe that everyone is pretending anyway, so if you just feigned

knowledge, the real thing was sure to follow" (Cohen, 2005, p. 64). Because of the technical limitations and lack of physical recording space on analog recording machines, the recording artist had to concentrate on recording their best performance without any errors. Chess would yell and shout at his artists like Tibbs, not only to look and sound like a record executive but to also inspire them to give it their all. If the musician could not deliver, Leonard would take over and try his hand at the recording. An instance of this occurrence can be heard on the Muddy Waters song, "She Moves Me," as Leonard banged out the drum beat (Cohen, 2005, p. 65).

## Chapter 7: Epilogue

The Chitlin' Circuit, its players, and its public wholly altered how popular genres of music were performed and distributed. The rich history of the tour route can be traced back to the song stylings of both black and white performers from both sexes, as they cultivated success in the new entertainment industry. These musicians interacted with one another when they labored together during the day or when they traveled together on early medicine shows. They collaborated to better learn their instruments and hone in on their craft. Early performers knew that the best chance at success in this occupation was to develop diverse musical repertoires, thus rendering their services more marketable. As the twentieth century persisted, new technological innovations like the record player and its predecessor, the phonograph gave birth to the business of recording music. Many circuit performers cut records that were desired by blacks and white audiences alike, further paving interracial exchanges in the music entertainment industry.

As both black and white artists began recording with new record labels, they created a new form of popular music that was conceived on the circuit. The new stylings of music ultimately forced Billboard executives to alter their record classification format in regards to African American releases, as time ushered in a new, more rocking form of music. This early rock and roll music transcended cultural barriers, as it was recorded by immigrants and Americans hailing from countless ethnicities and religious affiliations. These early record labels that produced these rocking blues artists inspired competitors to create similar records with more circuit performers, allowing these players with the opportunity to record and potentially become nationally recognized. All of these positive advancements to

American culture were made possible because of the Chitlin' Circuit and the numerous individuals and business that kept it alive and well.

On November 3rd, 2018 I attended a memorial for a Mississippi photographer, James Patterson, at a local venue called Hal and Mal's in Jackson. I paid my respects and briefly chatted with the university instructor that invited me to the event, Mr. Gregory Preston. He then ushered me to an older gentleman who was sitting nearby, informing me that he was a genuine Chitlin' Circuit performer. His name is Jessie Robinson, and what he had to say about the circuit is quite interesting. He first asked me what a chitlin' actually was. I responded, saying something along the lines of, "Yeah, it's the fried intestines of a pig." He agreed and defined what a chitlin' was to him, saying basically what I had stated, but he also made sure to state that "that's where the shit comes out."

He then went on to ask me, "What is the Chitlin' Circuit?" He elaborated upon his question, stating that the Chitlin' Circuit could be anywhere, implying that wherever there are touring bands to play at local venues, the Chitlin' Circuit will always evolve and exist. I enquired if he was familiar with the book, *The Chitlin' Circuit and the Road to Rock 'n' Roll* and its author Preston Lauterbach, to which he replied with a yes. But Robinson's overall demeanor made it clear that he was not thoroughly impressed with his work. While he confirmed that the events that unfolded in the book happened, there are countless other souls that performed at these same venues mentioned that were not discussed at all. I sincerely think that Robinson knew that Lauterbach was an intellectual, academic type of man, and they were not cut from the same cloth. In his final statement, Jesse stressed that if people really desire to understand the Chitlin' Circuit as a whole, one must first take a walk in the shoes of the performers that lived it.

But the steady, creeping hand of time has forever altered the Chitlin' Circuit's past heritage. Like the original circuit performers, many of the places where these star attractions played no longer exist. In the introduction of his work, Lauterbach highlights the effects of a changing time and culture as he stated, "While the ghetto's contours reverberate through the music in ways that often define notation, rock 'n' roll simply couldn't have happened anyplace else. The Streets of Indianapolis, Houston, and New Orleans are as fundamentally crucial to this story as the people who walked them. As money and power flowed through the ghetto during the 1930s and '40s, creativity and musical innovation followed. But as black downtowns atrophied and disappeared thereafter, not only was their influence diminished, their mark faded from America's cultural history" (Lauterbach, 2011, p. 13).

Preston also discusses a meeting he had with a more modern Chitlin' Circuit star, Bobby Rush, while working on an article for Jim O'Neal's magazine *Living Blues*. Rush was quick to point out the changes from the past, as "Their blues shows, which typically feature upward of five acts and go on for hours sell out rodeo arenas and civic centers, mostly in the Deep South." The past venues that acts like B.B. King, Ike Turner, and Muddy Waters used to frequent have vanquished now due to urban renewal and revitalization acts. The Hi-Hat Club that Walter Barnes built in Hattiesburg is now the sight of a local laundromat. These once-sacred spaces meant for music and enjoyment can only be accessed via imagination.

But people can still access and tour certain Chitlin' Circuit stops and attractions in the modern age. Of course, the overall experience is certainly different, as circuit performers like Bobby Rush socialize with the crowd throughout the evening, posing for

pictures with fans in front of airbrushed backdrops for the price of ten dollars. "The big concerts attract both young and nostalgic fans, and everyone has a good time, dragging coolers and bottles in and feasting on smoked turkey legs, fried catfish, and pulled-pork-shoulder sandwiches." There is even "an annual Grammy-type celebration" that celebrates the accomplishments of the contemporary circuit acts dubbed the Jackson Music Awards, hosted in Jackson, Mississippi (Lauterbach, 2011, pp. 4-5).

Today, the Chitlin' Circuit tourist industry capitalizes on the remaining venues and locations, as tourists from around the world can travel to places like The Shack Up Inn, found in Clarksdale, Mississippi, to put themselves in the life of a sharecropper who labored during the day and jammed the night away with pure Mississippi blues. Locations like this boast a special opportunity for true blues aficionados, immersing "themselves in the living history found within restored sharecropper shacks." The Shack Up Inn's website states that tourists can "walk around the grounds surrounding the original cotton gin" that has been converted into the inn's bar and main lobby. Guests can also spot "one of the first mechanized cotton pickers, manufactured by International Harvester." The Inn also is home to its own little dive setting called the Juke Joint Chapel. To help improve on the authenticity of the experience, the Shack Up Inn's "corrugated tin roofs and Mississippi cypress walls will conjure visions of a bygone era. As you sit in the rocker on the porch, sipping a cold one while the sun sinks slowly to the horizon, you just might hear Pinetop Perkins radiatin' the 88's over at his shack. Perhaps, if you close your eyes even Muddy or Robert or Charlie might stop to strum a few chords in the night" (The Ritz We Ain't: The Shack Up Inn, n.d.).

Without the brave entertainers to blaze the trail for the Chitlin' Circuit, the world would not have many of the distinct and immensely popular genres of music that exist today. Countless popular radio hits that are well-known and that have stood the test of time drew direct inspiration from artists that either worked on the circuit or had contacts along it. While many of the original establishments that hosted these performers are now gone, new spaces have emerged not only in the South but also throughout the country to celebrate the Chitlin' Circuit's heritage.

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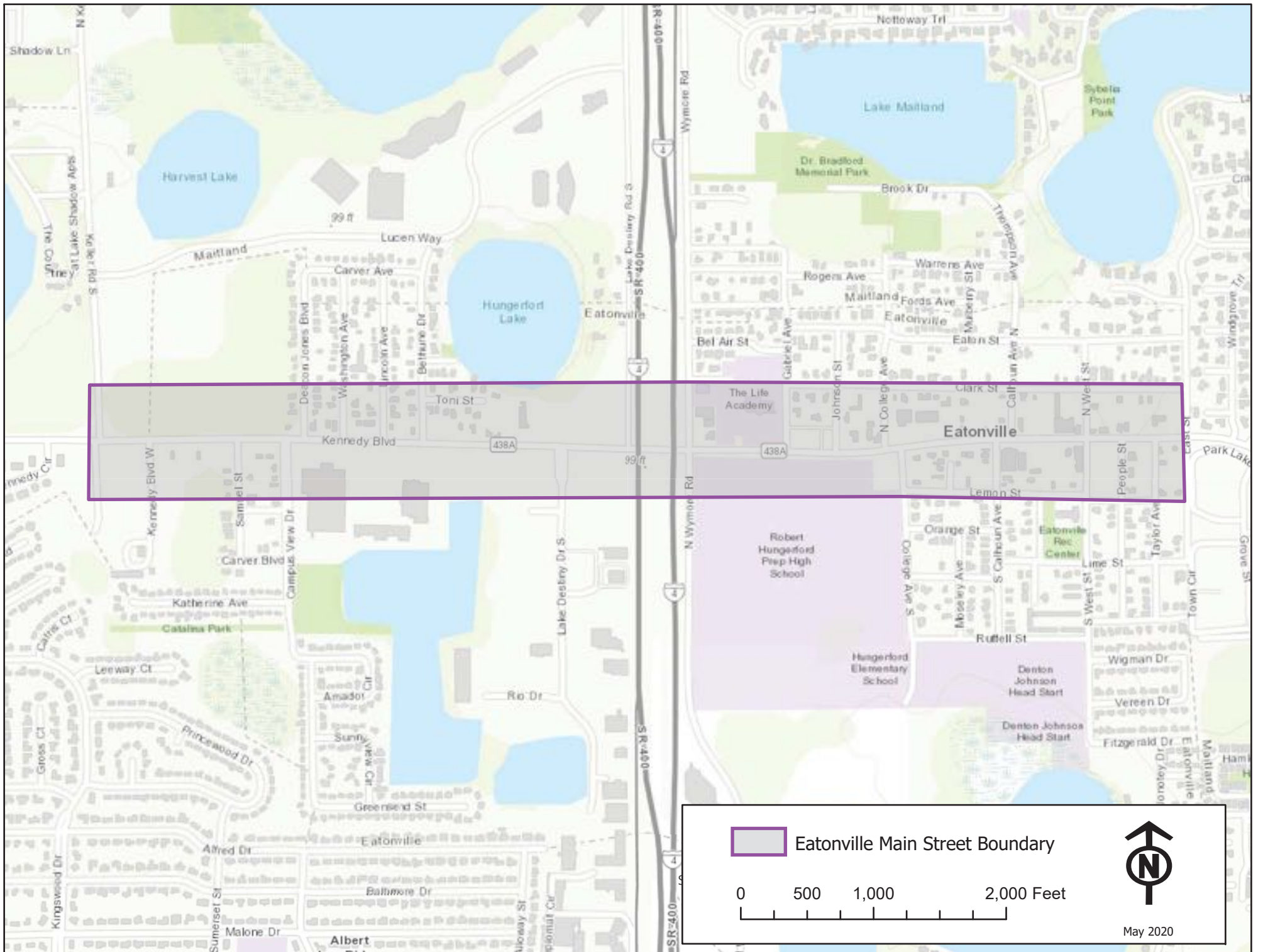
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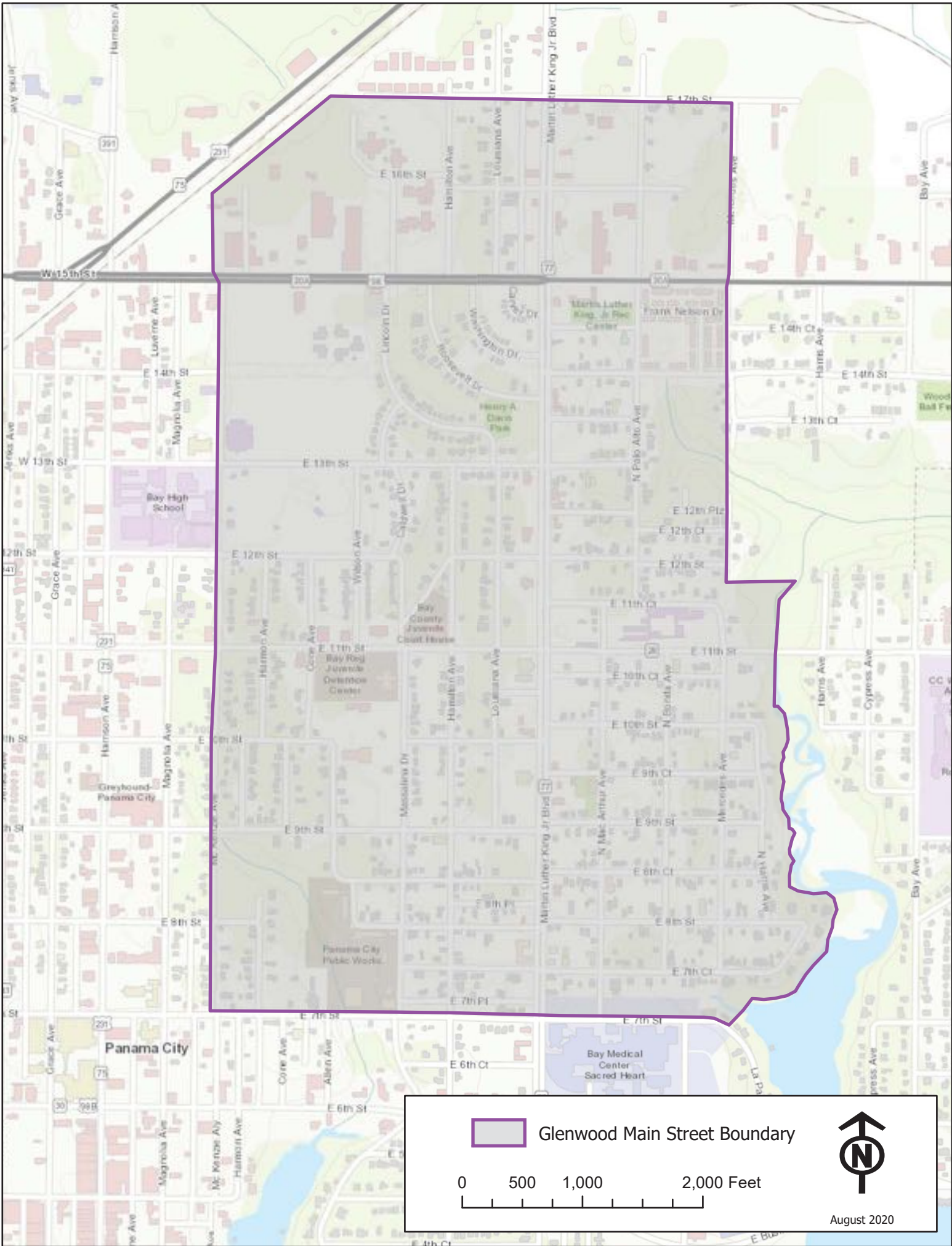
**Appendix C**  
**Main Street District Maps**

# DUECES & WAREHOUSE ARTS DISTRICT ACTION PLAN MAP

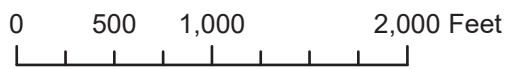
-  WAREHOUSE ARTS DISTRICT
-  WAREHOUSE ARTS DISTRICT AREA OF ACTION PLAN
-  DUECES LIVE AREA OF ACTION PLAN
-  22/5 JOINT AREA OF ACTION PLAN







Glenwood Main Street Boundary



August 2020



**Lincoln Park Main Street  
Fort Pierce, FL**



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# Appendix B

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# Appendix C

## Project Brochure

Numerous "strolls" can be found throughout the state. Nicknamed "The Home of Happy Feet," the **Manhattan Casino** was the heart and soul of the Deuces (22nd Street South) in St. Petersburg. Developed by local black entrepreneur Elder Jordan, music lovers went to the Manhattan to see the likes of Fats Waller, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughn, Fats Domino, and the Ink Spots. This story lives on through attractions like the **Manhattan Casino, Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum, 22nd Street South Corridor, and the 9th Avenue South Corridor African-American Heritage Trail.**

In Eatonville, one of the nation's first incorporated African-American towns, Condor Merritt parlayed gambling profits and a fruit picker's salary into a real estate empire, opening **Club Eaton** in 1950. One of Central Florida's most popular night spots, national acts associated with the club include Sam Cooke, Chuck Willis, Tina Turner, Etta James, Duke Ellington, Aretha Franklin, Cab Calloway, the Drifters and the Platters. This rich history continues to be celebrated through the **Eatonville Historical Trail, and the Zora Neale Hurston National Museum.**

In Fort Pierce, Lincoln Park's Avenue D emerged as a vibrant activity center for migrant laborers during the 1950s. Established by Levie Baker, **Baker's Flamingo Bar & Grill** attracted the likes of James Brown and Billie Holiday. Lincoln Park's contributions to the circuit continue to be highlighted through the **Lincoln Park Black Archives, Zora Neale Hurston Dust Tracks and The Highwaymen Heritage Trails.**

## Let's Connect!

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Front cover photos: Walter Barnes, Jr. photo courtesy of [sentirelblues.blogspot.com](http://sentirelblues.blogspot.com); Deuces Live's Royal Theatre photo courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP; LaVilla's Ritz Theatre & Museum photo courtesy of the Ritz Theatre; Background-LaVilla's Knights of Pythias Hall, photo courtesy of the Library of Congress. Back cover photos: Eatonville Zora Neale Hurston Festival photo courtesy of Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community; Background photo courtesy of Tampa Bay Collard Green Festival, Inc.; Lincoln Park's Avenue D courtesy of Ennis Davis, AICP; Barbecue photo courtesy of LaVilla's Jenkins Quality Barbecue. Internal photos: Map ©2023 Ennis Davis, AICP; Lincoln Theater photo courtesy of City of Ft. Pierce; Louis Armstrong at Manhattan Casino in 1957 photo courtesy of Deuces Live; Condor Merritt and friends inside Club Eaton courtesy of Eatonville Main Street; LaVilla aerial courtesy of Ritz Theater and Strand Theatre photographs courtesy of University of North Florida. Brochure designed by Community Planning Collaborative, LLC, and funded by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.

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FLORIDA  
*Chitlin' Circuit*



## Sample of Florida Chitlin' Circuit Strolls & Locations

### The Chitlin' Circuit

The "Chitlin' Circuit" was the collective name given to a series of Black-owned nightclubs, dance halls, juke joints, restaurants and theaters that were safe and acceptable for Black entertainers to perform in during segregation. Notable venues on the Chitlin' Circuit were the Cotton Club and Apollo Theater in Harlem, the Royal Peacock in Atlanta, and the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C.



Walter Barnes, a Chicago jazz musician and Chicago Defender columnist, is credited as being an early originator of the circuit. The Chicago Defender was one of the largest Black-owned newspapers in the country. Following the collapse of the Theatre Owners Booking Association (T.O.B.A.), a vaudeville circuit for Black performers, Barnes successfully established a network of venues across the American South during the 1930s where it was safe, acceptable and successful for Black entertainers to perform.



Barnes used his position at the Chicago Defender to promote himself and the circuit that visited strolls across the South. At its height, the Defender was a daily publication with a national circulation of over 500,000 and the largest Black-owned newspaper in the nation. Barnes noticed a pattern in communities that he came to call "the stroll." This term characterized the main commercial, entertainment and dining districts in Black neighborhoods across the country. Today, Florida's Black Main Street communities are historic evidence of the stroll.

### The Florida Chitlin' Circuit

Florida's strolls were a significant part of the Circuit, which was originally based out of Jacksonville. In 1933, Barnes established a winter headquarters in the LaVilla neighborhood to conduct annual late-fall-to-spring Southern tours. Barnes elaborated on the stroll in Jacksonville and other Florida cities in his writings in the Defender. His success in touring across the south encouraged numerous acts to follow what became known as the circuit during segregation. These strolls became destinations where music and foods, such as barbecue, fish fries and soul food intertwined.



Established in 1866, LaVilla's West Ashley Street emerged as an early ragtime and vaudeville destination by 1910 when it became the location of the nation's first published account of blues singing on a public stage. Home to venues such as the

**Knights of Pythias Hall, Strand Theatre, The Lenape and Two Spot**, early circuit musicians visiting LaVilla include Barnes, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Jimmy Lunceford, Fletcher Henderson and Erskine Hawkins.

Today, the **Ritz Theatre and Museum, Eartha M.M. White Museum** and **Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing Park** all tell the legacy of the community also affectionately known as Uptown.