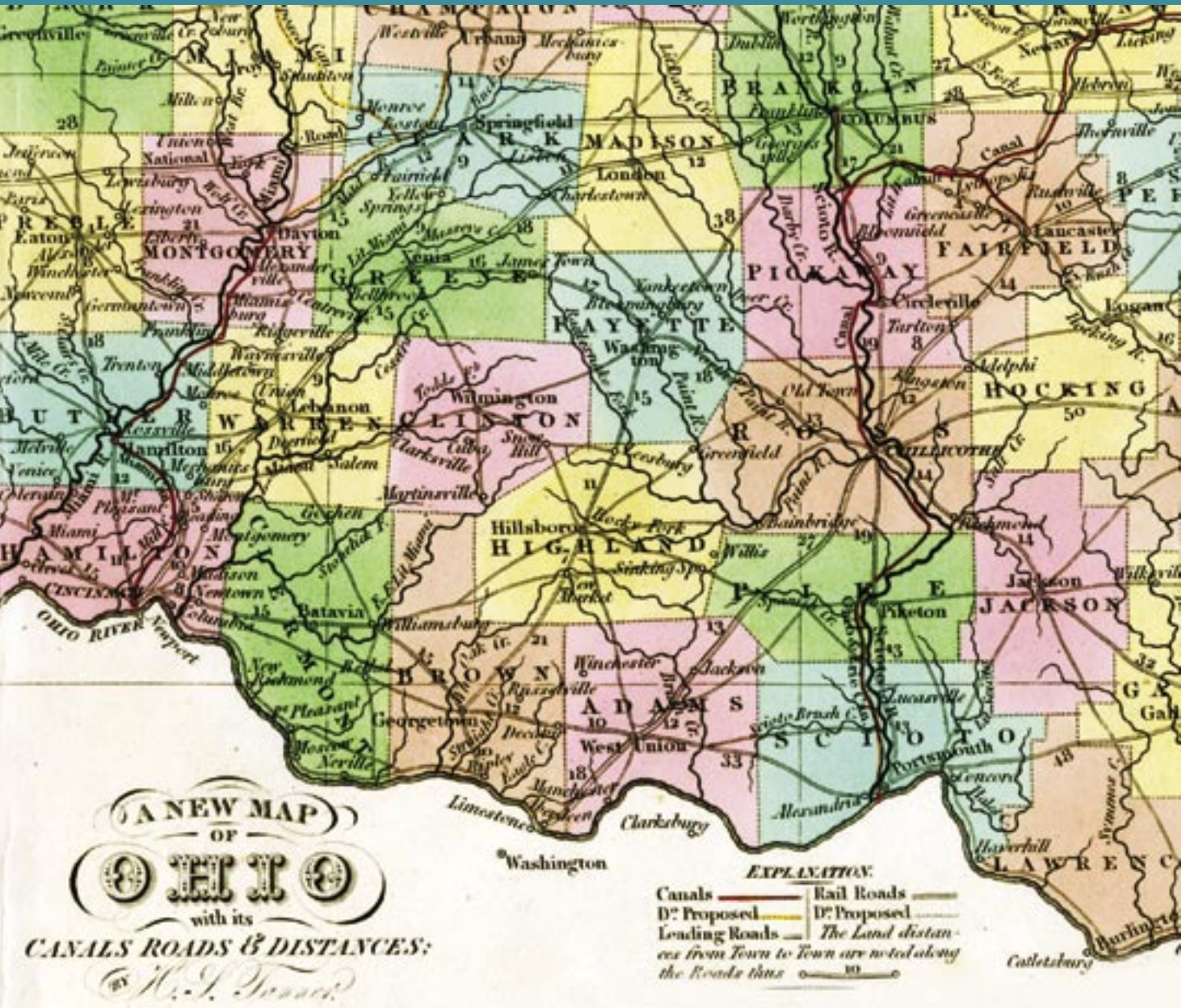


OHIO VALLEY HISTORY

A Collaboration of The Filson Historical Society, Cincinnati Museum Center, and the University of Cincinnati.

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OHIO VALLEY HISTORY

Volume 5, Number 4, Winter 2005

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Cincinnati Museum
Center at Union
Terminal, Cincinnati
Historical Society
Library

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Documents and Collections

Guide to Twentieth-century African American Resources

In February 2004 the Cincinnati Historical Society Library, Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, added a Guide to twentieth-century African American Resources to its on-line catalog (<http://library.cincymuseum.org>). African Americans have played a vital role in the history of Greater Cincinnati. Their struggles for freedom, equality, justice, opportunity and recognition have taken place and continue to take place in our streets, homes, churches, schools, governments and workplaces. African Americans are woven into every fabric of Cincinnati's rich historical tapestry; however, their part in our region's history is too rarely told or heard. The Guide to twentieth-century African American Resources at the Cincinnati Historical Society Library is a preliminary research tool to help students of history uncover the important roles played by African Americans in Greater Cincinnati's history.

The Guide covers selected twentieth-century resources held by the Cincinnati Historical Society Library dealing with African Americans in the Greater Cincinnati area. Included are many books, periodicals, theses, photographs, manuscript collections and historical objects. For complete holdings, researchers should visit the Library and consult the online and card catalogs. The Library's collections

contain more resources on African Americans than was practical to incorporate in the Guide. For example, the Library has extensive holdings regarding African Americans in twentieth-century Cincinnati and also has materials that discuss African American issues on the state or national level.

The Guide is organized by subject categories, such as education, housing, and sports. Within these categories, the Guide provides basic information about numerous individuals and institutions

in brief sketches and then goes on to list resources available for further research. What follows is a sampling of what the Guide includes.

Allen Temple A.M.E. Church

In the early 19th century, some African Americans in Cincinnati worshiped at the white Methodist Episcopal churches, but they were treated in a discriminatory manner. Following one camp meeting, African Americans Rev. James King and Rev. Phillip Brodie decided they could no longer tolerate the prejudicial treatment they had received. In 1824, soon after hearing of the new African Methodist Episcopal church

founded by Richard Allen in Philadelphia, King and Brodie founded Cincinnati's A.M.E. congregation.

As the small group grew, it relocated to several different buildings near the African American district of 6th and Broadway. Some of the early



ALLEN TEMPLE AFRICAN M. E. CHURCH
Cor. Broadway and Sixth Street, Cincinnati, O. Feb. 8, 1874.

*Allen Temple A.M.E. Church, undated.
General Photo Collection
Cincinnati Museum Center at Union
Terminal, Cincinnati Historical Library*

churches were called “Little Red Church on the Green,” “Old Lime House,” “Bethel Creek,” and “Allen Chapel,” named after A.M.E. founder, Rev. Richard Allen.

Continued growth and increasing vandalism at Allen Chapel forced the congregation to seek yet another location. In 1870, the congregation bought the former Bene Israel Synagogue at 538 Broadway. The congregation named its new home Allen Temple. The first years there were financially difficult due to the money owed to the Bene Israel congregation and to damages caused by a fire in 1874. Several charity groups formed to help ease these financial burdens. After satisfying the debts of the congregation, these groups formed the basis for subsequent social and welfare work.

Allen Temple began the twentieth-century with 800 members and continued to thrive. However, as the African American community began to migrate from the downtown area, the congregation made several attempts to sell its building and move to a new location. Finally, in 1979, the Allen Temple congregation moved to Roselawn Baptist Church on Reading Road. In 1998, Allen Temple bought Swifton Commons Mall in Bond Hill and made plans to build a church center there. The congregation began to worship at this new location in 2000.

The Cincinnati Historical Society Library collections include six printed works and the Allen Temple AME Church Special Photograph Collection, which includes photographs, slides and negatives of the renovation of Allen Temple in the 1970s.

NAACP Cincinnati Chapter

The Cincinnati branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established in 1915 by 15 to 20 inaugural members. At the time, many Americans thought the organization was radical, and members were often afraid of losing their jobs if employers discovered their membership. The group had no office and met in members' homes. One of its earliest successes was the elimination of the sepa-



Above, page 1 of Coney Island Report, July 6, 1961. NAACP Cincinnati Chapter Papers, 1959-1981, Mss. 774, box 5, folder 14. Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati Historical Library

Right, NAACP Selective Buying Campaign flyer, undated [1964]. NAACP Cincinnati Chapter Papers, 1959-1981, Mss. 774, box 33, folder 27. Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati Historical Library

rate school system for African Americans. It also achieved breakthroughs in employment and public accommodations by relying on the power of the courts and public persuasion. By the mid-sixties, membership had grown into the thousands and demonstrations and sit-ins became useful tools for accomplishing goals.

Several prominent African Americans in Cincinnati have been leaders in the local chapter. Wendell P. Dabney was the chapter's first president. Theodore Berry served as president of the Cincinnati branch from 1932 to 1946. In 1981 Marian Spencer

N. A. A. C. P.
SELECTIVE BUYING CAMPAIGN

DON'T BUY
WIEDEMANN BEER

They Have
NO NEGRO:

✓ OFFICE PERSONNEL
✓ DRIVER SALESMEN
✓ BREWERS
✓ BOTTLERS

YOU CAN HELP BY :

- ★ Stop Buying Wiedemann Beer .
- ★ Ask your Merchants NOT to stock Wiedemann Beer .
- ★ Tell 10 Friends & ask them to tell 10 of their friends to Stop Buying Wiedemann Beer .
- ★ Ask your club or other organization to:

SUPPORT THE NAACP

UN 1-7443  UN 1-7443

became the first woman president of the Cincinnati chapter.

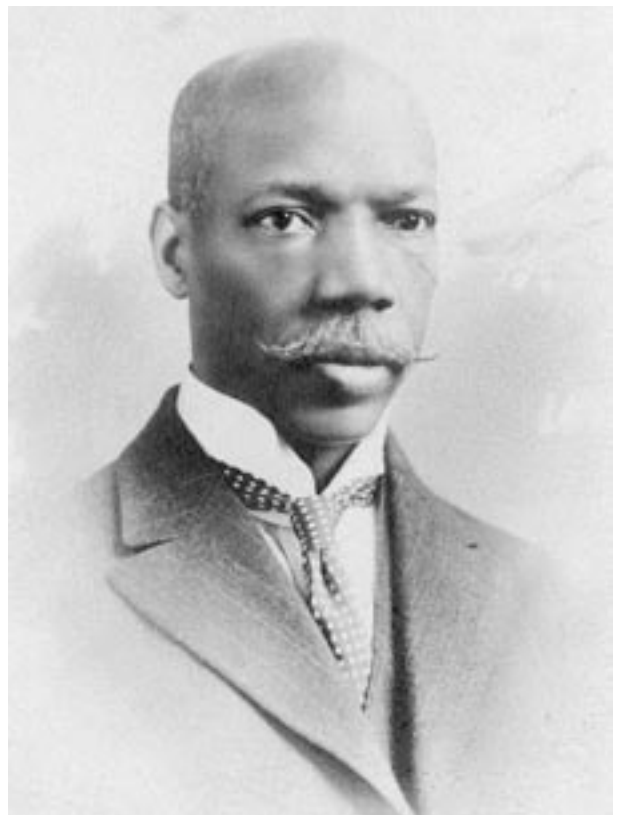
The Cincinnati Chapter continues to work for racial equality, most recently through a voter registration campaign. In announcing the campaign March 2003, NAACP Cincinnati President Calvert H. Smith said, “if the deceased warriors in the fight for freedom for African Americans could return to this city today, they would literally be amazed to discover that we are still confronted with some of the very same problems they thought they had conquered some 40 to 50 years ago.”

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Cincinnati Chapter collection consists of eighty-eight boxes and one oversized folder. It contains the minutes, correspondence, office files, committee reports, pamphlets, newsletters, clippings and other materials of NAACP’s Cincinnati Chapter from 1959-1981.

Wendell P. Dabney

Wendell Phillips Dabney was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1865, the son of former slaves. Dabney was erudite, intelligent, an avid reader, and a talented guitar player. After high school, he attended Oberlin College, where he was one of only fifteen African American students.

In 1894, Dabney came to Cincinnati to settle some business regarding property willed to his mother. He intended to stay only for a few months. During a trip to Indiana, however, he met Nellie Foster Jackson, a widow with two sons, whom he eventually married in 1897. Dabney decided to settle in Cincinnati, so he improved the property left to his mother and established a music studio. He began teaching music to many prominent Cincinnati



Wendell P. Dabney (1865-1962). General Photograph Collection - Black Leaders in the Professions, Commerce and Sports. Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati Historical Library

families and eventually became involved in politics. Dabney served as the first African American city paymaster and was the first president of the local chapter of the NAACP.

In an attempt to increase attention to issues of the African American community, Dabney entered the field of newspaper publishing. In 1902, he started *The Ohio Enterprise*, predecessor to *The Union*, which Dabney published from 1907 until 1952. Although Dabney accepted funds from the Republican Party for the newspaper and endorsed Republican candidates, he remained critical of their treatment of African Americans and used the paper as a voice of protest for the African American community in general. In the early 1920s, however, Dabney broke with the Republicans and shortly thereafter worked with the City Charter Committee. Until his death in 1952, Dabney continued to struggle against prejudice and used *The Union* to champion the cause of African Americans.

In addition to his publishing activities, Dabney also wrote books and composed music. He compiled and published *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens* in 1926 and wrote *Maggie L. Walker: The Woman and Her Work*, a biography of one of his longtime friends who became the first African American woman to own a bank. The music he composed includes *You Will Miss the Colored Soldier*; *My Old Sweetheart*; and *God, Our Father, a Prayer*.

The Cincinnati Historical Society Library collections concerning Wendell Dabney include two manuscript collections of his writings, the most complete run of *The Union* newspaper, his musical compositions, and a biographical thesis.

Douglass School

In 1858, Rev. Dangerfield Early began a school for African American children in his Walnut Hills home. When Walnut Hills became part of Cincinnati in 1870, the school came under the jurisdiction of the Cincinnati Colored School System and the city built a new edifice, the Elm Street School, in 1872. In 1887, however, Ohio's Brown-Arnett Bill called for the phasing out of segregated schools. Some of the African American community felt that integrated schools would lead to intense prejudice against the children attending them and a decrease in jobs for African American teachers. In an attempt to circumvent integration, in 1902 the name of the school was changed to Douglass Elementary School, named for the famous writer and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass.

Ostensibly the school was open to any child in Cincinnati, but in reality it became a magnet school for African American children. Indeed, the school became a beacon for African American children hoping to learn unhindered by bigotry, and many

Part of the Douglass School sixth-grade girls' class register, 1917-1918. Douglass School Records, 1917-1940, Mss 815, Box 1, Folder 1. Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Annual Register of					School
Register Number	NAME OF PUPIL	Place of Birth	Date of Birth	Date of Vaccination	Name of Parent or Guardian
1	Baker Louise	Paris, Ky	1907-6-7	'11	Mrs. Walter
2	Baker Bessie	Cin. O.	1908-7-17	'12	Robt. Bal
3	Boggs Martha	Cin. O.	1904-7-15	'10	Andrew Boggs
4	Borman Emma	Columbia, S.C.	1901-5-13	'11	Mr. Bessie John
5	Breeding Ellen	Louisville, Ky	1912-12-3	'11	Charles Breeding
6	Bradley Margaret	Atlanta, Ga	1912-1-21	'10	Ola Bradley
7	Burton Louise	Cin. O.	1901-9-24	'14	Archie Burton
8	Coleman Etola	Anderson, S.C.	1903-9-29	'13	Jno. Coleman
9	Coleman Hazel	Cin.	1906-1-29	'11	Wm. Coleman
10	Clinton Ruthana	Cin. O.	1906-5-16	'12	Van Clinton



notable citizens including Wilber A. Page, minister of Union Baptist Church, DeHart Hubbard, the first African American to win a gold medal in the Olympics, and Jennie D. Porter, who founded the Harriet Beecher Stowe School, attended Douglass. Despite the quality education it provided, the Douglass School had many critics, as did other similarly segregated schools. Wendell P. Dabney and the NAACP were especially vociferous in their opposition.

Nevertheless, the school continued to be a magnet for African Americans across the city until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision prompted the Cincinnati School Board to make it a district school. However, the school remained mostly African American since its Walnut Hills location was primarily an African American neighborhood. The school made a radical change in 1981 when the district erected a new building. It became an alternative learning school using the Montessori system. The school still stands today and continues to be center for the community and education.

The Cincinnati Historical Society Library owns two photograph collections, two pamphlets, and the Douglass School Records, 1917-1940 manuscript collection, which consists of one box of material



Above, USO women preparing packages for soldiers, 1944. Evva Friason Turpeau Collection, Photo SC#276. Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati Historical Society Library

Left, USO dance, October 9, 1945. Evva Friason Turpeau Collection, Photo SC#276. Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati Historical Society Library

from Douglass School, including two class registers, a souvenir program from the tenth anniversary celebration of the new building in 1920, and two yearbooks called “The Douglass.”

Evva Friason Turpeau Collection

This photograph collection consists of one box of photographs mostly of the USO (United Service Organizations) that operated out of the Ninth Street YMCA in Cincinnati. The photos show various USO activities, such as dances, picnics, and the preparation of “care” packages. Included are photos of some African American servicemen from the Cincinnati area who served in World War II. There are also photos of Evva Turpeau’s father, Lawrence Turpeau, who was the first African American superintendent for the Post Office in Cincinnati.

*Anne Kling
Archives Manager, Cincinnati Museum Center
at Union Terminal*







A Moment In Time

The Falls of the Ohio – June 2, 1914

The ability of photography to preserve a moment in time has proved a boon to both historians and the general public since its mid-nineteenth-century advent. Photographs provide a means to look back through the window of time at places, events, and people from our past. They can be endlessly fascinating and important for what they reveal about our heritage and our history.

The photo shown here was taken by Rogers Clark Ballard Thruston (1858-1946). Thruston was an avid amateur photographer who took his camera with him on his travels through this region, the rest

of the country, and even abroad. His earliest photos date from the 1880s and continue until 1942. Both in his work as an engineer and as a world traveler, he documented many of the people and places he visited. The Thruston collection contains some 8,000 different images and forms the foundation for The Filson's photo holdings.

This moment in time shows the Falls of the Ohio at Louisville, Kentucky, on June 2, 1914. The photo was taken from the tenth floor hallway of the Columbia Building. Upon its completion in 1890, the ten-story Columbia Building was Louisville's second skyscraper and its tallest building. The photo reveals the changes at the Falls since the city's founding in 1778. The Falls had been the only serious obstruction to navigation on the entire Ohio River. They

were the reason for Louisville's existence. Over the years the Falls were altered to meet the needs of a growing city and country.

The photo shows the entrance to the Louisville and Portland Canal to the left. Opened in 1830, the canal allowed for consistent passage around the falls and regular upstream shipping from below the barrier. The Fourteenth Street (Railroad) Bridge spans the scene. Completed in 1870, it was the first bridge to cross the river at Louisville. The industrial nature of Louisville's waterfront can be seen in both the foreground and in the distance. In 1914 Louisville was a growing and thriving industrial city.

The scene almost 100 years later has changed. The canal is still there, as is the bridge. Interstate 64 rather than railroad tracks runs along the riverfront and an increasing amount of what had been a predominantly industrial waterfront is now devoted to public green spaces. Two important features of the photo have disappeared entirely. Corn Island in the middle of the photo no longer exists. Not many years after this photo was taken a dam raised the river level high enough to cover the remnants of the island. Looking over the river today, nothing can be seen of the island that had been home to Louisville's first little band of settlers. The Columbia Building is also gone. Located at the northwest corner of Fourth and Main Streets, this landmark met the fate of all too many fine old buildings considered obsolete and not worth preserving. It was razed in 1966 to make way for a new high rise. But thanks to R. C. Ballard Thruston, his camera, and the wonderful vantage point from the Columbia Building, we can enjoy this moment in time.

*James J. Holmberg
Curator of Special Collections
The Filson Historical Society*