

**Timeline: African American Community History of Clayton
(Courtesy: Donna Rogers-Beard & Geoff Ward)**

❖ **1880s**

- 1880 First School at Coleman Avenue established, admitting both White(48) and Black children(3)
- 1889 May 28th, The Missouri General Assembly passed legislation ordering separate schools for children "of African descent" as part of the "Act to revise and amend...the Revised Statutes of Missouri of 1879
- 1889 Rose Lee Taylor, daughter of James William Taylor and Ida May Taylor was born in Clayton. She was delivered by Dr. Caster, June 3, 1889. The *Watchman* reported the family lived in the city by 1898.

❖ **1890s**

- 1890 March 9, *St. Louis County Watchman* reported that many Black male residents of Clayton were seeking employment as Pullman porters.
- 1890 July 17th, the *Watchman* reported that the African American citizens of Clayton have organized a Republican Club.
- 1891 August 25th, George Bailey was born to William and Ellen Bailey, African American residents of Clayton
- 1893 New elementary school built – Forsyth (White Only) - Black students remain at the original school on Coleman, which becomes known as the Colored School.
- 1893 First Baptist Church of Clayton bought land from the Davis estate to begin building a frame church. Founding members were Mrs. America Tyler, Jeff Tyler, Mr. William Bailey, Sr., Mrs. Molly White, Mary Williams, Robert Taylor, Robert Morris. The deed was recorded September 1894.
- 1894 Robert Taylor of Clayton and Alice Morris of Clayton married at the 1st Baptist Church of Clayton, by Rev. R. H. D. Williams.
- 1894 In June, the *St. Louis County Watchman* reported: "The Clayton colored school, Miss Mary Williams, closed last Friday with the usual exercises. Those who witnessed the examinations speak in flattering terms of the progress of the school and the good work of the teacher. To her credit we must state that the work exhibited is far superior to what we expected and compares well with other good schools in the country. Miss Williams deserves to be encouraged."
- 1894 July. Harrison Duncan, an African American resident of St. Louis, was hanged at the county jail in Clayton after an unsuccessful appeal of his conviction for the killing of a police officer. The case was tried in Clayton, and Duncan was represented by Walter Farmer, the first Black graduate of Washington University's law school, who also became the first African American attorney to argue a case before the Missouri Supreme Court in his appeal of Duncan's conviction. Following an unsuccessful final appeal to the USSC, and despite doubts that Duncan was guilty of first degree murder, he was executed by hanging in Clayton on July 27, 1894.

- 1896 May 18th, In *Plessy v Ferguson*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld segregation by law.
- 1896 July 10th, *Watchman* reported that Lulu Belle, aged 7 months, infant daughter of Giant Williams and wife of Clayton died of cholera.
- 1896 Oct. 9th, *Watchman* announced the death of Margaret Taylor, wife of the janitor of the courthouse. The news item did not say that the Taylor's lived in Clayton, but 1870 and 1880 census records show them in Central Township. The article did say "the funeral was largely attended by the [Black residents] of Clayton and vicinity."
- 1897 Clarence McKinley Williams was born to Giant and Mary Williams.
- 1897 July 1, Richard Hudlin, African American and a Republican, named first post-master of the Clayton Post-office
- 1897 William Taylor's dog bit Mr. James Hazard's horse. The *Watchman* identified Taylor as an African American resident of Clayton.
- 1897 Aug. 27th, The *Watchman* reported that Robert Morris, "a [Black] resident of Clayton," barely made it to his home after a long walk from his job in the city before collapsing from the heat.
- 1897 Sept. 10th, *Watchman* reported: "Both the White and Colored schools of Clayton opened last Monday with good attendance."
- 1898 Sept. 30th, the African American Republican Club of Clayton held a fund-raiser at the Saengerbund Hall.
- 1898 Thomas Thurston, a Black citizen of Clayton, was found dead in his bed Sunday morning (*St. Louis County Watchman*, April 8th)
- 1898 October 16th, George Coleman married Jannie Morris, both residents of Clayton.
- 1899 April 28th, Richard Hudlin, postmaster, was elected secretary of a 1904 World's Fair fund-raising committee at one of the first meetings held in Clayton to discuss the fair; the meeting was held at the courthouse.
- 1899 Dec. 1st, Black teachers gathered at the Coleman School to reorganize their professional association.

❖ 1900s

1900 Emanuel Bechure (Belger) and wife Julia listed in 1900 census, occupation was Station Engineman, renting, live a few doors down from Frank Rauchestein (*Advocate Newspaper*). E. L. Belger sold his farm, near Olive Street and Woodsmill Road, to Albert Autenrieth, and moved to Clayton.

1900 Census lists several African Americans living in Clayton, including:

- John Clayburn and wife Mollie as renters in Central, St. Louis, Missouri. By 1910, they are listed as homeowners at 432 Bonhomme.
- George Coleman and wife Jennie own their home on Coleman Avenue mortgage free.
- Mchugh(Mahalia) Bailey homeowner
- Louis and Hattie Ellis listed as residents of Central. They own their home. October 12, 1900, their daughter Virginia Ellis died of consumption. The

- *St. Louis Watchman* stated she was the daughter of Louis Ellis, a respected Black resident of Clayton.
- George and Janice Coleman own their home.
- Robert Tayler and his wife Alice own their home
- Ru and Hannah Saler own their home
- John and Liddia Bouyer rent a home
- 1900 Feb. 16th, the Post office Inspector audited the Clayton office and found a shortage of \$600.00. Postmaster Hudlin was arrested.
- 1900 Mar. 22nd, Richard Hudlin, the former postmaster and his family move to St. Louis.
- 1900 May 7th, Richard Hudlin found guilty of embezzlement of postal funds and sentenced to two years in the federal penitentiary.
- 1900 The Neighborhood Improvement Association of Clayton held a meeting at the courthouse and agreed to build a sidewalk along Forsyth boulevard to the Hanley Road, and down that road to Bonhomme Avenue and the African American school.
- 1900 June 22nd, Ms. Stella Jackson was named head at the school for African American children.
- 1900 August 15th, Post-Dispatch highlighted Jerry Curtis, a Clayton resident and janitor at the Clayton Courthouse, as the eloper's guide. The page 3 article included a picture of Jerry Curtis.
- 1900 Oct. 12th, The *Watchman* reported Black residents of Clayton had held a barbecue and fish fry which was well-attended by Blacks and Whites.
- 1901 April 17, 1901, Mahalia Bailey died in Clayton. She owned her property. 1900 census listed her occupation as a landlord
- 1903 Jan. 14th, Emanuel Belger, fireman of the Courthouse in Clayton, resigned to accept a position as copyist in Recorder Wetzer's office. William Bailey was appointed fireman by the County Court.
- 1903 Fannie Joshua born 212(122) Hanley.
- 1903 *The St. Louis Republic* reported that the rented residence of Emanuel Belger, an African American copyist in the Recorder's office in Clayton, was burned to the ground in Clayton. Belger and his family barely escaped.
- 1904 Vivian, a baby boy, was born to Clayton residents, May and Giant Williams. He was delivered by Dr. Eggers.
- 1905 Reverend Rhodes became minister of First Baptist Church of Clayton. There were 67 members.
- 1905 June 2nd, Mrs. Alice Taylor, wife of Robert Taylor, died at her home in Clayton. They are listed as residents of Central District in the 1900 census.

❖ 1910s

- 1910 Enrollment at the African American school on Coleman was 40
- 1910 Jerry Curtis, nightwatchman/janitor at the courthouse, lived at 209 Hanley Road.

- 1910 Census. Population of Clayton is approximately 2000. There are an estimated 50 Black families, including:
 - Scott and Anna Howard owned/mortgage home at 441 Bonhomme(1930 census 7711 Bonhomme)
 - Hattie Ellis listed as a resident on Handley Road. She owns her home.
- 1911 May 5th, the Clayton School Board reappointed Miss Emma Parker to head the African American school. Her salary was \$55.00, ten dollars less than the lowest paid white teacher in the district. In addition, at the African American school, two part-time teachers were hired at \$30.00 each.
- 1911 Enrollment at the African American school increased to 55.
- 1912 Ezzin Odell, wife of Robert Odell died at their residence at 429 Bonhomme. He was janitor at the County Bank. He was listed in the 1920 census. In 1924 he served on a jury.
- 1912 The Clayton School Board reported that 484 students were enrolled, 445 were white and 35 African American.
- 1913 Clayton incorporated. City Collector Henry Stecker completed a census of the city of Clayton. He stated there were 1,948 residents, 137 are Black (7%)
- 1913 July 25, resident Bill Bailey's amateur "Chocolate Babies" baseball team defeated the "Kirkwood Crows." The game was played in Clayton.

❖ 1920s

- 1920 Jerry Curtis, owns home free and clear at 209 Carondelet with his wife, Mary. Sarah Ellis owns her home at 120 South Hanley Road
- 1922 Feb 3rd, the First Baptist Church began repurposing the old frame church into a new parsonage equipped with electric lights and a bathroom. March 31st, Rev and Mrs. Rhodes were in their new home.
- 1923 Attucks School built at Hanley and Bonhomme
- 1923 November 13th, *Watchman Advocate* reported that Rev. J. H. Clayburn died at his home, 7718 Bonhomme.
- 1924 May 14th, Robert Odell served on a jury.
- 1927 Giant Buchanan Williams, Sr. died. He owned home at 7713 Bonhomme.

❖ 1930s

- 1930 Missouri Association of Teachers publication states the total population of Clayton is 9,613; Black population is 342 (3.5%).
- 1937 May 23rd, Clayton Swimming pool was dedicated.
- 1937 Sept.10th, Abraham Williams died at St. Louis County hospital at age 64. The death certificate listed his home address as 7733 Carondelet. He was listed as a Clayton resident in the 1900 census.
- 1938 March 18th, famed contralto, Marian Anderson was the house guest of Mr. and Mrs. Grant Williams, Clayton, MO
- 1938 June 24th, Scott Howard, 100, died at his home 7726 Bonhomme, possibly in a house fire. His daughter Mary Jenkins and her two children escaped the fire.

- 1939 June 23rd, Attucks School, under the direction of principal, Mrs. Bodine Thomas, held graduation.

❖ 1940s

- 1940 Feb. 23rd, Mayor Charles Shaw of Clayton, and mayors of Kirkwood and Webster Groves propose to the County Court for the county to build an outdoor swimming pool for county Black residents. At that time, it was reported that Clayton had a 250 Black population.
- 1940 Census:
 - Laura M. Williams, head of household, and her two daughters, Lucile and Clayda Williams live at 7723 Carondelet. Mrs. Williams is 73 and owns her home valued at \$9,000.
 - Ulyses Boler, home valued at \$4,000. 7719 Carondelet.
 - Martha Shores Blockman, owns her home at 7716 Bonhomme. Her home is valued at 4,000.
 - Louis Ellis, 56, owns home at 106 Hanley Road valued at \$3,000. He is a truck driver at the Municipal Garage.
 - Mary and Haywood Tunstall own their home at 116 Hanley. It is valued at \$1,000. Mr. Tunstall employed at 1st National Bank, porter-messenger.
 - Lewis Payne Woodson, owns his home, valued at \$3,000, at 7718 Bonhomme.
 - William and Martha Smith own 112 South Hanley Road. The home is valued at \$2,000.
 - Reverend Rhodes and his wife own their home at 216 Brentwood
- 1942 Feb.20th, "Aunt Molly" White, remembered as a "Pioneer Negro of Clayton" succumbs. *The Watchman-Advocate* reports that she came to Clayton in 1887. Ms. White was one of the founders of the First Negro Baptist Church of Clayton. She was the sister of America Tyler.
- 1942 Sept 11th, the Advocate paper reported "Harrison Pitts, One of the County's Pioneers, Dies." He had been a resident of Clayton since 1900 and owned his home on Coleman Avenue by 1930. The 1910 census listed him as a renter in 1910 and 1900.
- 1944 Feb. 7th, Ms. Sarah Ellis died. She was 96. Her residence is listed as 120 S. Hanley, also, the home of her daughter and son-in-law Fannie and Joe France.
- 1944, July 21st, the *St. Louis American* reported the St. Louis County Branch of the NAACP held its Tuesday evening meetings at the Clayton Court House.
- 1945 Sept. 14th, trustees of Davis Place filed suit against Walbert Lum, Chinese, for operating his restaurant, Forest Villa at 7727 Clayton Road. The suit states the business is in violation of a restrictive covenant of the community that "no person shall rent, lease or occupy any property in this sub-division who are not wholly of the Caucasian race."
- 1947 July 31st there was an exhibit and short program at the Attucks school to celebrate the end of the first summer recreational program for the school.

- 1947 The Moorlands investigated African American custodians accused of violating restricted covenant by allowing family members to live with them. The covenant held that: "No person not wholly of Caucasian blood shall acquire any estate or interest in any land in said tract, nor be allowed to occupy any building erected thereon, unless employed as servants in the family of an owner or occupant of anyone or more of said lots."
- 1948 Famous Barr opened
- 1949 August President Truman signed the American Housing Act of 1949 (Pub.L. 81–171), a landmark, sweeping expansion of the federal role in mortgage insurance and issuance and the construction of public housing. It was part of President Harry Truman's Fair Deal legislation.

❖ 1950s

- 1951 May 31st, the Post-Dispatch reported that African Americans were admitted to the Clayton pool for the first time.
- 1953 March, Lewis P. Woodson of 7718 Bonhomme died. He lived in this place for 26 years according to the death certificate.
- 1953 Aug. 17th, Martin Greenberg of Clayton wrote a letter to the Post stating that only Blacks were required to present proper identification cards to access the Clayton pool. He called this "lever of discrimination" meant to limit the use of the pool by Black Clayton residents, in keeping with "the current pattern of prejudice against the Negro."
- 1953 Sept. 18th, at the invitation of Margaret Dagen, CHS social studies teacher, famed baseball player, Jackie Robinson, was a guest speaker at Clayton High School.
- 1954 Schools integrated and Attucks closed. The five Black students enrolled at CHS were Lloyd Keys, Joanne McKinney, Elliot and Vernon Rawlings, and Erwin France.
- 1954 June, the Clayton School District appointed Miss V. Willene Jackson, former Attucks teacher, to serve as assistant psychologist. She was the first Black teacher assigned to an integrated Missouri School. She retired from Clayton at the end of the 1957 school term.
- 1954 August 26th, Mrs. Grant Williams (Laura) died at her home, 7723 Carondelet. In the 1940 census, the home was valued at \$9,000.
- 1955 May 18th- 29th, Clayton Missionary Baptist celebrates 50th anniversary. The last day of celebration, Mayor Jules Schweig attended and gave greeting from the City of Clayton.
- 1955 April 5th, Clayton is one of five municipalities to form a fair housing organization. Clayton's group obtained promises from real estate firms handling seven apartment buildings that the properties would be shown on a nondiscriminatory basis.
- 1955 Sept. 15th, St. Louis American reported that the Clayton Courthouse area restaurants were still refusing service to Black customers. Several weeks earlier the St. Louis County Branch of the NAACP appealed to the court to aid

the organization in negotiating with those restaurants to serve Black customers. Black lawyers, litigants and jurors could not find places to eat around the Courthouse.

- 1956 June 16th, Erwin France became the first Black graduate of Clayton High School.
- 1956 May 26th, Clarissa Start, columnist for the Post-Dispatch, wrote a column about Rev. Willis Louis Rhodes of First Baptist Church of Clayton. There were 600 congregants of the church at that time.
- 1957 McKay family take offer to sell, move to California in December. Their home was located at the present site of the carwash on Hanley Road.
- 1958 October, the master plan for Clayton was adopted.

❖ 1960s

- 1960 April 29th, some Washington University students held a sit-in at the Parkmoor Restaurant, 6737 Clayton Road because their integrated group was refused service.
- 1960 June 17th, The *St. Louis Argus* reported that most Clayton restaurants and drug stores quietly opened their establishments to all races. This was done through an agreement between the local government and the businesses. Two restaurants did not comply.
- 1961 September 29, 1961, the final service is held at First Baptist Church of Clayton. The congregation moved to 2801 Union. The church was renamed Clayton Missionary Baptist.
- 1962, Nov. 23rd, arsonists damaged vacated First Baptist Church building.
- 1964 March 18th, the Post-Dispatch reported “nine Clayton High School students will attend classes next week at Central High School in Little Rock, Ark. And meet with Gov. Faubus. Fifteen Little Rock High School students will spend the week attending classes at Clayton High and living in the homes of Clayton students.” At the time it was reported that there were about two or three Black students enrolled at Clayton High School.
- 1969 Ms. Emma Novel began teaching at Clayton High School. She and her husband were residents of Clayton for 50 years. She retired in 1973.

❖ 1970s

- 1971 Post Dispatch wrote about the property at 7737 Carondelet Avenue being one of the last residential in the central business district. The property belonged to the Willmann family. Capt. Willmann, the owner of the property, who is White and a former sheriff, recalled “the old Negro settlement along Bonhomme Avenue” was the first to area to go commercial.

❖ 2000s

- 2007 May 17th, the historical marker commemorating the Attucks School was placed at 7700 Bonhomme Avenue. There was a reception immediately following at Clayton High School.

- 2019 the Community Equity Commission of the City of Clayton is established to provide the Mayor and Board of Aldermen with an additional resource as well as special insight and guidance on matters of equity, diversity and inclusion.
- 2020 Clayton's Mayor's Commemorative Landscape Task Force is established "to provide guidance to the BOA for any potential changes to the city's current commemorative landscape in order to address community concerns that some items glorify racist or oppressive ideals. This could include adding new monuments that highlight important parts of Clayton history that have been overlooked."
- 2022 Mayor's Commemorative Landscape Taskforce recommends commemoration of the African American history of Clayton.