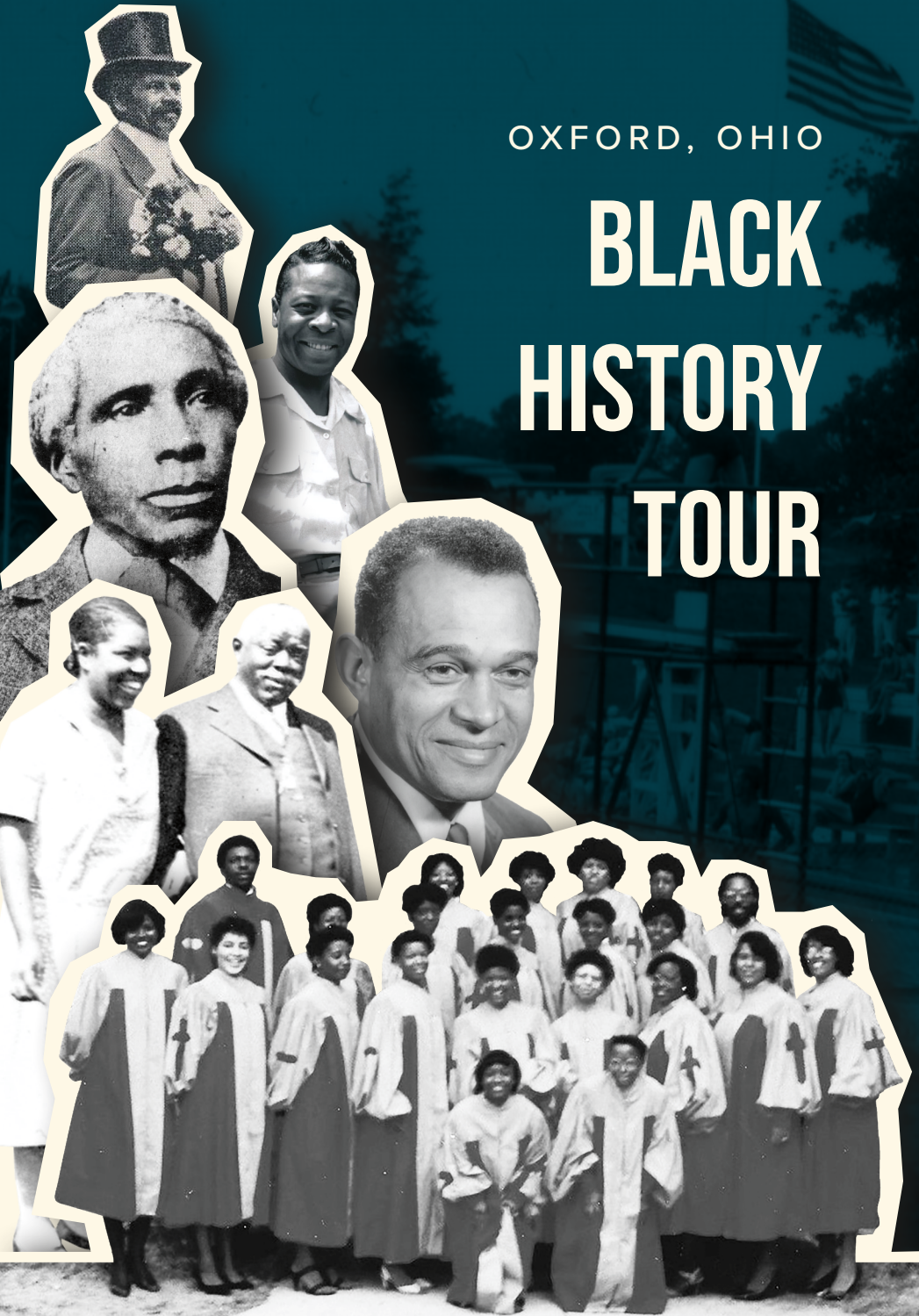


OXFORD, OHIO

BLACK HISTORY TOUR





WELCOME TO THE SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Oxford, Ohio's Black community has a rich and important history. It is through this self-guided tour that we aim to keep alive the memories of the brave Oxford citizens who fought for their right to occupy public spaces and who flourished in their passions despite systemic racism. We honor the lives and legacies of those who never faltered in demanding justice. We celebrate and gain inspiration from the accomplishments of Oxford's Black community, then and now.

How to use this guide: The letter next to each title and description corresponds with the letter on the map in the middle of the guide. Some locations on the tour will not have a clear place to pull over if you are driving, so please exercise caution and park in the closest parking lot if you wish to stop to observe the location more closely. The tour takes roughly one hour to complete.



Mr. John East and his class before the integration of Oxford's public schools

A Bethel A.M.E. Church

14 S. Beech St.

Bethel A.M.E. Church is the oldest of Oxford's four Historically Black Churches. The congregation formed in 1842 and met in the home of John Rollins. In 1857, the building on Beech Street was purchased by church trustees. One of Bethel's early pastors was Hiram Revels who would later become the first Black American to serve in the U.S. Congress when he was elected to the Senate from Mississippi after the Civil War. Bethel's long history includes throwing annual smorgasbord dinners and creating a Sunday School Department within their church for youth education and activities.



B Community Remembrance Project for Lynchings

Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (one of the two Uptown Parks)

For decades after the Civil War, Black Americans continued to be terrorized. Public lynchings took place across the country, including Ohio. In memory of the two Black men

lynched in Oxford—Simeon Garnett and Henry Corbin—the Equal Justice Initiative provided the sign that has been placed in Oxford's

Historical Marker Unveiling, June 2021



Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (formerly known as the West Park). This historical marker is the result of several years of work by Miami's Truth and Reconciliation Project, whose mission is to spread awareness of the racial terror of lynchings throughout the United States. The students involved in this project investigated the killings of Garnett and Corbin, then collected soil from the lynching sites to be sent to the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. There, the containers are exhibited next to similar jars from all across the country.



First Baptist Church

14 E. Vine St.

This is a private residence.

Organized in 1865 by a small group of Black citizens under the guidance of Reverend S. P. Young, the First Baptist Church



of Oxford is one of Oxford's Historically Black Churches. Services were first held in an old school house on Collins Street. In 1892 land on East Vine Street was purchased by church trustees, who built a church that stood proudly for 55 years before burning down in 1947. Efforts led by Charles A. Williams raised \$3,000 to rebuild the church. First Baptist Church remained at this location until 2006, when a new church was built at 6701 Ringwood Rd. The church continues to thrive with a dedicated, diverse congregation.

D Cephias Burns House

310 N. Main St.

This is a private residence.

Cephias Burns, born in Oxford in 1871, was the master stonemason behind many of the lamp posts, buildings, and stone bridges on the campus of Western College. He learned masonry from his father, Richard Burns, and built his own house near his father's at the age of twenty-one. Later, Burns was commissioned by the President of Western College for Women, Dr. William Boyd, to replace all of the wooden footbridges on campus with stone ones. Additionally, Burns was involved in the stonework construction of Kumler Chapel, the stone gazebo and stairs leading to Western Pond, and the Ernst Nature Theater.



*Cephias Burns with daughter,
Edna Burns Bradley*



Cephias Burns house



New house

E Richard Burns House

314 N. Main St.

This is a private residence.

Richard Burns was born in 1839. He served in the 9th Regiment, U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery during the Civil War and in 1886 became the second Black American elected to Oxford village council. After working as a farm laborer in his early years, Burns learned the stonemason trade and worked as a stonecutter and mason throughout the village. Burns was regarded as one of Oxford's "most highly respected colored citizens." He was an active member of the Bethel A.M.E Church and local Civil Wars veterans group.



F Sycamore Car Wash

9 E. Sycamore St.

This is a private residence.

Beginning in the 1950s, the Sycamore Car Wash was an important place of gathering for the Black residents of Oxford. According to brothers H. Dale Jackson and Gary S. Jackson (sons of owners Harrison E. Jackson and Lillie Mae Jackson), the Sycamore Car Wash was a “cultural haven” where Black people could enjoy music, dancing, basketball, story-telling, and Bible lessons. Additionally, the car wash provided employment opportunities for those, who like the Jacksons, had migrated from the South and were looking for a sense of community and belonging.

G God’s House of Praise and Worship

100 Homestead Ave.

God’s House of Praise and Worship, a Historically Black Church, was formerly known as First Pentecostal Bibleway Church and began as a Bible Study in 1956, under the leadership of Pastor Lenora Jenkins. As the congregation grew, an edifice was built in 1964, with expansions over the years. In 1993, Elder Anderson A. Simmons, Jr. became pastor and in 2015 the congregation welcomed their third pastor, Pastor Beverly A. Simmons. The church continues to hold weekly services, including Sunday school, morning worship, day and evening Bible studies, and youth and outreach ministries.

H Knoxy's Delicatessen

209 E. Sycamore St.

This is now Johnny's Campus Deli.

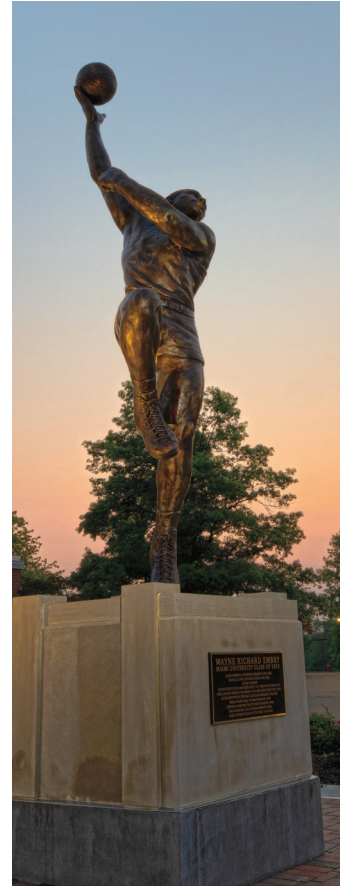
Built by Francis Theodore Knox and Ruth L. Knox in the late 1940s, this building used to be home to Knoxy's Delicatessen, also known as Knoxes' deli. Men in Oxford's Black community would gather in the deli's back room to converse about the world and community affairs. It was a space of refuge for reflecting on the struggles of establishing and operating a Black-owned business. Reflecting on when his father would take him to Knoxes' deli as a child, H. Dale Jackson recalls "The back room was a place where such 'coming of age' for young children was both a harsh awakening and a wonder."

I Wayne Embry Statue

500 E Sycamore St.

Statue in front of Millett Hall

In May of 2021, Miami University honored NBA executive and basketball icon, Wayne Embry (Miami '58) and his late wife, Theresa "Terri" Jackson Embry, with the Freedom Summer of '64 Award. A statue outside of Millett Hall was then unveiled, capturing Embry's "likeness and signature hook shot." Embry scored 1,401 points during his career at Miami, still ranking among the university's top 12 all-time career scores. Embry is also one of only six Miami men's basketball players to have his number retired. He went to serve on his alma mater's board of trustees



for 14 years, including one year as chairman of the board. Embry and his late wife, Terri, also served on the advisory board for the College of Education, Health and Society.

J Lewis Place

310 E. High St.

This is a private residence.

Built in 1839 for Romeo Lewis and his wife Jane, what is now known as Lewis Place (home to Miami University presidents since 1903) is said to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad. Possible evidence for this claim was discovered in 1965 when Lewis Place underwent a renovation in preparation for incoming Miami University President Phillip Shriver. According to Shriver, a secret part of the house was discovered that could have been used to hide runaway slaves.

K Freedom Summer Memorial

650 Western College Dr.

In 1964, student volunteers from around the country came to Western Campus (which was then the Western College for Women, separate from Miami University) for a two-week orientation in voter registration and non-violent resistance. They were preparing to register Black voters in racially segregated Mississippi. In 2000, a stone memorial for Freedom Summer was built next to the Kumler Chapel on Western Campus. In 2014, three additional tree sculptures were added to honor the lives of volunteers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner who had been murdered by the Klu Klux Klan upon their arrival in Mississippi.

L Maurice Rocco Burial Place

Burial near parents in Woodside Cemetery.

Maurice Rocco (born 1915 as Maurice John Rockhold) was a world-famous jazz pianist known for his energetic boogie-woogie style that he performed while standing. He played locally and in Cincinnati before moving to New York City where he headlined in nightclubs and theaters. He later performed at Carnegie Hall a number of times and landed roles in several Hollywood films. Rocco enjoyed a long and successful career until, at the age of 60, he was murdered while living in Bangkok, Thailand. He is buried in Woodside Cemetery, where in 2022, an Ohio Historical Marker was placed.



Rocco's parents' headstone, near where Rocco is buried.

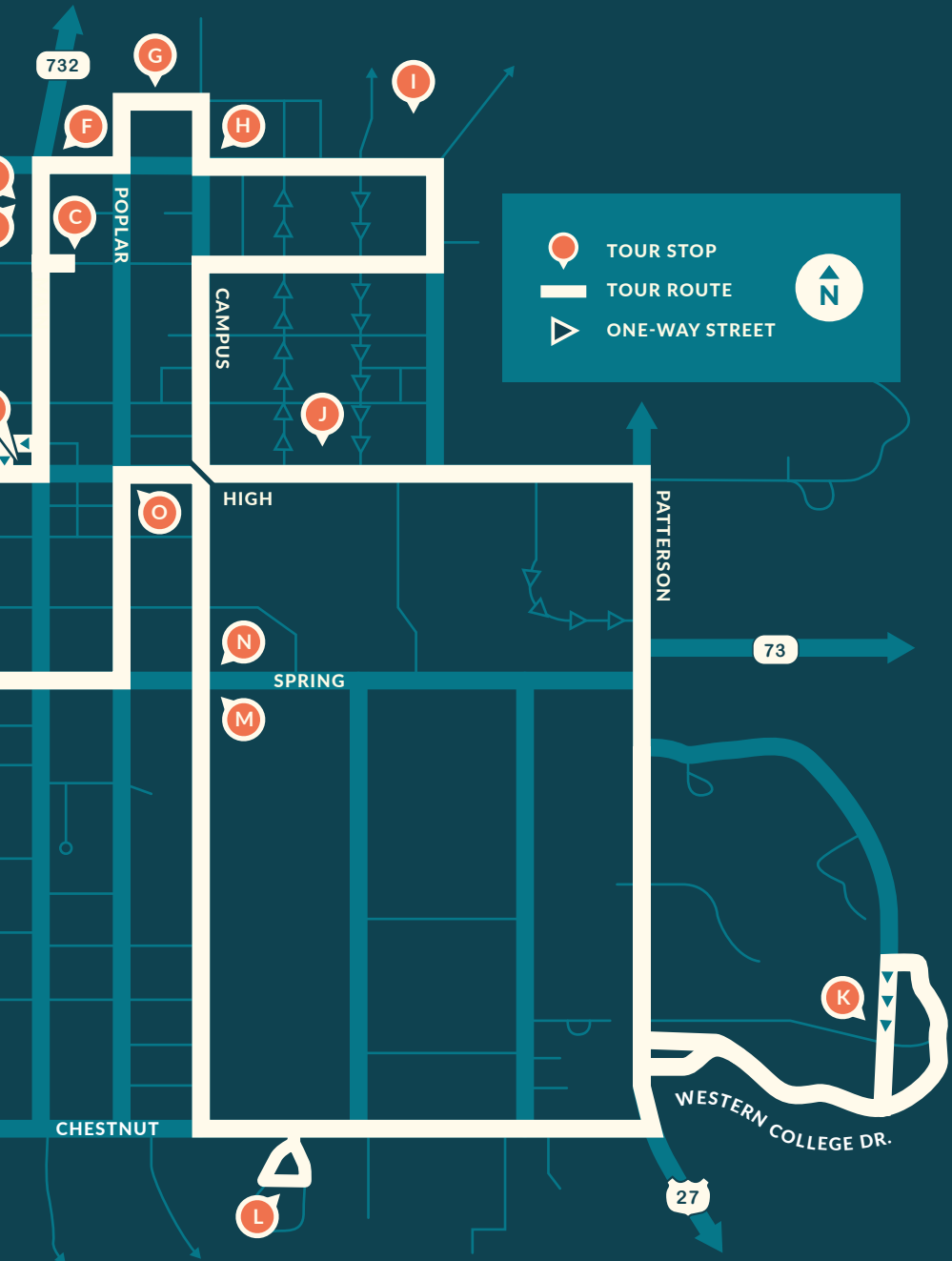


OXFORD BLACK HISTORY



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- O Oxford Panthers Basketball Team
- P Oxford Public School
- Q Elm Street Christian Church
- R Peter Bruner House
- S Oxford Municipal Pool in Roosevelt Park

SELF-GUIDED TOUR MAP



M **Nellie Craig Walker Hall**

301 S. Campus Ave.

Former Campus Avenue Building

In 1905, Oxford native, Nellie Craig became the first Black graduate of Miami University. She earned a two-year teaching certificate, becoming the first Black educator to student-teach in the village school to a mixed-race class. She later married James Walker and moved to Cleveland. Following Walker's death 16 years later, Craig took over her husband's tire company. This was remarkable, as Black-owned businesses were a rarity at the time, and ones run by Black women were practically unheard of. In 2021, Miami University officials renamed a building that once served as a university-run school as Nellie Craig Walker Hall.



Nellie Craig as a Miami student



N McGuffey Laboratory School

216 E. Spring St.

This is now McGuffey Hall.

In 1910, Miami University established the McGuffey Laboratory School. This teacher training school included kindergarten through twelfth grade classes, though only white students were admitted. In 1944, several members of the Oxford NAACP Branch met with Dean Ashbaugh of the School of Education at Miami to discuss the importance of integration. It wasn't until 21 years later, however, that the school's first Black students enrolled: Timothy Davis, Pamela Walden, and Victoria Nash.

O Oxford Panthers Basketball Team

101 E. High St.

This is now the Oxford Police Department.

In 1919, the Panthers Basketball Team was formed as a response to Black athletes not being allowed to play on the Oxford Public School's basketball team. A talented, semi-professional team, the Panthers played across Ohio, Indiana, and northern Kentucky. They even played the Harlem "Rens," (formally known as the New York Renaissance Five) a predecessor of the Harlem Globetrotters team, of later fame. The Panthers' home games were played in the upper level of what was then the Town Hall.



P

Oxford Public School

115 W. Spring St.

This site is now Stewart Square.

Beginning in 1853, Oxford had two separate schools: the Union School for white children and the North School for children of color. When a new Oxford Public School opened in 1887, Black students attempting to attend were chased away by the town marshal. Perry Gibson, a Black resident and father, advocated for integration before the Circuit Court of Butler County. The case made its way to the Supreme Court of Ohio before Black students were eventually allowed to attend the new school. Although classrooms were integrated, spaces like playgrounds and bathrooms were segregated for a time. Still, what became known as the “Gibson Case” was a judicial milestone for Oxford’s Black community.



Q Elm Street Christian Church

300 W. Withrow St.

Elm Street Christian Church, a Historically Black Church, is the second oldest of their denomination in Ohio and was organized in 1863. The congregation first met in the home of Mrs. Gidding. In 1881, when the congregation grew to 50 members, Mrs. Gidding's house was moved back farther on the lot and a new church building was constructed in its place. The church burned down in 1952 but construction was paid for after fundraising efforts led by Margaret Bradley. The new church opened in 1956.

R Peter Bruner House

319 W. Withrow St.

This is a private residence.

Peter Bruner arrived in Oxford in 1866 after freeing himself from slavery in Kentucky and serving in the Union Army during the Civil War. His work included custodial and other work at Western Female Seminary, Oxford Female College, and Miami University. Well known and much loved, Bruner was an active member of the Bethel A.M.E. Church and was once named "Mayor for a Day." Bruner's life is chronicled in his book, *A Slave's Adventure Towards Freedom*.

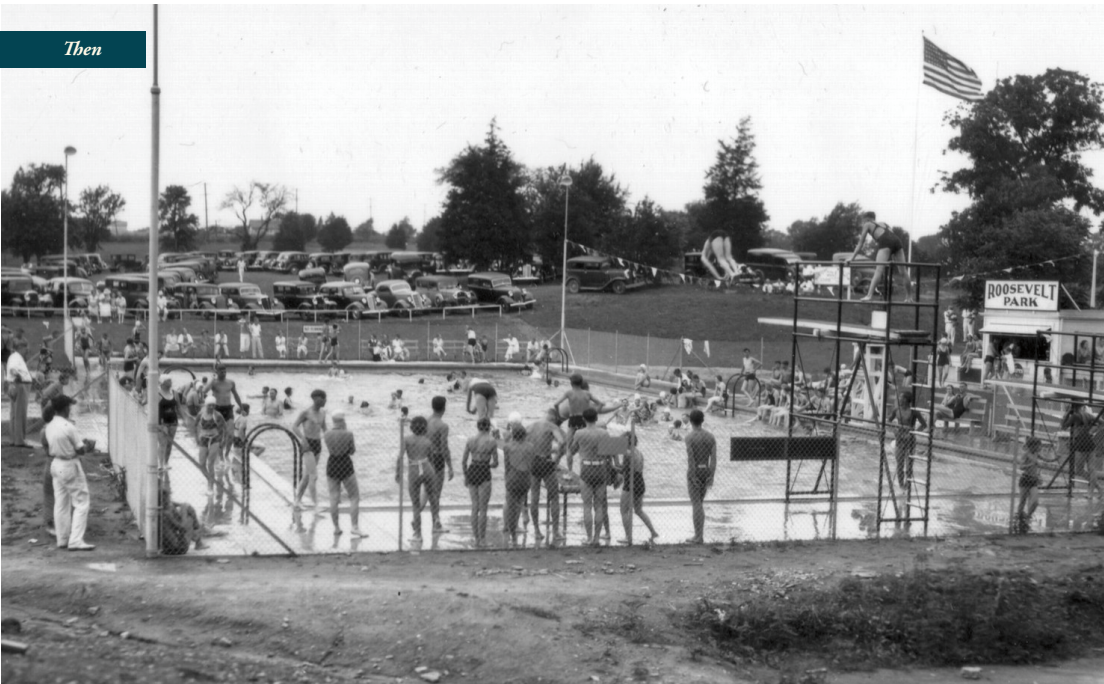


S Oxford Municipal Pool in Roosevelt Park

6192 Contreras Rd.

This property now belongs to the Oxford Country Club.

The first Oxford Municipal Pool opened in 1935 for “whites only.” In 1943, the Civil Committee of the NAACP (led by the president of Oxford’s NAACP Branch, Simon Miller) stated that denying Black residents access to the pool was an infringement on their constitutional rights. Six years later in 1949, there had still been no action taken to allow Black residents access to the pool, resulting in the NAACP filing a petition to admit “persons of Negro race and ancestry.” This request was denied but a year later in 1950 the courts finally declared that the swimming pool must be open to all citizens.



Freedom Summer Chimes on Miami's Western Campus



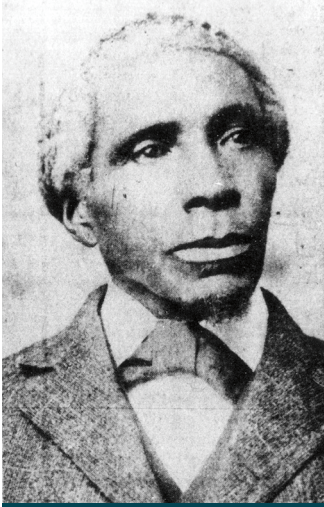
Freedom Summer Chimes on Miami's Western Campus

ARTHUR F. MILLER, CHAIR OF AN
1929 - 2009
THROUGH HIS DURESS EFFORTS AND GENTLE PERSUASION
THE FREEDOM SUMMER '68 MEMORIAL EXISTS

ADDITIONAL HISTORY

John S. Jones

Considered the best documented Underground Railroad site in the Oxford area.



John S. Jones

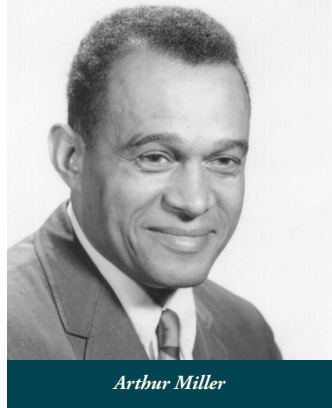
Born in Butler County in 1819, John S. Jones is known to have aided his father, Jack Jones, as an Underground Railroad operator. According to the family's oral history, enslaved people would follow the Great Miami River north from the Ohio River to Jack Jones' Hamilton home. From there, they'd follow the railroad tracks to John S. Jones' farm on Booth Road in Oxford Township. There they'd be given refuge before the next part of their journey.

The Miller Family

The Miller Family has long had an important and influential history in Oxford. Simon Miller, born in 1900, moved to Oxford with his wife Lazelle Jones Miller in 1918. He was an active member of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, a 32nd Degree Mason, and a charter member of the Oxford branch of the NAACP. He also served as president of the branch, leading the legal challenge of the Oxford Municipal Pool integration in 1950.

Simon's son, Arthur Miller, was born in 1921. He was the first Black American allowed to practice-teach at Miami's McGuffey Laboratory School. Additionally, he was elected to village

council and served as Oxford's first Black vice-mayor. Arthur followed in his father's footsteps, becoming active in the local NAACP branch and leading it as president for more than 20 years.



Anna Estella Hasty

Anna Estella Hasty, born in 1876, was the daughter of Peter and Fannie Proctor Bruner. A resident of Oxford her entire life, Hasty was an early graduate of the Oxford Public School after it was integrated and a writer for the Oxford Press for over 25 years. She was commended for faithfully reporting the news, often walking her reports uptown herself and phoning news to the press even after her retirement.

LYNCHING

Simeon Garnett & Henry Corbin

We remember and honor the lives of two Black Oxford citizens, Simeon Garnett and Henry Corbin, lynched in 1877 and 1892 respectively. In each instance, after being accused of a crime, each man was arrested by law enforcement. Despite the best efforts of village officials to prevent mob violence, the men were publicly lynched. In 2019, a memorial ceremony was held in Oxford's uptown parks, close to where each man was murdered. In 2021, a commemorative marker was installed at the same site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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For more information on Oxford history, visit:
The Smith Library of Regional History
441 S. Locust St.
(513) 523-3035
www.lanepl.org/smith

Stone Bridge built by Cephas Burns



