

Preliminary Historic Context Statement Black/African American History in Eugene Phase 1

**Documentation of archival primary and secondary sources and resources
Lane County, Oregon**

A Report to the

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Contributors and Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the City of Eugene and Lorna Flormoe, Equity & Access Planner of the City of Eugene Office of Equity & Community Engagement, for her assistance and to the community, partners, and contributors involved in the *Stories of Exclusion and Inclusion: Owning our History, Creating our Future* project that was developed from 2006 to 2025. Participation and collaboration from youth groups, elders and leaders in the Black community, and the involvement of local organizations and institutions in the *Stories of Exclusion and Inclusion* project helped inform this historic context.

Stories of Exclusion and Inclusion: Owning our History, Creating our Future project partners and contributors included the following individuals: Greg Black; Kenya Luvert; Leah Dunbar; Rena Dunbar; Sinde Fitz; Jennifer O’Neal; Cheryl Roffe; Mark Harris; Cheri Turpin; Eric Richardson; Elder Roy Samuels; Mr. Henry Luvert; Dr. Ed Coleman; Charmaine Coleman; Mr. Willie Mims; Mrs. Pauline Davidson; Mrs. Lyllye Parker-Reynolds; Greg Evans; Douglas Card; Jeffrey Flowers; Robert Hart; Mr. Herman Brame; Carmen Urbina; Tina Gutierrez-Schmich; Linda Hamilton; Peter Chavannes; Sarah Zaleski; Kevin Summerfield; Dr. Gerardo Sandoval; Abigail Spangler; Sarita Black; Mary Clayton; Shawna Adams; Kara Smith; Kaarin Knudson; Ellen Teninty; Raquel Wells; James Florendo; Churchill, Sheldon and ECCO High School students. Institutions who served as partners and contributors in the project included: Lane County Historic Society; University of Oregon; 4J School District; Bethel School District; Fair Housing Council of Oregon; Eugene Human Rights Commission; Oregon Historic Society; Blacks in Government; NAACP Eugene/Springfield Branch; Grupo Latino de Acción Directa, Lane Community College; LCC Longhouse.

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INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT UNDERSTANDING

Project Overview

The City of Eugene has hired the University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History (MNCH) to prepare the **Preliminary Historic Context Statement Black/African American History in Eugene**. The historic context provides a historical overview of the Black community in Eugene. Organized chronologically, beginning with the first documented Black resident in Lane County in the 1850s, to the more recent Black history in the 1970s and 1980s, this historic context statement documents the presence, involvement, and contributions of Black individuals within the history of Eugene. The Preliminary Historic Context Statement Black/African American History in Eugene serves as introductory framework that will guide and inform future research and survey efforts. In addition, the document provides supplemental information to the *Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002 National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Document (MPD)*, completed in 2024.¹ The historic context statement identifies spaces that demonstrate Eugene’s exclusionary and discriminatory past, while also illustrating the resilience, perseverance, and self-determination of the Black community in Eugene. This document will be completed in a phased approach, with the next phase focusing on community outreach and engagement.

Although African Americans have lived in Eugene and the surrounding area since its formation in the 1850s, the physical environment associated with Black history in Eugene has only recently begun to be identified and documented. The preliminary historic context serves as a starting point to identify and recognize historically significant places in Eugene, associated with Black individuals and the Black community. A preliminary list of known historic resources that are associated with Eugene’s Black community have been identified in this historic context. Historic buildings, structures, sites, districts, and objects that have the potential to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), as well as already listed historic properties and sites mentioned in the narrative are highlighted in **bold** text and when possible, include the location and address. Although no longer extant, the location of demolished historic buildings and structures, which represent or are associated with Black history are provided when applicable due to the potential for these historic sites to provide identification of other historic resources related to Black history, have archaeological relevance, and/or be recognized through other interpretive approaches. Historic properties already listed in the National Register are also mentioned in the historic context for the potential that NRHP nominations be updated and amended to reflect and recognize individuals and groups within Eugene’s Black community, which have historically been excluded from these narratives.

This phase of the historic context did not include a systematic historic resource survey or inventory, however, through the course of researching this document we were able to identify a number of historic resources associated with Eugene’s Black community, which are tabulated in Appendix A and mapped in Appendix B. Historic themes that are associated with the historic resources have also been identified in Appendix A. The listed historic resources are intended to guide future research and survey efforts. The historic resources identified in this document do not provide a complete or exhaustive list of all spaces and places that reflect Black history in Eugene but serves as a starting point that in congruent with the historic context should be updated over time. Additional historic resources may be added as more information becomes available. Some historic resources identified in this document require further

¹ Kimberly S. Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2024).

assessment to determine their current location and if the historic properties are extant or non-extant. The location of historic resources were approximated on the map, when the location of a historic resource was undetermined. The historic resources provided in the preliminary historic context have not been evaluated for National Register listing. Recommendations for future survey efforts are included at the end of the document.

A list of community members and leaders that were involved in and a part of Eugene's Black community are provided in Appendix C. The names of individuals will be further explored in the next phase to determine if additional biographical information should be included for specific individuals. In addition, the list of community members and leaders demonstrates the lack of background information available on certain individuals and how further research is needed if biographical backgrounds are to be added to this historic context in the next phase. The list of named individuals follows the order they are mentioned in the document.

Methodology

This historic context builds from *The Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002 MPD*, which provided the foundational historic context for Black history in Oregon and registration requirements for potentially eligible properties under this theme. The MPD provided the framework and research presented in this document. Information for preparing the preliminary historic context was primarily limited to archival primary and secondary sources accessed digitally and at local repositories. Research during this phase of the historic context relied on primary sources as much as possible. Since this is the first time the history of Eugene's Black community has been compiled, historical research revealed inconsistencies in dates and other research. Primary sources were consulted to address discrepancies when feasible. As such, **this document provides a baseline of information concerning the history of Eugene's Black community that is ongoing and by no means should it be considered a comprehensive statement.** The document does not include information obtained through contemporary interviews and/or community engagement. It is the City's intention to include this in the next phase of work. The following sources were consulted for this document:

- Census Records²
- City of Eugene Archives
- City of Eugene Stories of Exclusion and Inclusion Project³
- City of Eugene and Lane County records
- Lane County History Museum
- Local and state newspapers
- Previously recorded oral history interviews
- Scholarly research
- State of Oregon Historic Preservation Office
- University of Oregon Special Collections

It is important to acknowledge that Black Americans were excluded from some historical records as a result of systemic racism and discrimination. Due to this exclusion, there were potentially more Black residents in Oregon than recognized. Considering that early exclusion laws banned Black individuals from residing in Oregon and the prevailing racist attitudes and hostility towards people of color, Black individuals may have intentionally avoided government records, such as federal and state census records,

² US Census Bureau, 1850–1950 US census, microfilm publication [hereafter 1850–1950 US census], National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. [hereafter NARA].

³ City of Eugene Office of Equity & Community Engagement, *Stories of Exclusion and Inclusion: Owning our History, Creating our Future*, City of Eugene.

or this may have been inflicted upon individuals in situations of illegal enslavement. Furthermore, while census records provide documentation of some of Eugene’s earliest Black residents, census records were only conducted during a 10-year period and are far from providing a complete record. Additionally, there may have potentially been some undercounting and inconsistencies in census data. Historic photographs verify that several other Black individuals traveled to, visited, and may have been residents of Eugene during the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

The displacement of Black community members is a central component to Black history in Eugene. This document begins to outline these instances of displacement but does not contain the full stories of the families and individuals who experienced displacement in Eugene. This document begins to identify the places that were once the homes and neighborhoods of Eugene’s Black community but no longer exist, and it begins to identify places and spaces that were or are associated with Black community members. Illuminating the history of displacement provides a basis for eligible designations of the places and spaces from this portion of the history of Black Community in Eugene. Historical research conducted during this phase of the project identified a lack of documented information relating to the more recent history of Eugene’s Black community. It is recommended that the decades succeeding the Civil Rights movement, from the 1970s onward, be further explored in the next phase of this project, as described in the concluding recommendations and opportunities for future research section.

Federal post-war era legislation resulted in passages of laws (Housing Act of 1949 and Housing Act of 1954, and Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956) that were geared to provide funding to improve living conditions and spur community development. The housing acts were tailored to redevelop areas in cities categorized as “slum” or “blighted” and prioritize the use of cleared land for non-residential purposes (an evolution from 1949 housing act which included clearing land for housing purposes), such as commercial development and public institutions.⁴ The Federal-Aid Highway Act served as the mechanism to fund the vast interstate highway system that weaves through cities all across the country.⁵ The projects funded through this legislation were referred to as urban renewal. This document describes instances of how urban renewal was realized in Eugene, and the explanation and descriptions provide insight into how the legislation triggered displacement. This document does not contain a comprehensive history of urban renewal, nor does it describe the evolution of the program and agency as it exists today. This document acknowledges the history of how the program altered neighborhoods within the Black community and impacted living conditions for Black residents.

Terms and Definitions

The following definitions provide a general overview of terms commonly used throughout this document and follow terms and definitions outlined in the *Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002 MPD*.⁶

African, African American, and Black – The terms “African American” and “Black” are used interchangeably in this Context Statement. The term ‘African American’ describes people of African

⁴ Nina Johnson and Jeffrey Tashman, *Urban Renewal in Oregon: History, Case Studies, Policy Issues, and Latest Developments*, Researched for the Portland Development Commission (Portland, OR: Association of Oregon Redevelopment Agencies, 2002), 1,5.

⁵ Farrell Evans, “How Interstate Highways Guttled Communities—and Reinforced Segregation,” History, A&E Television Networks, accessed June 8, 2025, <https://www.history.com/articles/interstate-highway-system-infrastructure-construction-segregation>.

⁶ Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon.”

ancestry in the United States, while ‘Black’ is a more general term used to describe people of African descent regardless of place of birth or nationality.⁷

Enslaved, Enslaver – The term ‘enslaved’ reflects the condition of slavery that was forcefully imposed and inflicted upon a person or group of people. The term ‘Enslaved’ emphasizes the humanity of a person or group of people while recognizing they were forcibly kept in bondage, rather than the term “slave”, which reinforces the idea that a person or group of people were property or a commodity. The term ‘enslaver’ is used in place of “owner” or “master” to avoid reinforcing authority and power of the ‘enslaver’ and to abstain from hierarchical constructs.⁸

European American, white – These terms refer to people of European ancestry and are used interchangeably in this Context Statement. Following the AP style guidance, white is written lowercase in this document.⁹

Indigenous – The term Indigenous or specific tribal names are used interchangeably to describe the community of people (and their descendants) who inhabited the area of western Oregon prior to and after European colonization.

Across the Bridge Community – “Across the Bridge Community” refers to the community of predominately Black residents that formed on the north bank of the Willamette River (now a portion of Alton Baker Park). Then outside city limits, the area was one of the few places African Americans could live in the Eugene area during extreme racial inequality. Other historic names that have been used to describe the community include “Tent City,” “Ferry Street Village,” “Ferry Street Bridge Community,” and “Ferry Street Bridge Settlement.”

People of color – This term broadly refers to multiple races other than white.¹⁰ In the framework of this historic context, the term is used to describe racialized groups of people that have been historically disenfranchised due to systemic racism.

Urban renewal – Urban renewal was initiated as a federal housing program in which urban renewal agencies were established to “take advantage of federal funding” and carry out what was defined as “slum clearance.”¹¹ Urban renewal was supported by the 1949 Housing Act, which provided federal funds to cities across the U.S. for redevelopment and revitalization during the post-World War II period. Over time, an increasing amount of federal funds were available to nonresidential projects. Title I of the 1949 Housing Act provided federal funds to local public agencies with the option for private developers or public housing agencies to “assemble, clear, and resell or lease land for predominately residential uses,” what was essentially deemed “slum clearance.”¹² In 1951, the Oregon legislature passed an urban renewal law, authorizing only housing authorities to act as urban renewal agencies. The legislation was expanded to also include “city councils, county commissions, or separate boards appointed by these governing bodies.”¹³ The urban renewal agency in Eugene was formed in 1958.

⁷ BlackPast, “BlackPast Style Guide,” last modified October 2021, accessed October 2024, <https://www.blackpast.org/blackpast-style-guide-2/>.

⁸ National Park Service, “Language of Slavery,” last modified May 16, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/language-of-slavery.htm>.

⁹ Nicole Meir, “Why we will lowercase white,” The Associated Press. Accessed November 2024. <https://www.ap.org/the-definitive-source/announcements/why-we-will-lowercase-white/>.

¹⁰ University of Minnesota, “AP Style tips for race-related writing,” Communication Resources, accessed June 2, 2025, <https://umarcomm.umn.edu/blog/2024/11/27/ap-style-tips-race-related-writing>.

¹¹ Johnson and Tashman, *Urban Renewal in Oregon*, 1.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

PROLOGUE

The prologue provides a historical overview of the broader regional history that demonstrates the constructs of Oregon's racist past and how the confines of racial exclusion and discrimination influenced the lives of early Black residents and the generations that followed.

African Americans in the Exploration years of the Modern Era

African Americans have held a place in Oregon's history for over two centuries. During European exploration, a small number of Africans and people of African descent traveled the Pacific Ocean and coastline of western North America on sea-faring voyages throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Motivated by increasing colonial interests, England, France, Portugal, and Spain sponsored maritime exploration to the Americas to expand trade and wealth and eventually colonize and dispossess Indigenous people from their ancestral homelands. These exploration and trade vessels often had multi-ethnic crews, including free and enslaved Black individuals.

The earliest documented person of African descent to arrive in Oregon¹⁴ was Markus Lopus. Lopus was originally from Cape Verde archipelago off the coast of west Africa. Lopus reached the Tillamook Bay in 1788, while a cabin boy and cook aboard the *Lady Washington*—the first American vessel to explore the Oregon coast.¹⁵

Further exploration of the Pacific Northwest took place during the early nineteenth century, when the newly formed United States government funded the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery Expedition. The expedition included York, a Black man enslaved by William Clark, who played an integral role in the overland expedition. York hunted and prepared meals, transported supplies, and built shelters for all members of the expedition.¹⁶ He also participated in scientific studies and scouting activities, provided medical services, and maintained amicable relationships with Indigenous communities.¹⁷

News of the Lewis and Clark Expedition attracted an increasing number of explorers and trappers to the Pacific frontier, including fur-trade merchants seeking economic gain and expansion of fur trading enterprises. Throughout the early nineteenth century, fur-trade parties led scouting expeditions into the inland areas of the Pacific Northwest. Several free and enslaved Black men were a part of fur trapping

¹⁴ Recent studies indicated that the earliest person of African descent to arrive in Oregon may have been two men and a woman who were aboard the English galleon, *Golden Hinde*, captained by Sir Francis Drake, who sailed along the Northwest coast and circumnavigated the world from 1577 to 1579. Recent studies reveal that during the early summer of 1579, the *Golden Hinde* was grounded at a protected cove once thought to be Point Reyes but now is presumed to be Whale Cove along the central Oregon coast. See Melissa C. Darby, *Thunder Go North: The Hunt for Sir Francis Drake's Fair and Good Bay* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2019), 119.

¹⁵ Darrell Millner, "Black People in Oregon," Oregon Encyclopedia, last modified April 2, 2024, accessed October 2024, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/blacks_in_oregon/. Also spelled as Markus "Lopez" in other sources.

¹⁶ Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West 1528-1990* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 27–48; Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 7.

¹⁷ Darrell Millner, "York of the Corps of Discovery: Interpretations of York's Character and His Role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104, no. 3 (2003): 302–33. doi:10.1353/ohq.2003.0005.

brigades and maritime expeditions led by major fur trading enterprises, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Pacific Fur Company. These individuals were fur trappers and served as cooks, stewards, interpreters, and guides on expeditions, and later held positions at fur trading posts.¹⁸ Windslow Anderson, a sailor and fur trapper, and another sailor known by the name of Wallace, were the only known Black individuals who chose to permanently reside in Oregon after arriving in the 1830s.¹⁹

European American colonization and encroachment on Native lands in the Pacific Northwest continued apace in the 1830s, as US government officials actively promoted westward expansion and emigration to the Oregon Territory. From 1840 to 1860, European American settlement rapidly expanded as roughly 300,000 to 400,000 emigrants traveled west along the 2,000-mile Oregon Trail.²⁰

Disruption of and Aggression towards Indigenous society and culture by white settlers

White settlers, attracted by promises of the favorable climate and productive farmland, soon established homesteads and farms in the Willamette Valley. The arrival of white settlers dramatically disrupted and impacted Indigenous communities, and imported European diseases decimated Indigenous populations. By 1850, more than 90 percent of the Pacific Northwest's Indigenous population had died of repeated smallpox, influenza, measles, malaria, and other epidemics.²¹ Upheaval of lifeways was exacerbated by the white settlers forced removal of Indigenous populations to reservations. These brutal and harsh actions, which sometimes erupted in unprovoked acts of violence against Indigenous people, were precipitated by aggressive settlement encouraged by US government policy. The US government and certain tribal leaders negotiated the Willamette Valley Treaty in 1856, resulting in the forced displacement and sometimes violent removal of the Kalapuya people from their homelands to the Grand Ronde Reservation.

Slavery in Oregon

During the mass overland migration to Oregon, the United States remained an active participant in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and over three million Black people were still enslaved in the Midwest and Southern states.²² A small population of Black Americans traveled the Oregon Trail, including free and enslaved people. Although the number is likely higher given the prevalence of slavery across the US during the time, records show an estimated fifty enslaved Black individuals traveled to the Oregon

¹⁸ John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company fur trading post established in what is now Astoria, Oregon, in 1811, grew in prominence and soon became the first permanent European American settlement in present-day Oregon. When Great Britain and the United States claimed joint sovereignty over the region that became the "Oregon Country" by treaty in 1818, non-Indigenous inhabitants of the Oregon region were primarily explorers, merchant sailors, fur trappers, and "mountain men." See William Lang, "Oregon Question," Oregon Encyclopedia, last modified September 5, 2023. https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_question_54_40_or_fight/; Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 12.

¹⁹ Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002," sec. E, 12–13.

²⁰ US senators Thomas Hart Benton and Lewis F. Linn of Missouri, as well as Virginia congressman John Floyd, (all white people) promoted the region, though they never visited. By the early 1840s, early colonizing expeditions led to the mass migration of white settlers by way of the Oregon Trail. See William Lang, "Oregon Trail," Oregon Encyclopedia, last modified September 25, 2024, accessed October 2024, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_trail/.

²¹ Robert Boyd, "Another Look at the 'Fever and Ague' of Western Oregon," *Ethnohistory* 22, No. 2 (1975):135–154.

²² Millner, "Black People in Oregon."

Territory with their enslavers, a majority of whom were from Missouri.²³ Some enslaved individuals were coerced under misleading and false pretenses made by white enslavers, who guaranteed them a free life once they arrived in the Oregon Territory, while other enslavers promised freedom under certain conditions, since many white enslavers relied on exploitative practices for personal gain.

Slavery and the presence of Black Americans in Oregon was a prevalent issue that divided early white settlers, with roughly one-third of Oregon's white, male electorate (voting rights were initially only granted to white property-owning males but later allowed any white male over the age of twenty-one who had resided in Oregon for six months or more to vote), voting in support of slavery. The majority of white settlers opposed slavery in the Oregon Territory and while some abolitionists were in support of banning slavery on account of moral judgement, others were motivated by political and economic implications. Many white settlers opposed slavery under the condition that the territory be preserved as a white-only state.²⁴

Exclusionary Laws and Oregon's Statehood

The Oregon Provisional Government²⁵ via the 1843 Organic Act passed Oregon's first exclusionary law in 1844.²⁶ Although slavery was prohibited under the 1843 Organic Law, the law was rarely enforced, and enslavement still existed during the early years of the territory. This exclusionary law prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude but forbade free Black Americans from remaining in the territory longer than three years. Under provisions of the law, failure to vacate would result in arrest and punishment of up to thirty-nine lashes, which was to be repeated every six months until the individual left the territory.²⁷ The law was amended the following year by the provisional government's new legislative council, and enslavers were given time to "remove" enslaved individuals from the Oregon Territory, or free them.²⁸ The lashing punishment was replaced with forced labor, and under the amended law, Black residents who remained in the territory risked being arrested and were subject to serving a term of forced labor, followed by removal. The law was repealed two years later, and although there is no evidence it was ever carried out, it set the foundation to obstruct Black Americans from permanently settling in Oregon. Several enslavers took advantage of the lack of enforcement of anti-slavery laws and forcibly brought enslaved individuals to the Oregon territory.²⁹

After Oregon officially became a US Territory in 1848, a renewed exclusion law enacted in 1849 allowed Black residents already living in the territory to remain but banned Black people from entering or residing in the territory and threatened to arrest and forcibly remove any new arrivals.³⁰ The Provisional

²³ Lang, "Oregon Trail."; Gregory Nokes, "Slavery In Oregon: The Reuben Shipley Saga," BlackPast, accessed September 2024, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/slavery-oregon-reuben-shipley-saga/>.

²⁴ Keith K. Richard, "Unwelcome Settlers: Black Mulatto Oregon Pioneers," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 84, no.1, (1983), 32.

²⁵ Eventually replaced in 1848, when Oregon became a territory following the termination of the United States and Great Britain joint occupancy agreement

²⁶ State of Oregon, "National and Oregon Chronology of Events," Black in Oregon 1840–1870, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/black-history/Pages/context/chronology.aspx>.

²⁷ Millner, "Black People in Oregon."

²⁸ Gregory Nokes, "Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon."

²⁹ "The Only Slave Ever Sold in Oregon," *Morning Astorian* (Astoria, OR), November 18, 1884, 1. Historical evidence indicates that one act of human trafficking was confirmed in the Oregon Territory, when a young boy and his grandmother were illegally sold and purchased in the vicinity of present-day Eugene during the early development of the town in the 1850s.

³⁰ Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788–1940*, 2nd ed. (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2022), 20–21.; "National and Oregon Chronology of Events," Black in Oregon 1840–1870."

Government also denied African Americans living in Oregon the right to vote or hold office. Although rarely enforced, Black exclusion and discrimination formalized in early legislation and government measures created a hostile racial environment and gave rise to anti-Black sentiments.

The steady influx of European American migration to the Oregon Territory continued, with many settlers establishing homesteads and farms in the Willamette Valley under the Oregon Donation Land Act of 1850. Liberal land laws and government incentive programs aided white settlement and helped affirm early settlers' vision of a white-only state by denying Black Americans and other people of color land ownership. Under its provisions, white male citizens and "half-breed Indians" (children of white men and Indigenous women) could claim 320 acres of free land, while the government granted 640 acres to married couples.³¹

When the Oregon Territory joined the Union, becoming the thirty-third US state in 1859, Oregon was the only free state admitted into the Union with an exclusion clause in the state Constitution that prohibited Black Americans from living and owning property in the state, and prohibited them from making contracts.³² The national debate over slavery and the end of the Civil War began the emancipation of African Americans and associated changes to the United States Constitution. The passage of the 14th Amendment in 1866, and its ratification in 1868, declared that the federal government would guarantee the rights of citizenship to all citizens. This change legally nullified exclusionary laws that prevented Black people from living in Oregon. Despite the exclusion clause "rendered moot" by the 14th Amendment, exclusion laws were not repealed by Oregon voters until 1926.³³

Reconstruction Era (1865-1877) in Oregon

The end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in the United States in 1865 marked the beginning of the Reconstruction Era, which brought complex challenges. Little changed in terms of racial equality and the racist sentiments of early white settlers continued to prevail in Eugene and the rest of Oregon. Many shared racist beliefs that the migration of freed Black Americans in greater numbers would have economic implications and diminish job opportunities for white citizens. Only a small number of Black Americans had migrated from the South during the Reconstruction Era, and by 1877, ninety percent of the 6.5 million Black Americans remained in the South.³⁴ Despite widespread racial tension and systemic discrimination, the years following the Civil War were also a time of significant change for Black people in America. Black males secured voting rights with the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870 by outlawing discrimination in voting based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Some jobs that had previously been inaccessible to African Americans, like government positions, became available to Black men.

Black Americans faced the challenges of social and economic mobility, and as more Black Americans were integrated into the workforce, they were denied equal access to jobs and economic advancement. African Americans were relegated to lower-paying jobs that were often physically demanding and labor-intensive. The small group of African Americans who migrated to Oregon during the late nineteenth century found employment in the timber and mining industries, as well as service-related jobs as domestic servants, cooks, and waiters.

³¹ Williams G. Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Act," Oregon Encyclopedia, last modified August 17, 2022, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_donation_land_act/.

³² Nokes, "Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon."

³³ State of Oregon, "National and Oregon Chronology of Events."

³⁴ Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002," sec. E, 47.

Early exclusionary laws were diligently designed by white legislators to discourage African Americans and people of color from emigrating to and permanently residing in Oregon. These laws ensured white homogeneity and played a significant role in Oregon remaining a majority white state well into the twentieth century and continuing today.

EARLY HISTORY OF EUGENE (CA. 1850S –1920S)

The cultural history of the Upper Willamette Valley extends millennia into the past and includes a rich archaeological record as well as historical events significant to the development of the US, Oregon, and the Eugene metropolitan area. Eugene is located within the traditional homeland of Kalapuyan-speaking groups of the Upper Willamette Valley. At the time that Kalapuyan languages were first documented (in the late 1800s and early 1900s) there were three languages and at least 13 dialects, indicating both a long period of habitation and stability of community locations. Each of the dialect communities occupied a major tributary stream, with multiple villages sharing the community dialect.³⁵ Inhabiting the Long Tom River Sub-basin and the lower McKenzie River area in the vicinity of Eugene were the Chelamela and the Chafan bands of the Kalapuya.

From the 1840s to the 1850s, multiple non-Indigenous settlements began to form in the Willamette and tributary valleys. The town of Eugene was established in the Upper Willamette Valley by Eugene Skinner, an early European American who arrived in the area in 1846. Skinner constructed a cabin on his family's 640-acre Donation Land Claim near the butte and the Willamette River. While the land was not considered suitable for agricultural production, the potential of river transportation was recognized, and a post office was built in 1850, marking the early formation of a townsite that became known as "Skinner's Mudhole." The town was platted the following year, in 1851, the same year the territorial legislature formed Lane County.³⁶ The town, renamed Eugene City (before becoming Eugene in 1889) was designated as the county seat in 1853, six years before the Oregon Territory joined the Union.³⁷

Eugene's Early Black Citizens

The earliest recorded Black people in Lane County were Coleman William (commonly known as Cole) and his grandmother. They arrived in the Lane County area sometime in the mid-1850s. Cole's grandmother likely passed away before 1860 and until around 1880, he remained the sole Black resident in the county.³⁸ As a young boy, Cole lived with multiple families near Eugene, where he was likely held

³⁵ Melvin C. Aikens, Thomas J. Connolly, and Dennis L. Jenkins, *Oregon Archaeology* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 284–289.

³⁶ Elizabeth Carter and Michelle Dennis, *Eugene Area Historic Context Statement*, Eugene Planning and Development Department (Eugene, OR: City of Eugene, 1996), 15–16.

³⁷ Lewis L. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, 6th ed. (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1992), 299.

³⁸ Cole was identified as both William Coleman and Coleman William in historic newspaper articles and census records. See US Census Bureau, 1860, 1880 US census. The name of William's grandmother has not been determined through historic research.

in indentured servitude until he reached adulthood.³⁹ Little is known of Cole's early life, including his given birth name, but historic records indicate he was born in Missouri and his parents may have been from Kentucky.⁴⁰ Cole was approximately six years old when he was forcibly brought to the Oregon Territory with his grandmother, Pauline, and Louis (Southworth) Hunter via the Oregon Trail by their enslaver, James Southworth. According to historical records and biographical accounts Pauline was Louis's mother, which would indicate he was Cole's father or uncle.⁴¹ Around 1853, Cole and his grandmother were illegally bought by Joseph Teals, a wealthy businessman living in Lane County.⁴² This event is particularly noteworthy because it is the only documented instance in Oregon of the sale of an enslaved person. Teals changed the boy's name to Cole and reportedly "freed" Cole and his grandmother around 1860, who then lived together near present-day Junction City. However, census records indicate that in 1860, Cole was living with the Driskill family somewhat nearby, in present-day Elmira.⁴³ For a time, Cole also lived with John Whiteaker, a staunch pro-slavery figure and Oregon's first governor from 1859 to 1862.⁴⁴

Cole remained the single Black resident of Lane County in 1860 and at the time was one of only 128 Black individuals documented living in the state.⁴⁵ By 1880, he was one of only four Black individuals residing in Lane County, while the total Black population of Oregon had reached 497.⁴⁶ Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, Cole lived in a house he owned on High Street and worked as a cook in a restaurant.⁴⁷ Cole died in 1899, after suffering from an unknown illness. He was presumed to have been in his late forties at the time of his death (Figure 1).

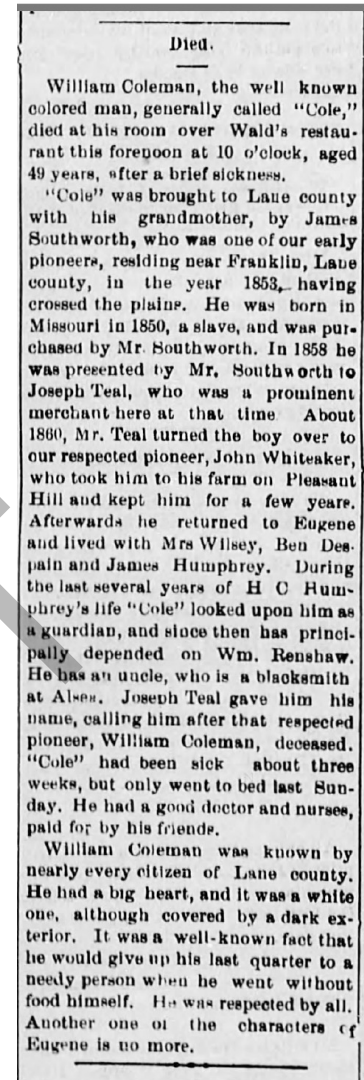


Figure 1. Obituary for Cole referred to as William Coleman (*Eugene Guard*, October 27, 1899).

³⁹ "Died," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), October 27 1899, 4.

⁴⁰ 1880 United States Census.

⁴¹ 1850 census records indicate that James Southworth enslaved three people in Missouri before emigrating to Oregon in the early 1850s. Southworth circulated a petition in support of slavery in Lane County in 1859. See State of Oregon, "Louis (Lewis) Alexander Southworth," *Black In Oregon 1840–1870*, accessed October 20, 2025, <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/black-history/Pages/families/southworth.aspx>.

⁴² McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise*, 49.

⁴³ US Census Bureau, 1860 US census. William's name was listed as "Cole Southworth [Southwell]," the last name of his enslaver, James Southworth.

⁴⁴ "Died," *Broad-Axe* (Eugene, OR), November 1, 1899, 1.

⁴⁵ US Census Bureau, 1860 US census.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ "Died," *Broad-Axe* (Eugene, OR), November 1, 1899, 1; "How Cole Counted Gov. Whitaker's Pigs," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), January 19, 1900.

Post-Railroad Era

Beginning in the 1870s, railroads began to reach the southern Willamette Valley. The Oregon and California Railroad Company finalized the railroad from Portland to Eugene in 1871, decreasing reliance on steamship and stagecoach for long-distance travel. Rail transportation significantly reduced travel time and enhanced economic opportunities in Eugene. After the Oregon and California Railroad Company went bankrupt, Henry Villard took financial control in 1885 and renamed the company the Southern Pacific Railroad (S.P.R.R.). In 1887, the railway was extended to California. The completed railway served as an economic link that substantially expanded markets and boosted timber and agricultural industries in the region.⁴⁸ Commercial development, industry, and commerce progressed as the railway became the primary mode and most reliable form of transportation in Eugene.

The arrival of the railroad introduced a new class of jobs available to Black men. Some railroad jobs available to Black men entailed manual labor, like track maintenance, but a majority of the job opportunities in the railroad industry were jobs as porters, cooks, and waiters on dining cars.⁴⁹ Many Black men were employed in the railroad industry in Oregon during the early 1900s because it was one of the few jobs that was available to them since employment was severely limited to Black Oregonians due to exclusionary laws and pervasive racism. Railroad companies engaged in exploitative labor practices, often seeking to hire Black workers who were paid lower wages than white workers. Massive recruiting campaigns were led by The Pullman Company, based out of Chicago, as well as other companies to a lesser degree.⁵⁰ A majority of railroad work was centered in Portland, the primary transportation and commercial hub in the state, however, the expansion of the railroad led to job opportunities throughout the state, including a large number of jobs through the S.P.R.R. in the Eugene area.

The arrival of the railroad substantially increased commercial and industrial development in the burgeoning city. Construction in Eugene continued on a large and unprecedented scale, with a majority of commercial development forming along 8th and 9th Avenues and Willamette Street. Numerous new businesses were established in the late 1800s that catered to arriving train passengers, including lodging and entertainment venues. Private residences initially located near the downtown commercial district core were either removed or relocated to make way for commercial growth. Eugene's population drastically grew from 2,000 in 1884 to 9,009 in 1910.⁵¹

Timber and agricultural production were dominant industries that propelled economic growth in the Eugene area during the late nineteenth century and continued to prosper well into the twentieth century. The potential for processing and transporting lumber and grain was immediately realized by early European American settlers who built a sawmill and gristmill along the Willamette River shortly after arrival in the early 1850s. After the completion of the railroad in the late twentieth century, further industrial development ensued along the river, just east of the city center. Over several decades, the production and manufacturing of timber expanded, and Eugene soon became a hub for processing and transporting lumber from mills in the nearby towns of Springfield, Saginaw, and Cottage Grove.⁵²

Lane County represented one of several areas in the state where a small number of Black individuals had settled while seeking new opportunities in logging, farming, and mining. Although less prevalent than

⁴⁸ Carter and Dennis, *Eugene Area Historic Context Statement*, 39.

⁴⁹ Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002," sec. E, 3, 52.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Carter and Dennis, *Eugene Area Historic Context Statement*, 57.

⁵² Steve McQuiddy, "Eugene," Oregon Encyclopedia, last modified September 25, 2023, accessed October 2024, <https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/eugene/>.

other areas of the state, mining was another extractive industry that attracted newcomers to areas near Eugene.

John Warren Downer was an early Black settler who lived in Lane County at the end of the 19th century. Born in Jamaica c. 1846, Downer immigrated to the United States by way of Florida in 1854, around the age of eight. He arrived in the Eugene area during the late 1880s to early 1890s, and was one of about seventeen Black residents living in the county by 1900.⁵³ He was involved in local politics and supported Grant and Wilson in the 1872 presidential campaign.⁵⁴ By the 1890s he had become a well-established miner in the region and despite discriminatory laws and policies that denied him the right to own property, Downer lived in a cabin on property he owned near the community of Blue River, approximately 40 miles east of Eugene. The community of Blue River formed in the 1860s, when miners began to settle in the area after gold-bearing quartz was discovered in the upper reaches of the Blue River drainage.⁵⁵ Downer purchased a 200-acre mining claim at Treasure Mine in 1903 in the Blue River Mining District.⁵⁶ Investors and owners of the First National Bank in Eugene, Thomas Hendricks and Stewart Eakins, also owned mines in the area and established a friendship with Downer.⁵⁷ Downer became a US citizen the following year in 1904. John William and A. E. Wheeler served as his witnesses.⁵⁸

When Downer fell ill sometime in the late spring of 1909, his neighbors helped care for him. While ill, Downer barely survived a fire that tragically destroyed his cabin. Shortly after, he was taken to the Eugene General Hospital in Eugene, where he passed away on June 2, 1909. Historic newspaper articles stated varying causes of his death, including accounts that Downer succumbed to injuries as a result of the fire, while others claim his death was caused by an illness or stroke. Thomas Hendricks and Stewart Eakins, owners of the First National Bank in Eugene who also had mining claims in the Blue River Mining District, purchased a plot at the **I.O.O.F. Pioneer Cemetery (1001 E 18th Avenue)**, where Downer was buried.

During the same era Eugene was home to Wiley Griffon, perhaps the most well-known early Black resident of Lane County. Griffon was notably involved in the operation of Eugene's earliest public transportation system. Born c. 1867, Griffon arrived in Eugene around 1890, the same time period as Downer. Biographical records of Griffon's life before his arrival in Eugene are sparse, but according to the 1910 census, he was born in Illinois. Griffon likely emigrated to Oregon to work for Henry Holden, a white businessman and railroad entrepreneur. He may have made the journey from Texas to Oregon with Holden, however, there is no documentation that confirms their relationship prior to their arrival in Oregon. It is possible that they met in the boarding house Holden operated in Fort Worth, Texas before his move to Eugene.⁵⁹

⁵³ US Census Bureau, 1900 US census. The county's Black population had grown from approximately ten residents in 1890 to seventeen residents by 1900.

⁵⁴ Heather Kliever, "Museum Rediscovered a Black Pioneer of Lane County," February 16, 2017, *Eugene Weekly*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://eugeneweekly.com/2017/02/16/museum-rediscovered-a-black-pioneer-of-lane-county/>.

⁵⁵ Gerald W. Williams, "Community of Blue River," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, 2022, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/community_of_blue_river/, accessed October 2024.

⁵⁶ "John Downer, Colored Miner, Is Dead," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), June 10, 1909, 2.

⁵⁷ Heather Kliever, "Museum Rediscovered a Black Pioneer of Lane County."

⁵⁸ Oregon State Archive, US Naturalization Records, 1840–1892, accessed October 8, 2024, via Ancestry.com.

⁵⁹ US Census Bureau, 1910 US census.; US Census Bureau, 1880 US census.



Figure 2. Wiley Griffon with his mule-drawn streetcar on the Eugene & College Hill line in c. 1890 (Lane County History Museum).

After his arrival, Griffon became the “driver, conductor, and dispatcher” for the **Eugene & College Hill Street Railway (1891–1900)**, the city’s first streetcar system established by Holden in 1891 (Figure 2).⁶⁰ Griffon operated the mule-drawn streetcar along the route from the Southern Pacific Depot, south along Willamette St. and 11th Ave., to the University of Oregon (UO) campus.⁶¹ Sometime after Holden sold the streetcar line, Griffon resigned from his position and held several other jobs both in and outside Eugene.

During the late 1890s, Griffon became the first African American employed at the UO as a janitor at **Friendly Hall (1233 University St.)**, the men’s dormitory on the campus (Figure 3). He also worked as a porter for the **Smeede Hotel (767 Willamette Street)** in Eugene (Figure 4).⁶²

His last job was working as a porter for the Eugene Elks Club. Only white men were allowed membership into the Elks Lodge and since their inception fraternal organizations banned women and people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds from joining. By 1900, Griffon was one of three African Americans living

⁶⁰ “Wiley Griffon, Eugene’s Negro Character, Dead,” *Morning Register* (Eugene, OR), June 27, 1913, 8.

⁶¹ The University of Oregon (UO) was founded in 1872 (originally called Oregon State College), after Eugene was designated by the Oregon State Legislature as the location for a new state university. Roughly 17 acres situated approximately one mile east of the central commercial area of Eugene, on what had previously been the Hilyard Shaw land claim, was selected as the site for the newly formed University. Initial funding to erect the University’s first building was provided by the Union University Association, but construction efforts were paused due to insufficient allocations. After more finances were secured from public and private donors, the University’s first building, University Hall (formerly named Deady Hall) was constructed in 1876. The building was originally named Deady Hall in 1893, after early lawyer, politician, and judge, Matthew Deady following his death. Deady, a pro-slavery proponent, compiled the first book of Oregon laws. After secession in 1860, he became a Republican and changed his political views during the Civil War, although he never denounced his stance on slavery. See Carter and Dennis, *Eugene Area Historic Context Statement*, 45.

⁶² For a time, Griffon was a waiter on an Oregon Railroad & Navigation Company (OR&N) dining car and also worked at the infamous Log Cabin Eating House (no longer extant), a restaurant in Meacham, Oregon, near Pendleton, which was owned by OR&N and run by Katherine Munra, known as “Grandma Munra.” See Carter and Dennis, *Eugene Area Historic Context Statement*, 45.



Figure 3. Wiley Griffon (lower center) outside Friendly Hall Dormitory, c. 1895 (Lane County History Museum).



Figure 4. Staff shown in the kitchen of the Smeede Hotel in c. 1895, including Wiley Griffon (lower left) (Lane County History Museum).

in Eugene, out of a total population of 3,236 at the time.⁶³ For a brief time during the early 1900s, Griffon was also an authorized piano manufacturer and dealer and he frequently published ads in the newspaper seeking various cleaning jobs, including carpet and plate glass cleaning.

As one of the few Black residents living in the Eugene area when Oregon was not a welcoming place for people of color, Griffon persevered. Under the discriminatory exclusion laws of 1849, it was illegal for Griffon and other Black residents to own property or make contracts in Oregon, however, these laws were often overlooked since there were very few Black people living in Oregon. In 1909, Griffon obtained a permit from the city to construct a residence, becoming one of the first known Black homeowners in Eugene.⁶⁴ His house was purchased through an “installment plan” which he arranged with William B. Andrews, a local white lumber dealer. Griffon’s house was located on what is now the southwest corner of **E 4th Ave. and Mill St.**⁶⁵ The residence was a small one-story wood-framed dwelling with a full-width porch that would have overlooked the Eugene Millrace during the time he resided there. Griffon also had a garden that he tended in his yard.

When Griffon fell ill, the Elks Club and some of his former employers reportedly sent a physician and housekeeper to his house to care for him. After several weeks, Griffon died at his home at the age of forty-six in June of 1913.⁶⁶ He was buried at the **Eugene Masonic Cemetery (University St. and E 25th Ave)**. Griffon’s funeral was held at the Branstetter Chapel on Olive St. He was not an Elks member due to exclusionary practices but his funeral was organized and paid for by the Eugene Elks Lodge, a service that was customarily given to Elks members after their death.⁶⁷ Griffon was either buried in an unmarked grave or the gravestone was destroyed or somehow damaged and removed. After his death, his residence was relocated or demolished by 1918. Midgley Planing Mill Co. purchased the property, before the Eugene Water & Electric Board (WEB) eventually acquired it.⁶⁸ Numerous obituaries reflecting Griffon’s life and moral character were published after his passing, indicating he was well-regarded in the community, but he undoubtedly faced overt and covert racism while a resident in Eugene. Griffon was described as “genial” with “many friends” and was remembered as “...one of the most industrious colored men” and “...perhaps the best-known character on Eugene’s streets.”⁶⁹



Figure 5. Henderson Stone’s children photographed in a Eugene studio in ca. 1890 (Lane County History Museum).

⁶³ US Census Bureau, 1900 US census.

⁶⁴ “Many New Residences Started During Month of April,” *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), May 5, 1909, 2.

⁶⁵ Sanborn Map Company, “Eugene, Lane County, Oregon,” 1902, 1912, Library of Congress Digital Collections, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/>; “Wiley Griffon, Eugene’s Negro Character, Dead.”

⁶⁶ “Wiley Griffon, Eugene’s Negro Character, Dead.”

⁶⁷ “Wiley Griffon [sic] Dead,” *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), June 27, 1913, 2.

⁶⁸ With the help of various community members and groups, a monument has been placed at the site of his grave at the Eugene Masonic Cemetery and a historic marker was placed at the site of his home in 2022.

⁶⁹ “Wiley Griffon [sic] Dead.”; “Wiley Griffon, Eugene’s Negro Character, Dead.”

Henderson Stone was another early Black resident who lived in Eugene with his two children sometime during the late-1880s (Figure 5). He owned a barbershop and bathhouse on Willamette St. and was the first recognized Black business owner in Eugene.⁷⁰ There is little known about the Stone family, but they likely left Eugene sometime before 1890.

INTERWAR YEARS, THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1920–1941)

This period reflects the years between the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II. Significant changes occurred in American life during this period including hallmark events such as the Great Depression and the development of new modes of transportation. Eugene underwent significant and unavoidable economic downturns during World War I and the Great Depression that were eventually followed by a postwar boom that boosted development throughout the city.

Beginning in the early 1900s to the 1970s, approximately six million Black individuals and families left the south during the period known as the Great Migration.⁷¹ Leaving racial violence and Jim Crow laws in the south, African Americans relocated to northern industrial cities, such as Pittsburgh, New York, and Chicago in pursuit of better education and employment prospects during the first phase of the Great Migration, beginning in the early 1900s up until 1940. Black southerners also migrated to urban areas in California during the early years of the mass movement. Although Black Americans did not migrate to Oregon in increasing numbers until the second phase of the Great Migration, following the onset of World War II, Oregon's Black population steadily grew from 1940 onward.

This growth was concentrated in Portland, which had become one of the most rapidly growing cities in the United States by the turn of the twentieth century. While the city's Black population had gradually increased, this growth was occurring at a significantly slower rate than overall population growth. An estimated 70 percent of Oregon's Black population lived in Portland, which reached 1,115 by 1900.⁷² Eugene's Black community by contrast remained small, and while the number of Black residents had slightly increased from 10 to 17 residents in 1900, the number of Black people living in Lane County decreased after 1900 and remained at fewer than 17 people until around World War II.⁷³

Social engagement, civil rights activism, and advocacy began to take root in Portland's expanding Black community during the early 1900s. The first Black-owned newspapers in the state, *The New Age* (1896–1907) and *The Advocate* (1903–1936) gave voice and representation to the Black community, which had been excluded from white-dominant narrative.⁷⁴ Numerous Black churches emerged in Portland as places of worship and spiritual practice. Churches also provided community aid and social services, including education, health care, housing, and employment. Early civil rights efforts in Portland were led by early Black residents like Beatrice Morrow Cannady, Dr. James Merriman, and several others who helped found the first National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter in Oregon in 1914. After formation, one of the chapter's primary goals was to remove the exclusion laws from the

⁷⁰ Lane County History Museum, Photo Record (WR220), Digital Collections, accessed October 8, 2024, <https://lchm.pastperfectonline.com/photo/29E04A7A-BC47-404A-BAE4-631619359040>.

⁷¹ National Archives and Records Administration, "The Great Migration (1910-1970)," African American Heritage, last accessed September 10, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/migrations/great-migration>.

⁷² Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," E-53.

⁷³ After 1900 the population continued to decrease until 1950. See US Census Bureau, 1900 US census.

⁷⁴ Galbraith et al., "African American Resources in Portland from 1851 to 1973 MPD," sec. E, 68–72.

state constitution.⁷⁵ While centered in Portland, organizations like the NAACP, actively engaged in early civil rights efforts and Black empowerment, were connected to a larger network of smaller Black communities throughout Oregon. Mirroring early civil rights activism that was occurring nationally, the Portland chapter of the NAACP confronted systemic inequality, racial injustice, and challenged racial discrimination, including housing policies and segregation in schools, and resisted Ku Klux Klan (KKK) activity across the state.⁷⁶

The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan in Eugene

During the early 1920s, the KKK gained prominence in Eugene and other parts of Oregon. The KKK represents racism and violence and is the oldest hate group and white supremacist organization in the United States. The group formed in the South during the post-Civil War Reconstruction era in 1860. The organization was initially formed to harass northern troops occupying the South and threaten and intimidate African Americans. The KKK began to decline after Federal law enforcement began to hinder their growth, but a resurgence in Georgia in 1915 reignited Klan activity. Klan membership reached a peak in the United States during the 1920s, gaining millions of followers across the country.

As Klan activity spread throughout the western United States during the early 1920s, the KKK was most prominent in Oregon, with a far-reaching presence that expanded to every county of the state. With Oregon's 97% white and majority Protestant population in 1920, the Klan received little resistance when it first made its way to the state.⁷⁷ As described by the late historian Eckard Toy Jr., "...racism, religious bigotry, and anti-immigration sentiments were deeply entrenched in the laws, culture, and social life of Oregon."⁷⁸

The Klan perpetuated racial and ethnic exclusion in Oregon and recruited politicians and state legislators to help advance their anti-immigration agenda. In 1923, during the Klan's successful infiltration and political influence over the Oregon State Legislature, the Alien Land Act was passed in Oregon, denying people of Japanese descent not born in the U.S. the right to citizenship and property ownership.⁷⁹ The Oregon Alien Business Restriction Law was another anti-immigration legislation implemented in 1923. The law allowing municipal governments to refused business licenses to first generation Japanese Americans and required business owners not born in the U.S. to publicly post and display signs indicating their nationality.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Kathy Tucker, "Portland Chapter NAACP 50th Anniversary," Oregon History Project, Oregon Historical Society, last modified 2025, accessed October 2024, <https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/portland-chapter-naacp-50th-anniversary/>.

⁷⁶ Millner, "Black People in Oregon."; Tucker, "Portland Chapter NAACP 50th Anniversary."

⁷⁷ Eckard Toy, "Ku Klux Klan," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, 2022, last modified July 21, 2022, accessed October 2024, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/ku_klux_klan/.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Eckard Toy, "Robe and Gown: the Ku Klux Klan in Eugene, Oregon," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward A New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 160–161.; State of Oregon, "Oregon and the Roaring Twenties," Oregon at War! World War I and the Oregon Experience, accessed June 12, 2025, <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/ww1/Pages/oregon-roaring-twenties.aspx>. The fundamental purpose of Alien Land Acts in Oregon and other western states was to disenfranchise and prevent economic opportunities for people of Japanese descent, while also affecting Indigenous, Chinese, Korean, and South Asian populations.

⁸⁰ State of Oregon, "Oregon's History," expert from *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan. A Roadmap of Racial Equity and Belonging*, accessed June 14, 2025, https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/Housing/Documents/2021_DAS_DEI_Action_Plan-History_Only.pdf.

By 1923, KKK membership in the state had reached an all-time high, with approximately 35,000 registered members out of Oregon's total population of 833,000.⁸¹

To declare their presence, and as a form of intimidation, local chapters used visible Klan symbology and conducted public acts of terrorism at speeches, events, and ceremonies in Eugene and other towns and cities throughout Oregon (Figure 6).

The Klan increased recognition and power in local and state politics in Oregon, with Klan members holding positions as government officials and in police forces, fraternal organizations, and churches.⁸² The overwhelming majority of members were considered "ordinary Oregonians."⁸³ Walter Pierce, Oregon's governor from 1922 to 1927, was endorsed by the Klan.

One of the Klan's objectives and intent while campaigning in Oregon was anti-Catholicism. Given the small Black population of an estimated 2,000 in Oregon during the 1920s and only 13 Black residents living in Eugene, the Black community was not viewed as a threat; however, people of color and other ethnicities were still subject to racially-motivated intimidation and violence. Black business owners in Salem and Oregon City were threatened and told to leave town by the Klan. Klan members kidnapped and "mock lynched" three men, including an African American, in southern Oregon but did not kill them.

Klan recruiters arrived in Eugene in 1921 and began organizing the Eugene Klan No. 3 local chapter. According to historian and author Eckard Toy, who has conducted extensive research on the Klu Klux Klan in Oregon, over 60 local chapters and provisional Klans were active in the state by 1923.⁸⁴ Members

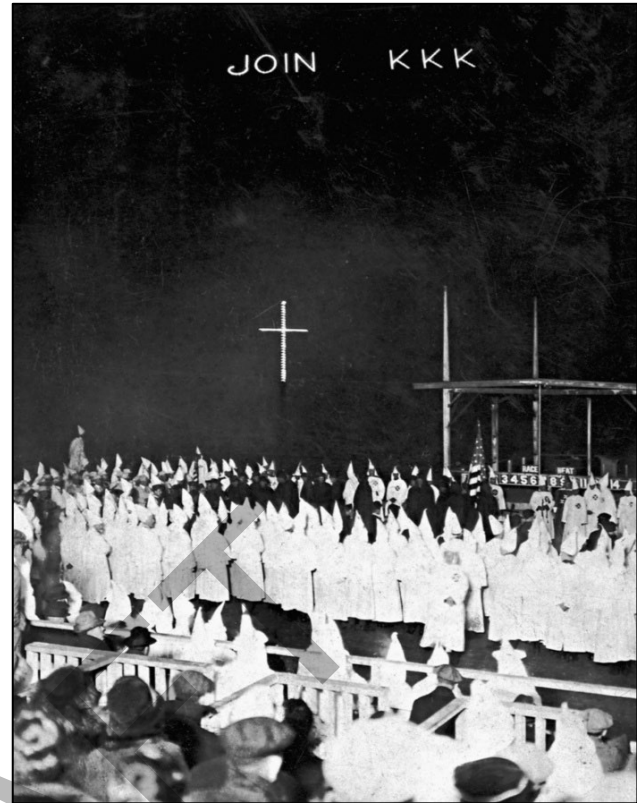


Figure 6. KKK gathering held at the Lane County Fairgrounds in ca. 1921 (Oregon Historical Society Research Library, accessed from *Racing to Change*).

⁸¹ *Oregon's Klan in the 1920s: The Rise of Hate, Season 16, Episode 1*, Public Broadcasting Service, 2022, <https://video.wgbh.org/video/the-rise-of-hate-oregons-klan-in-the-1920s-uoakln/>.

⁸⁴ Toy, "Ku Klux Klan." The number of chapters varies according to some sources. According to the Moreland et. al., there were 18 chapters in Oregon. See Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 78.



Figure 7. “KKK” displayed on top of Skinner’s Butte in 1921. View from Willamette Street, looking south (Old Oregon Photos, accessed from *The Daily Emerald*, August 14, 2016).

of the Eugene Klan aimed at recruiting white men, but affiliated auxiliary groups also formed to expand membership to include women and white Protestants born outside the US.

In Eugene, the letters “KKK” were prominently displayed on top of Skinner’s Butte, where the Klan would burn a cross weekly during the early 1920s (Figure 7).⁸⁵ According to scholars and historians Johnson, Taylor, and Weisiger, while the Klan never exceeded 4% of Oregon’s population, its members held high-ranking positions and were therefore able to assert disproportionate power and influence over public affairs.⁸⁶

The Klan caused corruption and division across Oregon, and while some Oregonians maintained neutrality, there was also local and state-wide opposition to the Klan. Several prominent Oregonians were called out by name in the *Capital Journal* for their association with the Klan, including local Eugene Klansman Joseph Shelton, owner and publisher of the *Eugene Guard*, and Charles “Shy” Huntington, the UO head football coach.⁸⁷ Despite resistance from the administration, the Eugene Klan successfully enrolled faculty and students at the UO.⁸⁸ Frederick Dunn, professor and head of the Latin Department at

⁸⁵ Thomas C. Hogg, “Negroes and Their Institutions in Oregon,” *Phylon*, 3rd Qtr., 1969, Vol. 30, No. 3, 278.

⁸⁶ David Alan Johnson, Quintard Taylor, and Marsha Weisiger, *Report on the History of Matthew P. Deady and Frederick S. Dunn*, University of Oregon, September 5, 2017, 26, accessed September 5, 2017, https://president.uoregon.edu/sites/default/files/deady_dunn_final_report_08-05-16.pdf.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 28.

⁸⁸ Eckard Toy, “The Ku Klux Klan in Oregon,” in *Experiences in a Promised Land: Essays in Pacific Northwest History*, G. Thomas Edwards and Carlos A. Schwantes, eds. (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1986), 274.

the University, led the Eugene Klan No. 3 under the title of Exalted Cyclops.⁸⁹ Klan activity also infiltrated the city government and local politics. The Eugene Klan successfully forced the mayor, city attorney, and chief of police in Eugene to resign in 1923, after Klan-endorsed candidates were elected in nearly every municipal office in Eugene.⁹⁰ They also attempted to remove all Catholic teachers from public schools; three teachers whose contracts were up for renewal lost their jobs.⁹¹

Public opposition to the Klan built, and local newspapers began to publicize and expose corruption within the Klan movement. By the mid-1920s, most local chapters in Oregon had dissolved and the Klan movement throughout the United States was in decline.

Early Black UO Students and Exclusionary Campus Housing Policies

The first Black student to attend the UO was Mabel Byrd in 1917, when total enrollment at the university was 330. She was only one of approximately thirteen to seventeen African Americans living in Lane County during the 1910s.⁹² Byrd was denied campus housing in the newly constructed women's dormitory because she was African American, and during the years she attended UO, from 1917 to 1919, she was forced to find off-campus housing in Eugene. Originally from Pennsylvania, Byrd moved to Portland with her family in 1895. After graduating from Washington High School in Portland, Byrd was admitted to the UO, where she majored in economics. She excelled in her studies and was recognized for her good academic standing. To remain in Eugene and receive a college education, Byrd had to live and work as a servant in the home of history professor Joseph Schafer, located at **1378 13th Ave** (no longer extant).⁹³ In 1919, at the end of her sophomore year, Byrd transferred to the University of Washington, where she graduated in 1921.⁹⁴ Byrd remained an active advocate for equal rights until she passed away in 1988 at the age of 92.

Discriminatory housing practices aimed at Black students continued into the late 1920s and 1930s. The first Black graduate student of UO, William Sherman Savage, faced similar housing discrimination. After graduating from high school in Baltimore, Savage earned an undergraduate degree from Howard University in 1917. He became a high school teacher in the South before securing a permanent teaching position at Lincoln University in Missouri in 1921. He left his teaching position to attend the UO two

⁸⁹ Eckard Toy, "Robe and Gown: the Ku Klux Klan in Eugene, Oregon," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward A New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 65.

⁹⁰ Johnson, Taylor, and Weisiger, *Report on the History of Matthew P. Deady and Frederick S. Dunn*, 28.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² US Census Bureau, 1910 US census.; US Census Bureau, 1920 US census.

⁹³ McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise*, 126.

⁹⁴ Herman L. Brame, *A Forgotten Woman of Oregon: Mabel Byrd's Life of Protest* (Portland, OR: Herman L. Brame, 2014). Byrd went on to become an activist during the civil rights movement and was involved in various national and international organizations. For a time, she taught English at the segregated Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Portland and served as the vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Portland Branch. She befriended W.E.B. DuBois and arranged for him to speak at the University of Oregon in 1923. While living in New York City, she became part of a core group of DuBois's inner circle that gathered to discuss strategies to confront and combat racism. Byrd was the first African American hired by the National Recovery Administration (NRA) during the Roosevelt administration and oversaw the implementation of fair working conditions and equal pay. See Camryn McNab, "Mabel Janet Byrd (1895-1988)," BlackPast, June 11, 2021, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/people-african-american-history/mabel-janet-byrd-1895-1988/>.

years later, in 1923. Savage graduated from the UO in 1925, with a master's degree in history.⁹⁵ Savage was also denied on-campus housing and struggled to find housing while attending the University. City directories indicate that he lived for a short time in a residence at **775 Willamette Street**, near downtown.⁹⁶ Savage went on to earn his PhD in history and authored the landmark book *Blacks in the West*, one of the first scholarly treatments of the contributions of Black people to the history of the western United States.

While a student at the University during the 1920s and 1930s, Maxine Maxwell protested the University's policy of excluding Black women from living in the dormitories. Maxwell found off-campus housing twelve blocks from campus at **1970 Columbia Street**, where she lived with her roommate, Nellie Franklin. Franklin was also denied on-campus dormitory housing. She persevered and during her studies, was actively involved in various clubs and organizations at the University, including the Women's Athletic Association, the Polyphonic Choir, and the Cosmopolitan Club.⁹⁷ Franklin was the first Black woman to graduate from the UO, earning a bachelor's degree in music in 1932.⁹⁸

Ellen Law, a Black student originally from the eastern Oregon logging community Maxville, encountered similar treatment while attending the UO and was forced to find housing in a cold basement.⁹⁹ Although Black students were generally restricted from living in dormitories on campus, there were some exceptions where Black students could live on campus but only under segregated conditions that entailed rooms in entirely different buildings than white students or occupying another area of dormitory buildings separate from white students. The only other circumstance the University permitted Black students residing on campus was if they only roomed with other Black students.¹⁰⁰

The first Black students to be allowed in dormitory housing at the UO were Robert "Bob" Robinson and Charles "Chuck" Williams (Figure 8). Robinson and Williams were also the first documented Black collegiate athletes to attend the University of Oregon, in 1926, the same year Oregon's exclusion law was repealed. Robinson moved to Portland from Texas in 1922, and Williams moved to Portland from Kansas City in 1925. Both men played high school football in Portland before accepting full scholarships at the UO. Prohibited from living in the dorms their first year, the two lived in an apartment, located at **825 E 13th St.**¹⁰¹ During their sophomore year, Robinson and Williams and track and field athlete Huber Allen

⁹⁵ Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 95.

⁹⁶ Polk's Eugene City (Oregon) Directory, 1925, Portland, R.L. Polk & Co., 1925.; Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 95.

⁹⁷ Peyton Hall, UO History 101: Women on Campus, accessed April 6, 2025, <https://www.uoalumni.com/s/1540/21/interior.aspx?sid=1540&gid=3&pgid=12420&cid=32274&ecid=32274&crid=0&calpgid=586&calcid=27007>.

⁹⁸ Herman L. Brame, *Maxine's Struggle: The Story of Maxine Maxwell and the University of Oregon* (Portland, OR: Herman L. Brame, 2014).

⁹⁹ McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise*, 126.; Law had grown up in a segregated environment and her father worked diligently to ensure his children received a fair and equal education. Initially born in Arkansas, Law grew up in segregated conditions in Maxville, Oregon, where her father worked as a logger. To ensure Black students received an education separate from white students in the segregated community of Maxville, Law and other Black students were only able to attend night school. Law's father boarded his children in the nearby town of Enterprise so they could attend public school. Law taught physical education at Jefferson High School in Portland during the 1950s, until she was appointed principal of the school in 1971. She accepted the position of head coach of the high school varsity girls' swim team and became the first known Black woman to coach varsity sports in the state. See Herman L. Brame, *African American Athletes in Oregon: A History From 1804 to 1950* (Portland, OR: Herman L. Brame, 2000), 31–32.

¹⁰⁰ Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 95.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., sec. E, 96.

were allowed to live in Friendly Hall, but only under segregated conditions. They were housed in a separate living area, away from white students in the central dorm area.¹⁰² Robinson and Williams were not permitted to play the last games of their careers when the opposing team, the University of Florida, refused to compete against Black athletes. The UO conceded, and the game was held in Miami without Robinson and Williams.¹⁰³

Other notable Black athletes at UO during this period included Mathew “Mack” Robinson, a UO track and field athlete during the 1930s, who excelled at the 100- and 200- meter sprints and long jump.¹⁰⁴ Robinson earned a place on the US Olympics team and traveled to Berlin for the 1936 Olympic Games amidst deep concerns of rising white supremacy in Nazi Germany. Black-owned newspapers across the country and other advocates opposed the proposed boycott of the 1936 Olympics, encouraging Robinson and the other 17 Black athletes, who had been given the name the “Black Eagles,” to compete and disprove the racist myth of white superiority.¹⁰⁵ Robinson won the 200-meter dash at the Olympics and unlike segregated living in Eugene, while at the Olympic games, Robinson stayed in integrated housing at the Olympic Village.¹⁰⁶

Robert “Smokey” Whitfield was another notable Black student at UO who went on to have a long Hollywood career in film and television, usually playing supporting roles as recurring characters in movie sequels and television series. While at UO, Whitfield was noted for his talent in acting, singing, and dancing. In addition to being a student and performer, he was a reserve halfback on the football team. At the UO, his starring role in a late-1930s student production of Eugene O’Neill’s play, *Emperor Jones*, led to a Hollywood contract.

Discriminatory housing practices at the University of Oregon and other universities in Oregon continued into the 1940s, when legal challenges ended outright discriminatory policies.

¹⁰² Herman L. Brame, *The Long Ebony Line: African American Athletes in Oregon, Circa 1860-1979*, (Portland, OR: Herman L. Brame, 2017), 23.

¹⁰³ Brame, *The Long Ebony Line*; 23.; Brame, *African American Athletes in Oregon*, 36.

¹⁰⁴ He grew up in Georgia and was the older brother to famed baseball player, Jackie Robinson, the first Black Major League Baseball (MLB) baseball player. See Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon,” sec. E, 96.

¹⁰⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936,” African American Responses, accessed April 2, 2025, https://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/olympics/?content=aa_responses&lang=en.

¹⁰⁶ Hansi Lo Wang, “Black US Olympians Won In Nazi Germany Only To Be Overlooked At Home,” *National Public Radio*, August 13, 2016, accessed March 28, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetorch/2016/08/13/489773389/black-u-s-olympians-won-in-nazi-germany-only-to-be-overlooked-at-home>; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon,” sec. E, 97.

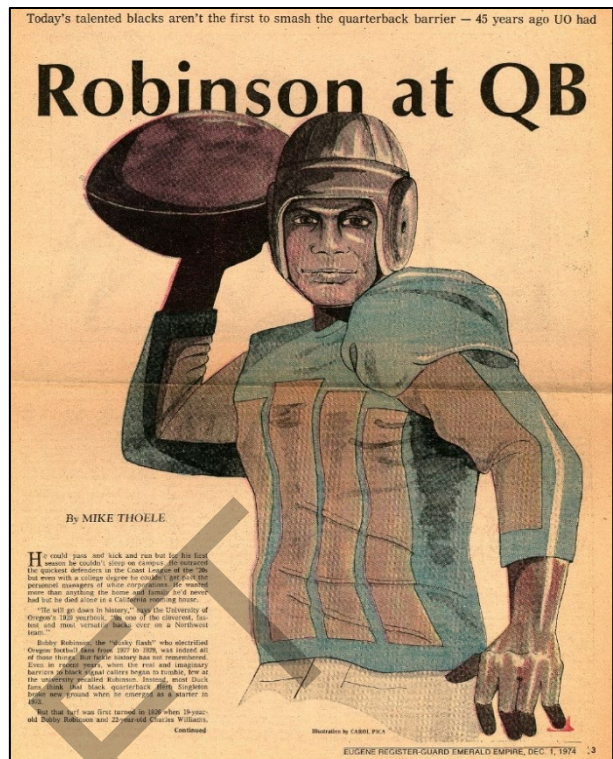


Figure 8. Artist depiction of Bobby Robinson from a later 1974 *Eugene Register-Guard Emerald Empire* article highlighting his athletic achievements and racism he encountered while living in Eugene (Citation needed-accessed from Lorna’s files).

Post-World War II to the Civil Rights Era (1942–1955)

Following the war, there was a development “boom” in Eugene. As the lumber industry in the region prospered from the nationwide housing surge, Black Americans faced widespread housing insecurities due to discriminatory policies and practices. To improve affordable housing after the Great Depression, the federal government introduced new housing agencies, the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).¹⁰⁷ From 1935 to 1940, the HOLC and the FHA created redlining maps of over 200 major US cities, including Portland. Redlining maps produced residential security zones that were rated according to discriminatory “grades” or risk categories based on race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Individuals and neighborhoods across the country that were comprised of “low-class whites,” immigrants, and African Americans deemed “hazardous” were denied access to banks, saving and loans, and other lenders, making it nearly impossible to buy or refinance homes.¹⁰⁸ As a result, areas deemed “hazardous” experienced plummeting house values, abandonment by landlords, and unreliable or non-existent city services. This racist and discriminatory practice, promoted by the federal government, continued for three decades and predominantly affected African American home ownership, although Jewish and immigrant populations were also targeted, to a lesser degree.

A redlining map of Eugene was never created simply because the population of the city was not large enough to constitute a major metropolitan city. Still, Black residents in Eugene experienced other forms of discrimination in housing. They were not only impacted by local, state, and federal policies, but local racist sentiments denied Black residents from owning and renting homes in most areas of Eugene.¹⁰⁹ This generally took the form of racial restrictive covenants, which were legally enforced structural barriers used to segregate cities across the US during the early to mid-twentieth century. These practices predominately impacted Black communities.¹¹⁰ Racist clauses also existed in the form of contracts that were agreed on by all property owners within entire neighborhoods or developments. These clauses not only forbade property ownership to people of color but also ensured they could not live in certain areas unless they were servants.¹¹¹ Racial covenants continued to exist despite the Supreme Court ruling against racial covenants as unconstitutional in 1948, and although they were officially outlawed with the passage of the Federal Fair Housing Act in 1968, racial covenants have had residual effects on Black communities across the country including in Eugene and Oregon, state-wide.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, et al., “Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America.” Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers eds. *American Panorama: An Atlas of United States History*, 2023. <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Redlining maps were made for cities of a population of 40,000 or more.

¹¹⁰ “What is a Covenant,” Mapping Prejudice, University of Minnesota, 2022, <https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/racial-covenants/what-is-a-covenant>. Racial restrictive covenants prevented people of color, as well as other ethnic and religious groups from leasing and owning property through discriminatory clauses that were written into individual property deeds. See Greta Smith, “‘Congenial Neighbors’: Restrictive Covenants and Residential Segregation in Portland, Oregon,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 119, no. 3 (2018): 360.

¹¹¹ In addition to the government, racially-restrictive covenants and deeds were promoted and enforced by landowners, developers, neighborhood associations, realtors and real estate boards, insurance companies, lenders and banks, and federal guarantors. Although the use of racial restrictive covenants peaked during the 1920s, racial covenants were legally binding conditions written into deeds and were enforced in perpetuity, prohibiting future sales or leases. See Smith, “‘Congenial Neighbors’: Restrictive Covenants and Residential Segregation,” 358. See also Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 77.

¹¹² State of Oregon, “Later Developments,” Black in Oregon 1840–1870, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/black-history/Pages/context/later-developments.aspx>; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon,” sec. E, 108.

Housing segregation enforced by racist zoning and planning policies impacted all facets of life for Black Americans and people of color, including education, health, and wealth. Racist and discriminatory housing policies and practices led to wealth inequality and environmental disparity, and the generational impacts of these policies still exist today. Black Americans and people of color were disproportionately subject to environmental disparity and injustices because of racist and discriminatory policies and practices that limited where they could live. As a result, because of redlining and racial covenants forced many Black Americans and people of color to live in “dilapidated” areas not desired by middle-class white families. These areas often lacked basic human rights like clean drinking water and exposed residents to higher levels of waste and pollutants.

As was the case nationwide, Black residents were denied equal housing in Eugene. Due to federal, state, and local policies and practices that were still prevalent during the 1940s, housing options for Black residents in the Eugene area were virtually non-existent. Certain neighborhoods and houses in Eugene had covenants with racist conditions and restrictions that excluded and discriminated against Black homeowners and renters.¹¹³ In addition, Black residents commonly encountered overt racism from white neighbors and property owners who refused to sell or rent to them.

Eugene was historically a sundown town—meaning the majority white community excluded African Americans from living there. Although there were no formal laws or ordinances, it was informally understood that the few African Americans that resided in the area would work and travel in Eugene during the day, but risked a much higher chance of racial incidents and harassment by the police if out at night.¹¹⁴ Although the number is likely higher, historians estimate that between 1890 and 1960, there were up to 10,000 sundown towns in the United States, mostly in the Midwest and west regions.¹¹⁵

The Second Great Migration

The period known as the “Second Great Migration” began with World War II when war-related employment and manufacturing significantly increased, causing a large migration of Black Americans relocating to major cities in northern and western states. The war resulted in a sudden influx of defense jobs that were available to many Americans who had formerly been denied equal access to employment opportunities due to racial and gender discrimination. In western states, shipyards opened in the major cities of Portland, Seattle, and San Francisco, which became centers for war manufacturing. The Kaiser shipyards in Portland and nearby Vancouver, Washington brought a large influx of Black Americans to the Northwest, substantially expanding Portland’s Black population from around 2,000 before the war, to roughly 22,000 by 1944.¹¹⁶ Black shipyard workers were recruited from all over the country, but a majority of those who came to the Portland vicinity were from the South. Most Black workers and their families lived in the community of Vanport, the largest wartime housing development in the United States that was hastily built on a floodplain outside Portland’s city limits to temporarily house wartime workers

¹¹³ Nagae, “Dealing With Race,” in *Eugene 1945-2000: Decisions That Made a Community*, ed. Kathleen Holt and Cheri Brooks (Eugene: City Club of Eugene, 2000), 201–202.

¹¹⁴ Talicia Brown-Crowell, interview by Geoff Norcross, *Think Out Loud*, OPB, August 19, 2024, accessed November 2024, <https://www.opb.org/article/2024/08/19/memorial-in-the-works-for-former-black-neighborhood-in-eugene/>; Ross Coen, “Sundown Towns,” BlackPast, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/sundown-towns/>, accessed October 2024.

¹¹⁵ Ross Coen, “Sundown Towns.”

¹¹⁶ Millner, “Black People in Oregon,” The Oregon Encyclopedia, last modified July 10, 2019, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/blacks_in_oregon/#.XcLw2ndFyUk.

and their families.¹¹⁷ By 1945, Vanport became the second largest city in Oregon. Vanport was home to over 10,000 Black residents during the war and approximately 6,000 Black residents remained there after the war. Tragically, it was destroyed by a devastating flood on May 30, 1948. The community had little warning and at least 15 residents perished in the flood, although according to eyewitness accounts there may have been more fatalities.¹¹⁸ Nearly one-third of the 18,500 displaced residents were Black.¹¹⁹ Just days after the flood, eight former Vanport residents registered with the Lane County Red Cross seeking housing and aid. The names of the individuals were not listed and according to the *Oregon Daily Journal* article, there were others who had not registered.¹²⁰

A majority of war-related jobs in Oregon were limited to Portland, but more job opportunities in the lumber and railroad industries did become available to African Americans in the Eugene area during the war years, as white men were drafted or left for better paying jobs related to the war effort elsewhere. These expanding employment opportunities for African Americans attracted individuals and their families to other regions of Oregon, including Eugene.

The overall population of Lane County increased substantially by eighty-two percent during the 1940s and for the first time, the county's Black population rose considerably from 15 residents in 1940 to 161 by the end of the decade.¹²¹ Some Black shipyard employees in search of work after the end of the war relocated to the Eugene area with their families, where they worked in lumber mills and were employed by the Southern Pacific Railroad. Others found service-related work in local hotels or worked for white families. Between 1940 and 1950, an estimated 146 Black people moved to Lane County.¹²² Most Black families who moved to the Eugene area during the late 1940s originally came from southern states such as Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas.

Across the Bridge Community, Eugene's First Black Community

Unable to rent or buy a house within the city limits of Eugene, Black residents had no other option but to live segregated on the outskirts of town. During the late 1940s, many Black individuals and families took residence on land owned by Lane County on the north bank of the Willamette River. The area was primarily agricultural land that was prone to seasonal flooding, including multiple floods that occurred during the 1940s (Figure 9). The area lacked public utilities or basic services, including plumbing and drinking water.¹²³ Residents assembled wood-framed homes primarily out of scrap lumber (Figure 10). Some houses had tent roofings.

Despite inadequate living conditions, a community primarily comprised of Black (and a small number of white) families formed what is known as the **Across the Bridge Community**¹²⁴ (now a portion of Alton

¹¹⁷ Michael N. McGregor, "The Vanport Flood," *The Oregon History Project*, last modified 2023, accessed October 2024, <https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/essays/the-vanport-flood/>.

¹¹⁸ Galbraith et al., "African American Resources in Portland," sec. E, 29.

¹¹⁹ Carl Abbott, "Vanport," *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, last modified September 16, 2023, <https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/vanport/>; McGregor, "The Vanport Flood."

¹²⁰ "Vanport Evacuees Arrive in Eugene," *Oregon Daily Journal* (Salem, OR), June 3, 1948, 5.

¹²¹ Thomas Hogg, "Black Man in White Town," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (1972): 281.

¹²² US Census Bureau, 1940 US census.; US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.

¹²³ Chrisanne Beckner, "Cultural Demolition: What Was Lost When Eugene Razed Its First Black Neighborhood?" Master's thesis, Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, 2009, accessed October 2024, <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/a3ac66f9-ea6b-4400-9dc4-5a0fa5db910e/content>.

¹²⁴ See page 4 of this document for additional information.



Figure 9. Photograph of the Willamette River flooded in Eugene 1945. Yellow arrow pointing to the approximate location of the Across the Bridge Community prior to its formation in the late 1940s (Lane County History Museum).

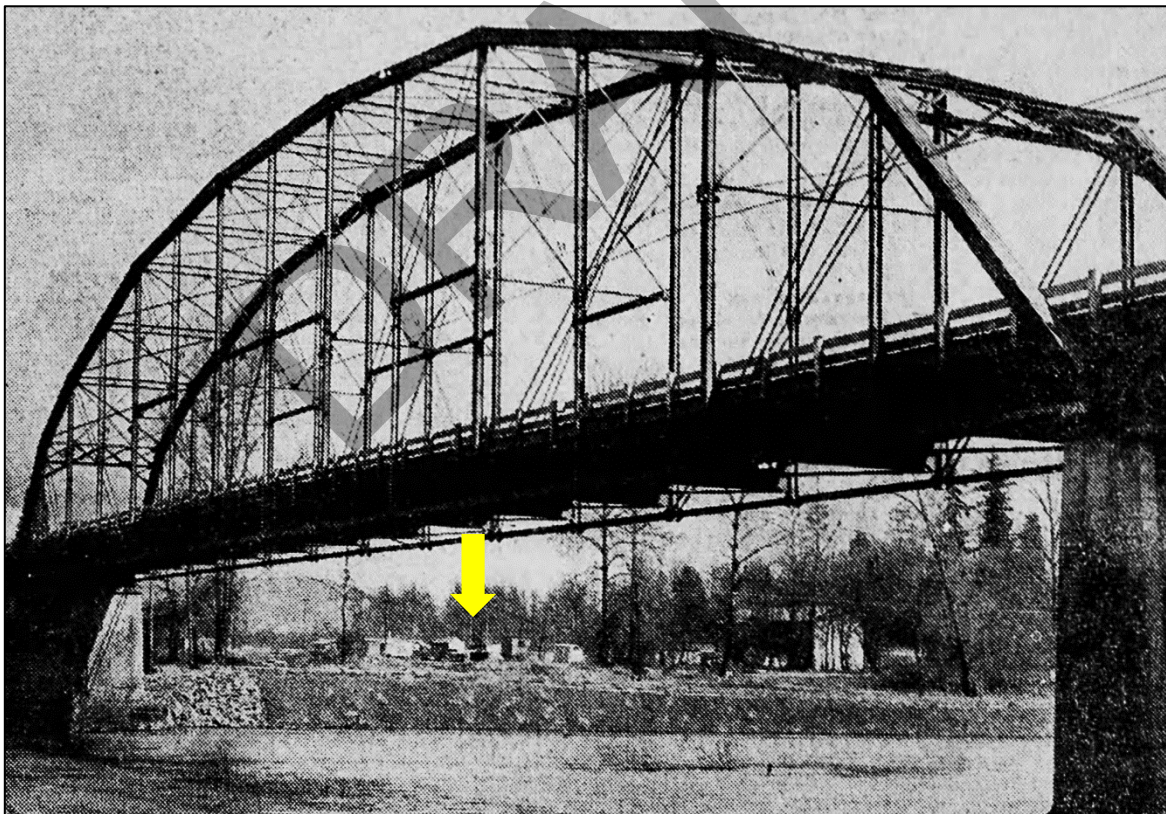


Figure 10. Across the Bridge Community partially in view in 1949 along the north side of the river bank, east of the Ferry Street Bridge before it was replaced (*Eugene Guard*).

Baker Park). White families in the community generally moved out as their economic situations improved, while Black families were denied the same opportunities. Early founding families of the community included the Johnsons, Mims, Nettles, and the Reynolds. These founding Black families invested in a community that, by 1948, housed an estimated 100 residents, including 65 Black residents and 36 white residents.¹²⁵ Other Black families that lived in the community included the Holts, Williams, Rucker, Joiner, Frenchwells, Lesters, Garrets, and Henrys. The community supported and looked after one another, they watched each other's children, gathered and shared meals, and built their own church (Figure 11). As described by Willie Mims, who was a child when his family lived at the Across the Bridge Community, "...folks had to depend on each other...if you didn't have income coming in, they'd fix everything else that you needed to survive on. I think probably the strongest resource that people had was each other."¹²⁶



Figure 11. Children pumping water in the Across the Bridge Community in c. 1949 (*Eugene Guard*, 1949).

In 1948, the community established the Ferry Street Chapel. Services were held in a wood-framed structure covered with a tent the Fairmount Christian Church in Eugene helped assemble (Figure 12).¹²⁷ The church was an integral part of the community and in addition to providing communal worship and spirituality, fostered community engagement. The first pastor of the church was Rev. S.H. Holloway of Portland, who commuted for Sunday services before he relocated to Eugene with his wife.¹²⁸ The Ferry Street Chapel had their own choir, "The Harmonizin' Five" who sang with the Portland "Southland

¹²⁵ "County Court Tells Ferry St. Villagers to Start Moving," *Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), July 14, 1949, 1.; Beckner, "Cultural Demolition," 63.

¹²⁶ City of Eugene Office of Equity & Community Engagement, *Stories of Exclusion and Inclusion: Owning our History, Creating our Future*.

¹²⁷ Fairmount Christian Church was located near the UO campus and was notably a white congregation. See Peggy Nagae, "Dealing With Race," 199-200; Beckner, "Cultural Demolition," 102-103.

¹²⁸ "S.H. Holloway Takes Ferry Street Chapel Ministerial Post," *Eugene Guard*, March 12, 1949, 4.



Figure 12. Women standing outside the Ferry Street Chapel in 1949
(Citation needed-accessed from Lorna's files).

Gospel Singers” at the Fairmount Church of Christ in Eugene.¹²⁹ While campaigning for Henry Wallace’s presidential bid in 1948, the actor, athlete, lawyer, singer, and Civil Rights activist, Paul Robeson visited the Across the Bridge Community and sang on the steps of the chapel to a group of approximately 50 people.¹³⁰

Sam and Mattie Reynolds were among one of the first families to live in the Across the Bridge Community. They came to Lane County from Shreveport, Louisiana in 1942 and briefly lived in McCredie Spring, near Oakridge, where Mr. Reynolds worked for the railroad. The Reynolds relocated to Eugene with their two children after Mr. Reynolds accepted a job at a sawmill. The sawmill owner found housing for the family in Eugene, but when the Reynolds arrived and began moving their belongings into the apartment on 6th Street, the landlord refused to rent to them.

The Reynolds faced unjust racism and discrimination while living in Eugene. They briefly found lodging at a hotel on Highway 99 in Eugene, where they were told that the children not go outside or else white people would move out.¹³¹ When staying at a boarding house on Pearl Street, between 6th and 7th streets, the Reynolds had to use the back entrance to move in, while white residents used the front. While living in a house on 7th and Van Buren Street, a neighbor warned them that they couldn’t stay in the neighborhood, and bicycles were left in their yard in an attempt to frame the family for theft.¹³² Unable to find safe housing in Eugene’s city limits, the family relocated multiple times before moving to the Across

¹²⁹ “Negro Groups Sing At F’m’t Church of Christ,” *Eugene Guard*, March 12, 1949, 3.

¹³⁰ “Third Party Hopes Told By Robeson,” *Oregon Daily Journal* (Salem, OR), August 21, 1948, 6.

¹³¹ “Mattie Reynolds, interview by Jefferson Middle School students in Eugene, Oregon, 1992,” Accessed March 12, 2025, from Oregon State University, *Oregon Black Pioneers Oral History Collection*.
https://media.oregonstate.edu/media/t/1_dyse27ou.

¹³² Ibid.; Beckner, “Cultural Demolition,” 87–88.

the Bridge Community in 1946.¹³³ They lived in a three-bedroom house Mr. Reynolds built out of salvaged lumber from the sawmill. Mr. Reynolds eventually became the joint owner of a sawmill that was reportedly located southwest of Eugene along the Lorane Highway.¹³⁴ Mr. and Ms. Reynolds raised twelve children together: Deloris, Earnest, Eddie, Edward, Lottie, LeVirsei, Lynda, Robert, Sam Jr., Thaddest, and Verda May. The family helped to establish the St. Mark Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, where Mr. Reynolds later became minister and Ms. Reynolds served as a steward.¹³⁵

The Mims arrived in Eugene in 1946. C.B. and Annie Mims were originally from Marshall, Texas. The Mims moved to Vancouver, Washington with their two children, Willie and Pearlie Mae, during World War II after Mr. Mims secured a job in the shipbuilding industry. Prior to relocating, Mr. Mims worked as a foreman in a mill in Marshall and after the war, he sought work in the timber industry but was unable to find work at the Eugene mill. Instead, Mr. Mims found employment as a busboy at **the Osburn Hotel (no longer extant), located on the corner of E 8th Ave. and Pearl St.** The family moved to the Across the Bridge Community in 1947, where they met the Johnsons and Reynolds.¹³⁶ The family lived in a house built by Mr. Mims. As a child, Willie Mims recalled that in the community "...all the mothers was everybody's mother."¹³⁷ Ms. Mims, known as "Mama Mims" in the community, would sometimes bring her children and other children she was looking after with her while she worked picking beans and other crops near Eugene. When their homes flooded, the Mims and their neighbors would stay at the Osburn Hotel.¹³⁸ The Mims family lived at the Across the Bridge Community for approximately nine months until 1948.¹³⁹ Within that time, the river flooded twice. During flooding events, families had to temporarily relocate from the north to the south bank of the river to avoid flooding.¹⁴⁰

Another founding family of the Across the Bridge Community was the Johnsons. After Charley Johnson responded to an advertisement in the newspaper seeking employment for the Southern Pacific Railroad, Mr. Johnson and his wife, Bertha Johnson, left their home in Atlanta, Georgia with their three children and moved to Oakridge, Oregon in 1940. Unable to find housing, the Johnson family stayed with the Washingtons when they first arrived in Eugene.¹⁴¹ Mr. Johnson was later employed by Eugene Chemical Works, a rendering plant located on Patterson Rd., while Ms. Johnson cared for their ten children and worked as a house cleaner. She later worked in a restaurant. The family lived with their four children, Charles, Eloise, Rober Louis, and Billy at the Across the Bridge Community. One month before the family was forced to vacate their homes, Ms. Johnson gave birth to triplets, Terry, Jerry, and Perry.¹⁴²

The Nettles were another founding family living in the community. Joe and Marnie Nettles migrated from Texas to Oregon with their young son, Olenza, during the 1940s. After arriving, Mr. Nettles found work for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Olenza enlisted in the Air Force in the 1950s. The Nettles family eventually moved to the West Eugene community and continued to live in Eugene at least into the 1980s.¹⁴³

¹³³ "Mattie Reynolds, interview by Jefferson Middle School students in Eugene, Oregon, 1992." Beckner, "Cultural Demolition," 82, 88.

¹³⁴ Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 115.

¹³⁵ "Ed Reynolds, interview by Jefferson Middle School students in Eugene, Oregon, 1993," Accessed March 12, 2025, from Oregon State University, *Oregon Black Pioneers Oral History Collection*. https://media.oregonstate.edu/media/t/1_oprd3a2n.

¹³⁶ *Willie Mims Interview. City of Eugene Archives. Need more info to complete citation.*

¹³⁷ Paul Neville, "Video effort gives lesson about respect," *Register Guard* (Eugene, OR), June 9, 1994, 1.

¹³⁸ David Arnold, "The Mims of High Street," *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), June 7, 1981, 1.

¹³⁹ *Willie Mims Interview. City of Eugene Archives. Need more info to complete citation.*

¹⁴⁰ *Willie Mims Interview. City of Eugene Archives. Need more info to complete citation.*

¹⁴¹ Beckner, "Cultural Demolition," 49.

¹⁴² Herb Baker, "Ferry Street Mother Bears Three Boys," *Eugene Guard*, July 12, 1949.

¹⁴³ US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.

Forced Removal and Displacement

On July 16, 1949, the Lane County Board of Commissioners issued a court order to raze the Across the Bridge Community for the construction of a new Ferry Street Bridge. The court order allowed residents only 10 days to vacate their homes by July 26.¹⁴⁴ The Board of Commissioners publicly stated that demolition was necessary for the construction of the Ferry Street Bridge, which was to be a new vehicle crossing over the Willamette River.¹⁴⁵ A committee, including several Across the Bridge Community members, was formed to advocate for residents. The committee attempted to reason with county officials to allow adequate time for residents to leave, mitigate demolition by only razing what was deemed necessary, while allowing other homes to remain, but the county denied all requests.¹⁴⁶ Residents were notified of the eviction six to ten days prior to the demolition. On August 24, the following month, the entire community was demolished. Despite a court order that stated only a small number of the homes required removal, the county ignored the order and bulldozed every home. With little or no warning, residents of the Across the Bridge Community lost everything; the chapel and every home was destroyed. The area that was razed encompassed a much larger area than was originally agreed upon by the county.¹⁴⁷ Some residents were still packing and were forced to frantically gather what possessions they could before their homes were demolished.¹⁴⁸ Several homes were destroyed before owners had the opportunity to grab their belongings. Willie Mims (thirteen years-old at the time) later recounted, “They didn’t care where we went or if we had anywhere to go. They would have only had to knock down a few of the houses to build the bridge. But they just wanted us all out of there, and that’s what they got.”¹⁴⁹

After the forced removal and displacement of the Across the Bridge Community, some Black families left Eugene due to the difficulties of finding housing in the city. In order to remain in the Eugene area, the most feasible option for Black residents was to relocate to areas outside Eugene’s city limits, although about 10 Black families were able to move to white neighborhoods throughout Eugene.¹⁵⁰ Black families living in white neighborhoods faced blatant racism from neighbors. On several occasions racist individuals left a burning cross in front of a Black church and front yard of a home where a Black family was living.¹⁵¹

The Glaster family were able to rent a house at **2785 Friendly Street**. While some neighbors accepted the family, the family experienced violent threats from others. One neighbor called Effie Spencer, the home owner, and threatened that the house would “be leveled to the foundation” if the Glasters remained living there, but Mrs. Spencer ignored the threats, and the Glasters remained in the house.¹⁵² The Johnson family relocated to a residence on Patterson Rd. owned by Mr. Johnson’s employer at Eugene Chemical Works.¹⁵³ They lived with their ten children and niece, Pauline Gibson, who worked as a housekeeper. Most of their neighbors were white and were also employed at the chemical plant, with the exception of

¹⁴⁴ “County Court Tells Ferry St. Villagers To Start Moving,” *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), July 13, 1949.; Beckner, “Cultural Demolition,” 32. See pg. 38 for a copy of the original court order dated July 16, 1949.

¹⁴⁵ The planned construction of the Ferry Street Bridge coincided with widespread urban renewal projects across the US from the 1950s–1970s that disproportionately impacted Black neighborhoods and communities of color.

¹⁴⁶ Mike Thoele, “Black In A Sea Of White Island,” *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), January 31, 1993, 1, 8A.

¹⁴⁷ Talicia Brown-Crowell, interview by Geoff Norcross.

¹⁴⁸ Talicia Brown-Crowell, interview by Geoff Norcross.

¹⁴⁹ Thoele, “Black In A Sea Of White Island.”

¹⁵⁰ Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon,” sec. E, 114.

¹⁵¹ “Mattie Reynolds, interview by Jefferson Middle School students in Eugene, Oregon, 1992.”; Nagae “Dealing with Race,” 199.

¹⁵² “Racial Problem Strikes Eugene,” *Oregonian* (Portland, OR), February 10, 1952, 1 and 24.

¹⁵³ “Pauline Davidson, interview by Jefferson Middle School students in Eugene, Oregon, 1993,” Accessed March 12, 2025, from Oregon State University, *Oregon Black Pioneers Oral History Collection*. <https://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/multiculturalvoices/item/35425>.

their next door neighbors John Ward and Leroy Thomas. Mr. Thomas was originally from Michigan and worked for the railroad.¹⁵⁴

While a few Black families found housing in various neighborhoods of Eugene, most Black residents settled in the areas of **East Skinner Butte**, the unincorporated area of **Glenwood**, and **West Eugene** (near West 11th and Bailey Hill Rd.) (Figure 13). During a time when Black residents were excluded from living in Eugene city limits, Black families living in residential neighborhoods persevered through the ongoing struggle for racial equality.

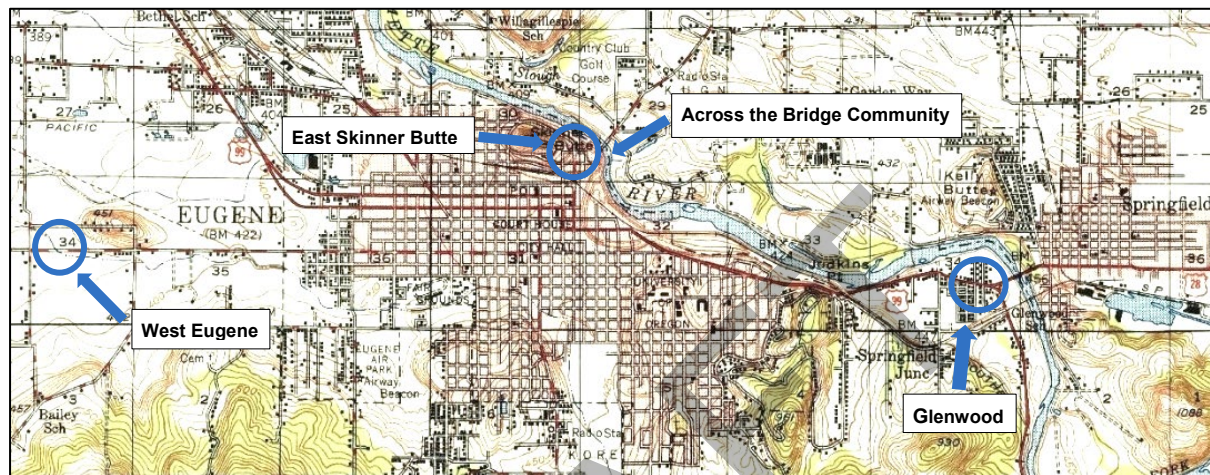


Figure 13. 1949 map of Eugene marking the location where Across the Bridge Community following forced displacement and removal (US Geological Survey).

East Skinner Butte

Following the demolition of the Across the Bridge Community, the Mims and Redman families had relocated either along or near High Street in the East Skinner Butte area by 1950, near where the Washingtons already lived. All three families welcomed Black residents and travelers denied accommodations elsewhere in Eugene. The East Skinner Butte area was the oldest neighborhood in Eugene and by the late 1940s, many of the aged houses were in disrepair and deemed “uninhabitable.”¹⁵⁵

Leo and Pearl Mae Washington were one of the earliest post-World War II Black families to reside in Eugene. The Washington family settled in Eugene sometime around 1941, before the Across the Bridge Community formed. After arriving, the family was employed by the Russells, a wealthy family who owned a local lumber mill.¹⁵⁶ Mr. Washington worked as a servant and maintained the property, while Ms. Washington was employed as a housekeeper. By the late 1940s, the Washingtons were living in a house (no longer extant) on East 2nd Avenue, between Mill and High Streets in the present-day East Skinner Butte neighborhood. After moving into the house, the Washingtons were confronted with a petition circulated by a neighbor in attempt to expel them from the neighborhood. Some neighbors refused to sign, and their efforts soon proved fruitless. Mr. Washington ran the Washington Shoe Shine

¹⁵⁴ US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.

¹⁵⁵ **Willie Mims Interview. City of Eugene Archives. Need more info to complete citation.**

¹⁵⁶ Other sources state they owned a department store in Eugene.

Shop in the Hampton Building on the corner of **E 6th Ave. and Willamette St.**¹⁵⁷ Later, he worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad as a porter and crewman at the Eugene train depot.¹⁵⁸ The Washingtons took in Black boarders denied housing and lodging in Eugene, including men employed by the railroad. The family hosted a young Sammy Davis Jr., while touring with his father and uncle as the Will Maston Trio.¹⁵⁹ Ms. Washington was a devout Christian and helped establish the St. Mark CME Church alongside Ms. Mims and Ms. Reynolds. In 1952, the Washingtons adopted and raised their niece, Brenda, and nephews, Jerry and Ron, after their mother passed away.¹⁶⁰

In 1948, the Mims family purchased two side-by-side properties at **330 and 336 High St.**, east of Skinner Butte in Eugene (one block from the Washingtons).¹⁶¹ In addition to Oregon's exclusionary laws, discriminatory lending practices by banks were barriers to Black property ownership in Oregon, but some families were able to circumvent discriminatory barriers with the help of white residents. Mr. Mims' employer at the Osburn Hotel, Joe Earley, purchased the lot with two houses at the north end of High Street so he could then in return sell it to the Mims. Both houses on the Mims property were in need of significant work, but due to discriminatory lending practices, the Mims were not able to apply for home improvement loans. Mr. Mims replaced the roof and conducted all the repairs himself.

The Mims family lived in the 1867 Gothic Revival-style house near the back of the lot, while the other residence facing the road became a guest house known as **Mims House (336 High Street)**. The house served as a gathering place and provided housing for Black travelers unable to find accommodations while visiting Eugene, as well as newly arrived residents unable to secure housing.¹⁶² The Mims welcomed a wide-range of visiting academics, scholars, civil rights leaders, artists, and entertainers. While on tour, numerous famous Black musicians and performers who played for white audiences but were not welcomed or allowed at Eugene hotels also stayed at the Mims house. Such famed performers included Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, and Ella Fitzgerald. In addition, the Mims provided more long-term housing opportunities for Black workers unable to find housing in Eugene, as well as Black students denied dormitory housing while attending the University of Oregon.¹⁶³ When the Mims House was fully occupied, the Mims family welcomed guests into their home.

¹⁵⁷ Sally Wright and David Pinyerd, *Eugene Modernism 1935-65*, City of Eugene Planning and Development Department (Eugene, OR: City of Eugene, 2003), 10.1. The building was demolished in ca.1981 to build the Hult Center for the Performing Arts.

¹⁵⁸ "Pearlie Mae Washington, interview by Michael Clint in Eugene, Oregon, April 6, 1993, accessed March 12, 2025, from Oregon State University, *Oregon Black Pioneers Oral History Collection*. <https://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/multiculturalvoices/item/35434>.; Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 115.

¹⁵⁹ "Pearlie Mae Washington, interview by Michael Clint in Eugene, Oregon, April 6, 1993."

¹⁶⁰ "Jerry Thompson, interview by Jefferson Middle School students in Eugene, Oregon, October 28, 1993, Oregon State University, *Oregon Black Pioneers Oral History Collection*, accessed March 12, 2025, <https://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/multiculturalvoices/item/35426>.

¹⁶¹ In 2016, the houses became the headquarters for the Eugene Springfield chapter of the NAACP.

¹⁶² The Mims' Hotel operated safe haven to Black travelers, similar to properties listed in the *Green Book*. In 1936, New York City mailman, Victor Green, wrote and published the first *The Negro Traveler's Green Book*, a guide for Black travelers seeking safe accommodations and services during widespread racial discrimination prior to the Civil Rights-era. Eugene and Pendleton were the only Oregon cities published in *The Green Book* outside Portland. Pendleton was added in 1939, while Eugene wasn't included in the guidebook until 1957. The City Center Lodge (no longer extant) located at 476 E Broadway, was the only Eugene business listed in *The Green-Book*, from 1957 to 1967. The owner of City Center Lodge, Ruben Ross, was a white business man who was involved in the Lane County Motel Association and also owned the Globe Lumber Co. and sawmill "Business Records," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), July 11, 1957, 33.

¹⁶³ **Willie Mims Interview. City of Eugene Archives. Need more info to complete citation.**

Ralph and Edna Redman lived on **E 2nd St.**, near the Washington and Mims family residences. They likely moved to Oregon sometime during the 1940s. Born in Nebraska, Mr. Redman worked as a “fire lighter” for the railroad. Ms. Redman was born in Missouri, and the couple resided with their daughter, Wanda, and Ms. Redman’s brother, George Rucker, who worked as a shoe shiner. A boarder by the name of Alandis McCracken from North Carolina, who worked as a car washer in an automotive shop, also lived with the family.¹⁶⁴ The Redmans were active members of the St. Mark’s CME Church and Mr. Redman was engaged in civil rights advocacy. He was a member of the Urban League of Portland, the Lane County Committee for the Advancement of Minorities, and was one of the first three-member executive committee members on the Americans for Democratic Action after it organized in 1948.¹⁶⁵

Glenwood

Other displaced Across the Bridge Community residents moved to the unincorporated community of Glenwood, located between Eugene and Springfield. Due to reoccurring flooding, Glenwood was another area of Eugene that was considered an undesirable place to live during the 1950s. A number of displaced Across the Bridge Community residents settled along **Brooklyn St. in the Glenwood area** and formed a small Black neighborhood with a few families and single men, many of whom worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad.¹⁶⁶ Leon and Maxine Glaster, both born in Texas, lived with their daughter, Ruby, in the Glenwood area in 1950, before moving to Friendly Street. Leon’s brother, Willie Glaster and wife, Thelma lived down the road. Both Leon and Willie worked in construction and built houses for a living.¹⁶⁷ Their neighbor Mary Walker lived with her infant son, Anthony, while working as a domestic servant. Samuel and Bertha Pledger also lived in Glenwood with their baby and Bertha’s mother. John and Essie Tyler lived on Brooklyn Street, as well as their neighbor John Green, who worked as a “firelighter” for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Mr. Pledger and Mr. Tyler also worked as “firelighters” for the Southern Pacific Railroad while Austin Scriber, another Black resident in the neighborhood also built houses.¹⁶⁸

West 11th Area/Community

Before the destruction of the Across the Bridge Community, a committee of fifteen white people and seven Black people formed to help soon-to-be displaced residents find housing in Eugene. One member convinced real estate agents to sell contiguous lots along Amazon Creek, 1.5 miles outside the city limits.¹⁶⁹ This area was west of Eugene near **W 11th Ave. and Bailey Hill Rd.** The Amazon Creek canal had not yet been constructed, and the land was prone to recurring flooding and was not ideal for building.¹⁷⁰ In addition, the area lacked suitable infrastructure like electricity, drinking water, plumbing, and sanitary services. Eugene realtors sold the properties despite the inadequate living conditions and without proper planning subdivision documents.¹⁷¹

With few options, an estimated eight families displaced from the Across the Bridge Community relocated to the West 11th area, where they quickly assembled one- or two-room wood-frame houses or lived in

¹⁶⁴ US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.

¹⁶⁵ “Americans for Democratic Action Organize Chapter in Eugene,” *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), May 28, 1948, 18.

¹⁶⁶ By 1950, a total of 161 Black residents lived in Lane County, over half were men, most of who worked for the railroad.

¹⁶⁷ US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.

¹⁶⁸ US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.

¹⁶⁹ “Group Named to Investigate New Settlement for Ferry St.: 10 Days Left To House Families,” *Eugene Guard*, March 23, 1949, 1. ; “Racial Problem Strikes Eugene,” *Oregonian* (Portland, OR), February 10, 1952, 1 and 24.

¹⁷⁰ Flood-control dams were constructed later during the 1950s and improved living conditions.

¹⁷¹ “West 11th Settlement No Solution For Eugene’s Negro Families,” *Eugene Guard*, December 21, 1951, 9.

trailers.¹⁷² The Reynolds were one of the only families to purchase multiple lots with an existing dwelling that needed significant repairs, including a new foundation. Other former Across the Bridge Community families that relocated to the area included the Holts, Lesters, and the Nettles.¹⁷³ Without time to construct a house, the Nettles moved into an unfinished home without a roof, exterior walls, or flooring.¹⁷⁴ The first winter after forced relocation, residents in the West 11th area faced significant flooding with water levels that rose above foundations. Evelyn Grady, a white ally critical of the county's response, recalled, "It was awful. I remember those mothers and fathers carrying their children out through the water on their backs."¹⁷⁵ High water levels and lack of sewage disposal caused health and safety issues.

Despite harsh living conditions, the Black community living in the West 11th area, persevered and forged a new neighborhood and community of 39 residents, representing more than half of Eugene's Black population in 1950.¹⁷⁶ Without assistance from the city or county, the community relied on each other and were innovative, resourceful, and self-sufficient out of necessity. When the US Corps of Engineers dredged Amazon Creek during the summer of 1951, to mitigate flooding in west Eugene, the water was simply removed from the creek and dumped onto adjacent land. Several months later, a bridge that provided access to the community's homes was washed out and destroyed. Dredging may have contributed to compromising the bridge's structural integrity.¹⁷⁷ After it became known that the city or county was not going to repair or replace the bridge, the community took measures into their hands and built a new bridge using their own materials and labor.¹⁷⁸

Early Eugene Black Churches

The communities of West 11th and Glenwood established churches as places of worship and gathering. Churches were fundamental to Black communities and helped cultivate a sense of belonging. In addition to serving as places of worship and spiritual practice, Black churches played an instrumental role in social engagement, education, economic development, political activism and advocacy. Churches organized within Eugene's Black community were well-connected, as was evident in the services and events they hosted together and were also part of a larger mutual aid network that extended to other congregations and organizations in Eugene, as well as Portland. Churches helped support the social, educational, political, and economic needs of Black communities and provided services that the Black community had been denied equal access to, such as education, health care, housing, and employment.

In 1949, the St. Mark Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (**1167 Sam Reynolds St.**) was the first Black church formally organized in Eugene. The church was founded by thirteen community members, including Ms. Mims, Ms. Reynolds, and Ms. Washington, former Across the Bridge Community residents. Initially, the predominantly Black congregation held church services at the Ferry Street Chapel. After the community was forcibly displaced, services were held at Washington's home on E. 2nd Avenue until the community could secure a permanent location. The church community purchased two lots for

¹⁷² "Racial Problem Strikes Eugene," *Oregonian*.

¹⁷³ US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.

¹⁷⁴ Beckner, "Cultural Demolition," 63.

¹⁷⁵ Thoele, "Black In A Sea Of White Island."

¹⁷⁶ Thoele, "Black In A Sea Of White Island,"; US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.

¹⁷⁷ "West 11th Settlement No Solution For Eugene's Negro Families."

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

\$2,000 and prepared to build a modest church building with materials donated by J.P. O'Neill, a local lumberman and employer of Mr. Reynolds.¹⁷⁹ Mr. Reynolds and other members of the congregation built the church alongside John T. Taylor, the first minister of St. Mark CME Church (Figure 14). By October of 1949, services were taking place in the parsonage adjacent to the church building under construction.¹⁸⁰ Pastor Taylor had come to Eugene from El Paso, Texas, and utilized his carpentry skills to help build both the parsonage and the church.¹⁸¹ The church served as a place of refuge and worship, and also as a critically important meeting place where the Black community could gather, socialize, and organize. The St. Mark CME Church is still active today and continues to offer worship services to the predominantly African American fellowship in its original location.

The Jerusalem Church of God in Christ was a predominately Black church that formed in west Eugene in 1950. For over a year, the congregation met in various locations, including private residences in Eugene and Glenwood, before securing a permanent location in Eugene at **1760 W. 11th Ave.**¹⁸² The property included a residence and a detached garage. The garage was converted into the main church, while the smaller residence was used as the parsonage. Renovations took several years to complete and were achieved through fundraising and volunteer labor.¹⁸³

Reverend E. E. Wilson (formerly of Portland), was the first pastor. Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson lived at 1756 West 2nd St. Services were held at their residence, as well as the West Eleventh Full Gospel Church at 3900 W 11th before the Jerusalem Church of God was completed.¹⁸⁴ The church was affiliated with other church organizations in both Portland and Eugene. Rev. Wilson traveled to Portland to attend meetings at the Zion Hill Church of God in Portland and guest pastors from Portland would frequently visit the church to give guest sermons.¹⁸⁵ The Jerusalem Church of God and the St. Mark's CME Church often held potlucks and



Figure 14. 1949 image of St. Mark Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (below) and parsonage (above). From Eugene Register-Guard, December 16, 1949.

¹⁷⁹ Beckner, "Cultural Demolition," 82–83.

¹⁸⁰ "St. Mark's CME," *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), December 3, 1949, 3, <https://universityoforegon.newspapers.com/image/140776843/>.

¹⁸¹ "Small Church To Be Aided By Concert," *Eugene Register Guard*, December 12, 1949, 8, <https://universityoforegon.newspapers.com/image/140777147/>.

¹⁸² "Negro Denomination Building New Church on West Eleventh," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), December 20, 1952, 3.

¹⁸³ Norma Pfeiffer, "Westside Churches Expanding Rapidly," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), March 6, 1954, 7.

¹⁸⁴ Norma Pfeiffer, "West Siders Still Expand As '54 Dawns," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR) January 2, 1954, 2.

¹⁸⁵ Pfeiffer, "Westside Churches Expanding Rapidly."

planned other events and activities together.¹⁸⁶ The Jerusalem Church of God appeared to be active through the early 1960s.

The Antioch Baptist Church was located at **1545 Brooklyn Dr.** in Glenwood. The predominantly Black congregation initially formed in 1952. One year later, the church purchased property on Brooklyn Dr. in Glenwood in 1953. The church planned to build a “modern and convenient” building to house their congregation, but until enough finances were secured, services were held in an older residence on the lot.¹⁸⁷ Several local events were organized to help raise funds to construct a new church. The Zion Hill Singers of the Seattle Mt. Baker Baptist Church went on a west coast tour to help raise money for the congregation.¹⁸⁸ The Antioch Baptist Church also hosted events at other local churches, including a gospel concert with the Lion Hill Trio singers at the River Road Baptist Church in Eugene. The Antioch Baptist Church, Jerusalem Church of God in Christ, and the St. Mark CME Church coordinated spiritual gatherings and religious holidays together. By 1957, instead of constructing a new church, efforts were underway to renovate the existing building on the Glenwood property to serve as the congregation’s church. At that time, the pastor was Reverend Dewey H. Griggs, and the congregation comprised around 25 members.¹⁸⁹ Other pastors of the church throughout the 1950s were Reverend O. B. Wiley and Reverend P. H. F. McQuarter.

The congregation was active until 1965, when the Bethel Temple Faith Ministries acquired the Antioch Baptist Church property. Bethel Temple Faith Ministries was founded by former Antioch Baptist Church members and Glenwood residents, Arthur and Luvenia Shankle. Before becoming a minister, Rev. Shankle was a skilled carpenter and was the first Black member of Oregon’s local carpenter union.¹⁹⁰ Beginning in 1976, Shankle became pastor of the Salem Mission and would deliver Sunday sermons in both Eugene and Salem.¹⁹¹ When a larger building was needed to accommodate a growing congregation, the Bethel Temple Faith Ministries relocated to **2170 W 18th Ave** in 1994. Rev. Shankle remained pastor of the Bethel Temple Faith Ministries and the Salem Mission until his retirement in 2012.¹⁹² Bethel Temple Faith Ministries remains an active congregation that continues to hold serves at their church at the 18th Ave. location.

The building that housed the Antioch Baptist Church and later Bethel Temple Faith Ministries in Glenwood was renovated in 2022 and now operates as the Shankle Brooklyn Shelter, an emergency shelter for unhoused people, named after the late Rev. Arthur Shankle.¹⁹³

Early Eugene Black Societies and Social Clubs

Fraternal societies and social clubs were also long-standing organizations that provided mutual aid and safe places for African Americans to congregate. Since their early formation in the 1700s up until the 1970s, fraternal societies such as the Freemasons excluded African Americans and people of color. A

¹⁸⁶ “On the West Side,” *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), November 20, 1954, 3.

¹⁸⁷ “Antioch Wants New Building,” *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), February 14, 1953, 2.

¹⁸⁸ “Zion Hill Singers Working for Fund For Antioch Baptist,” *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), February 21, 1953, 2.

¹⁸⁹ “They’re Building A Church,” *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), September 7, 1957, 3.

¹⁹⁰ Oregon Northwest Black Pioneers, *Perseverance: A History of African Americans in Oregon’s Marion and Polk Counties*, Salem, Oregon: Meadowlark Publishing Services, 2011, 180–181.; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon,” sec. E, 116–117.

¹⁹¹ Oregon Northwest Black Pioneers, *Perseverance*, 181.

¹⁹² “Rev Arthur James Shankle,” https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90472492/arthur_james-shankle, accessed March 12, 2025.

¹⁹³ Tiffany Eckert, “Historic Black church building in Glenwood becomes sanctuary for Lane County’s homeless,” *KLCC Radio*, October 6, 2022, <https://www.klcc.org/2022-10-06/historic-black-church-building-in-glenwood-becomes-sanctuary-for-lane-countys-homeless>.

separate chapter of the Prince Hall Freemasonry named after its founder, Prince Hall, was created for Black Americans in 1784. The first Prince Hall chapter in Oregon formed later in Portland in 1867.¹⁹⁴ Fraternal societies were a brotherhood traditionally committed to social, political, and economic support, but civil rights and social justice were also at the forefront of fraternal lodges in the Black community.¹⁹⁵ In addition to practicing Masonic customs and rituals, local Prince Hall chapters supported community initiatives and encouraged leadership skills and educational development in local Black communities.¹⁹⁶ Women were also prohibited from joining Masonic lodges. The Order of the Eastern Star was an auxiliary group of the Masonic Lodge that allowed women who were related to the fraternal society members, including the wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters. The only known Black fraternal organizations established in Eugene were the Shasta Masonic Lodge No. 37 A.F. & A.M. (which later became Shasta Masonic Lodge No. 2) and the Order of the Eastern Star, Deborah Chapter No. 16. The Prince Hall Grand Masonic Lodge and the affiliated Order of the Eastern Star of the Masons women's auxiliary group oversaw local chapters in Oregon, including Eugene.

The Shasta Masonic Lodge No. 37 Eugene chapter of the Prince Hall Grand Chapter was formed in 1955 and remained active throughout the 1970s. When established, the organization had a total of 11 members, including Clifford Joiner served as Worthy Patron of the organization during the 1950s (Figures 15 and 16).¹⁹⁷ The chapter did not appear to have a designated lodge or hall, although meetings were held in the homes of various members, including the Washington's house.¹⁹⁸ Events were held at St. Mark CME Church, as well as other establishments in town.¹⁹⁹

The local chapter of the Eastern Stars, Deborah Chapter No. 16, was likely active from the 1950s to the 1970s, paralleling those of the Shasta Masonic Lodge No. 2.²⁰⁰ In addition to supporting the Shasta Masonic Lodge, the Eastern Stars independently participated in charitable causes and community engagement. The Eugene Eastern Star chapter had nine members in 1955 and grew to 13 members by 1963.²⁰¹ Many of the women in the Eugene Deborah Chapter were founding family members of the Across the Bridge Community. Active members during the 1950s included, Edna Redman, Mary Samuels, Lettie Reynolds, Mary Williams, Pearlie Mae Washington, Annie Mims, and Pearlie Mae Joiner, Bonnie Rucker, Mary Lee Taylor, and Mary Williams (see Figure 15).²⁰² Edna Redmond was Worthy Matron of the Deborah Chapter No. 16, Order of the Eastern Star in 1955 and Ms. Mims held the title in 1957 (see Figure 15).²⁰³

¹⁹⁴ State of Oregon, Fraternal History of the Prince Hall Masonry in Portland, https://heritagedata.prd.state.or.us/historic/index.cfm?do=main.loadFile&load=52992_1.pdf.

¹⁹⁵ National Museum of African American History & Culture, "Prince Hall Masons," accessed March 2025, <https://www.searchablemuseum.com/prince-hall-masons/>; Catherine Galbraith et al., "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1851 to 1973," Washington DC: US Department of the Interior (DOI), National Park Service (NPS), 2019, sec. E, 103–107.

¹⁹⁶ Galbraith et al., "African American Resources in Portland," sec. E, 107.

¹⁹⁷ "New OES Chapter Organized Here," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), May 1, 1955, 47.

¹⁹⁸ "Jerry Thompson, interview by Jefferson Middle School students.," Hogg, "Black Man in a White Town," 18. Hogg indicated that meetings were periodically held on the "second floor of a home in the Skinner's Butte district."

¹⁹⁹ "News Brief," *Eugene Guard*, August 14, 1953, 11.

²⁰⁰ "Lodge Calendar," *Oregon Advance Times* (Portland, OR), February 15, 1968, 2. <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=oregonadvance>.

²⁰¹ Hogg, "Black Man in a White Town," 18.

²⁰² This list of members is not complete and is still developing.

²⁰³ "Deborah Chapter Announces Roster of Chosen Officers," *Eugene-Guard* (Eugene, OR), May 6, 1957, 8.; "New OES Chapter Organized Here."



Figure 15. 1956 photograph of the Deborah Chapter No. 16, Order of the Eastern Stars. Members from left to right: Mary Samuels, Lettie Reynolds, Bonnie Rucker, Mary Williams, Clifford Joiner, Pearl Washington, Annie Mims, and Pearl Mae Joiner (Lane County History Museum).

Although women were unable to join the Masonic Lodge, men could be members of the Order of the Eastern Stars and hold elected positions such as Associate Patron and Worthy Patron to support presiding officers. Clifford Joiner served as Worthy Patron of the Eugene Deborah Chapter No. 16 in the mid-1950s. The Deborah Chapter No. 16 was a part of a national sisterhood that welcomed and supported members of other chapters. When a member of the Portland chapter of the Eastern Stars was severely injured in a car accident near Creswell, and needed to be hospitalized for an extended period, sisters of the Eugene chapter frequently visited and cared for the young woman, keeping her family informed of her progress.²⁰⁴ Throughout the 1950s, the chapter held monthly meetings and events at St. Mark CME Church, as well as the **Eugene Hotel (222 E Broadway)** and the **Carpenter's Hall (40 E 5th Ave)** building located on Willamette Street.²⁰⁵



Figure 16. Newspaper article announcing the formation of the Eastern Stars, Deborah Chapter No. 16 Eugene chapter and elected officers (*Register-Guard*, May 6, 1957).

²⁰⁴ "Lyllie Reynolds-Parker, interview by Lorna Flormoe in Eugene, Oregon, n.d.," *Stories of Exclusion and Inclusion: Owning our History, Creating our Future*, City of Eugene Office of Equity & Community Engagement.

²⁰⁵ "Chapter Sets Charter Night," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), September, 2, 1955, 8.; "Special Service At St. Marks for Deborah Chapter," *Eugene Guard* (Eugene, OR), June 5, 1955, 33.; "New OES Chapter Organized Here." The St. Mark's Church also held events at the Carpenter's Hall in 1954.

Growing Awareness of Housing Inequality

Eugene's population substantially increased during the early Post-World War II period, from 20,828 in 1940 to 35,879 in 1950.²⁰⁶ Even with the expansion of the city boundary, by 1952, about two-thirds of Eugene's 135 Black residents lived outside the city limits, primarily in the West 11th Ave. area.²⁰⁷ The civil rights organization Urban League chapter in Portland, founded in 1945, helped to bring attention to discriminatory real estate dealings and the living conditions of the Black community in Eugene. The Urban League identified Eugene and Salem as having the highest racially discriminatory housing practices in the state.²⁰⁸ Edward (Bill) Berry,²⁰⁹ the executive secretary of Portland's Urban League, called the West 11th housing situation "disgraceful and horrible." When speaking to the Fair Employment Practices Committee, in Portland, Berry explained how the Eugene realty board and Realtors profited from selling "swamp land properties" and after visiting the West 11th community, Edwards stressed the severity of the situation he described as "I don't know of anything as bad in rural Mississippi."²¹⁰ After a group of white women from the League of Women Voters published a housing survey on the severity of job and housing discrimination against Eugene's Black community, the housing conditions in the West 11th community were widely publicized in local newspapers and even *The Oregonian*. The press covered events such as the panel discussion titled "The Negro Problem in Eugene: What Should We Do?," organized by the Eugene League of Women Voters that roughly 100 Eugene residents attended.²¹¹ Residents of the West 11th community and other Black residents were not included in the panel or other town halls and discussion groups led by the white community.

The Lane County Fellowship of Civic Unity was formed in response to the growing public concern for the pressing housing issue.²¹² This civil rights organization was established in March 1952 with H.V. Johnson (prominent lawyer and former minister) as president. Other founders included white members of the League of Women Voters and churches. The group advocated for better housing and employment for the Black community, but it did not advocate for desegregation in Eugene, and overall, very little was accomplished.²¹³

Despite state laws, like the Oregon Fair Employment Practices Act of 1949 that made it unlawful to discriminate in hiring, promotion, and working condition based on race, discriminatory practices continued in Eugene well into the 1950s, leading to job insecurity and high unemployment among Eugene's Black community and hindering economic stability for Black families.²¹⁴ Eugene's Black residents had limited options in work, and were often restricted to railroad work, service industry positions, and domestic work, because white business owners wouldn't hire Black employees or they would only hire them for certain jobs. The City and Eugene schools also refused to hire Black residents. A majority of the founding Black families' children left after graduating high school because job

²⁰⁶ Wright and Pinyerd, *Eugene Modernism*, 3.3.

²⁰⁷ Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 115.

²⁰⁸ "Salem, Eugene Pointed Out as Worst In State for Racial Discrimination," *Oregon Daily Journal* (Salem, OR), January 1952, 2.

²⁰⁹ Berry served as first director of the Urban League and was one of the leading activists pushing for policy changes to establish fair and equal access to housing and employment in Oregon during the 1950s. See Holly Roose, "Edwin C. (Bill) Berry (1910–1987)," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, last modified January 20, 2022, accessed October 2024, <https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/berry-edwin-c-bill/>.

²¹⁰ Berry also noted properties sold an average of \$300 at significantly higher rates than adjoining lots and that the county building inspector failed to issue building permits for the West 11th area. See "West 11th Settlement Conditions Rapped," *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), January 5, 1951, 1.

²¹¹ Hugh Scott, "Eugene Citizens Begin to Seek Means of Helping Negroes," *Oregonian*, February 11, 1953, 12.

²¹² Nagae "Dealing with Race," 200–201.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Hugh Scott, "Eugene Citizens Begin to Seek Means of Helping Negroes.," "Negro Housing a Vital Problem," *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), February 18, 1951, 6.

opportunities were limited.²¹⁵ Young Black residents and families left Eugene in search of better job prospects in Portland and larger metropolitan areas.

Leading up to the Civil Rights movement, some significant gains were made in the State Legislature. Oregon's 1862 miscegenation law banning interracial marriages was repealed in 1951, 16 years before the US Supreme Court declared all miscegenation laws unconstitutional.²¹⁶ The state also passed the Civil Rights Bill of 1953, becoming the 21st state in the union to pass legislation outlawing discrimination in public places. The law enforced fair and equal access to "any place of public accommodation, resort or amusement" without discriminating "race, religion, color or national origin."²¹⁷ On a federal level, great strides were made in civil rights legislation in 1954 with the Supreme Court's landmark decision ruling racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional in the *Brown v. Board of Education*. The case was a defining moment in the early civil rights and signified the end of legalized racial segregation ruling the "separate but equal" doctrine in education unconstitutional.²¹⁸ Churches and organizations throughout Oregon, including the Lane County Fellowship for Civic Unity, united under Oregon's Legal Committee for Equal Rights to support and advocate for the desegregation of public schools.²¹⁹ *Brown v. Board of Education* was a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights movement and signified progress in the ongoing efforts to achieve equality. Despite the Supreme Court ruling, systemic racism and racial discrimination continued throughout the country. Public establishments in Eugene and throughout Oregon for decades.²²⁰

Black Academics, Athletes, and Student Organizations

The number of Black students attending the University slowly increased by the onset of the 1950s, after World War II when there were more Black families living in Oregon than ever before. A total of 17–18 Black students were enrolled at UO during the 1950 to 1951 school year.²²¹ Black students engaged in student life, academics, and athletics. As students, they faced racism and discrimination on campus and from the greater community. They persevered and demonstrated their right to an education. Students were at the forefront of civil rights activity in Eugene. Many organized and advocated for racial and social justice.

DeNorval "De" Unthank, Jr. attended the University from 1950–1952. He was the first Black man to graduate from the UO School of Architecture and Allied Arts and was the son of prominent Portland physician and civil rights activist, Dr. DeNorval Unthank, Sr. Unthank Jr. was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1929, just before his family moved to Portland. During the family's early years in Portland, they endured blatant racism and discrimination that escalated to violent threats and vandalism. Unthank Jr. attended Portland public schools and Howard University, a Historically Black University (HBU). He returned to Oregon after two years and enrolled in UO where he met his future wife Deb Mohr, a white

²¹⁵ Greg Evans Interview, City of Eugene Archives. Need More Information to Complete Citation.

²¹⁶ "Act to Prohibit the Intermarriage of Races, 1866," Oregon History Project, Oregon Historical Society, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/act-to-prohibit-the-intermarriage-of-races-1866/>.

²¹⁷ Binus, Joshua, "Oregon's Civil Rights Bill, 1953," Oregon History Project, Oregon Historical Society, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/signing-oregon39s-civil-rights-bill-1953/>. Also referred to as the Public Accommodations Bill.

²¹⁸ National Archives and Records Administration, "Brown v. Board of Education, Milestone Documents," accessed April 2, 2025, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/brown-v-board-of-education>.

²¹⁹ Galbraith et al., "African American Resources in Portland from 1851 to 1973 MPD," sec. E, 107.

²²⁰ Ibid., sec. E, 127.

²²¹ "Does Oregon Need NAACP?," *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), January 10, 1951, 2.; Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 117.

sorority member of Gamma Phi Beta. As a student, he was denied on-campus housing due to discriminatory UO policies that continued to exist in the 1950s. Unthank Jr. and Mohr also received numerous threats because they were in an interracial relationship.²²²

Despite extreme racism and potential danger from white supremacists, Unthank Jr. persisted and pursued his studies. He earned his bachelor's degree from the architecture program in 1952 and began his professional career in Eugene immediately after graduating. His early designs included the **Robert D. & Opal R. Clark House (2323 University St)** built in 1952, followed by the **Crasemann House (2520 Woodland Dr.)** built in 1958. Both residences were located in the Fairmount Neighborhood. Over the course of his career, Unthank Jr. designed a number of iconic buildings in Eugene. In 1959, he designed the **Lane County Courthouse (125 E 8th Ave)** and associated **park block** with Robert Wilmsen and Charles W. Endicott of Wilmsen, Endicott & Unthank. He became a partner in the firm in 1960. Early in his career he was honored by the Southwest Oregon Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1961. He also designed **Kennedy Middle School (2200 Bailey Hill Rd)** in Eugene and Thurston High School in Springfield, which opened in the mid-1960s. Unthank Jr. co-founded the Eugene firm Unthank Seder Poticha Architects in 1968 and for 15 years, served as associate professor with the UO School of Architecture and Allied Arts (renamed College of Design). On the UO campus, he designed the Bean dormitory complex, now **Justice Bean Hall (1695 E 15th Ave)** in 1962, followed by **McKenzie Hall (1101 Kincaid Street)** in 1970, which originally served as the former UO School of Law (Figure 17). He was named Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1980 and received countless other awards throughout his career. He received honorary recognition from the American Institute of Architects for his work on the Lane County Courthouse, McKenzie Hall, as well as several buildings on the Central Oregon Community College campus in Bend.²²³ Unthank Jr. believed his role as an architect was to “make places for people” and like his father, Unthank Jr. was a community leader. He worked closely with Portland's

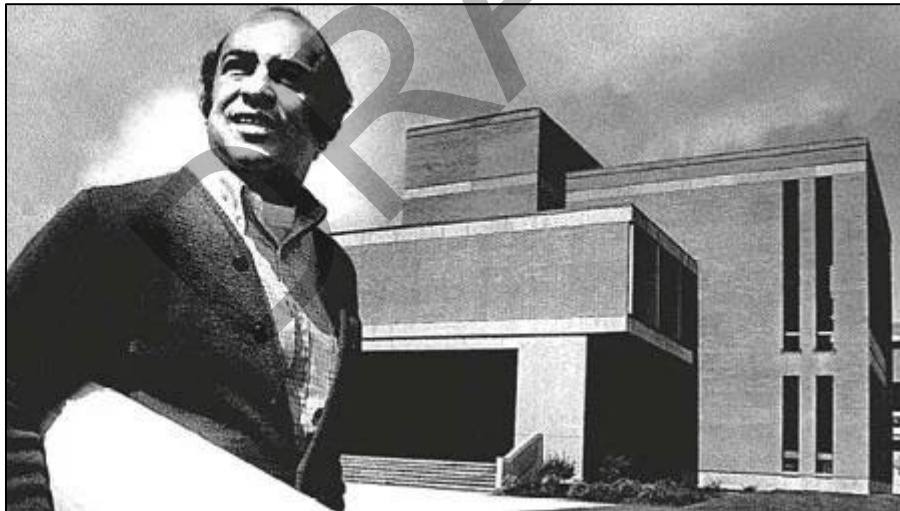


Figure 17. DeNorval Unthank Jr. in front of McKenzie Hall, which was built in 1971 (Courtesy UO Libraries Special Collections).

²²² Unthank Jr. and his girlfriend were harassed and violently threatened for being an interracial couple. A cross was lit on fire on the front lawn of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority house where his Mohr lived. When the couple married, they had to go to Vancouver, Washington because interracial marriage was outlawed in Oregon. See April Miller, “Celebrating Black History: Honoring Black History Month,” University of Oregon Alumni, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://www.uoalumni.com/s/1540/21/home.aspx?sid=1540&gid=3&pgid=13006>.

²²³ Stephanie Basalyga, “Architect shaped Pacific Northwest style,” Daily Journal of Commerce (DJC) Oregon, accessed April 2, <https://djcoregon.com/news/2000/11/14/architect-shaped-pacific-northwest-style/>.

Urban League and community leaders on several projects in the Albina community from the 1960s to the 1980s.²²⁴

During the early 1950s, civil rights activism began to gain momentum on the UO campus. The Eugene branch of the NAACP was organized by students as early as 1949. Robert (Bob) Holloway served as president of the chapter throughout the 1950s. During the early years of the organization, the Eugene NAACP primarily fought racial and social injustices on campus, such as discriminatory housing on campus and racial clauses in fraternities and sororities. The Eugene NAACP held meetings and maintained a membership of nearly 40 individuals. During the early years of its formation the organization lacked support from the administration, as well as some faculty and students. The NAACP was denied formal recognition as a student organization by the Student Affairs Committee (SAC), which was assembled of faculty and students, because UO policy required that organizations be “directly connected with student life” and “contribute to the well-being of the University.”²²⁵ The NAACP fought to achieve recognition and status as a UO organization. After submitting several petitions, the NAACP was officially granted a student organization near the end of the school year in 1953.²²⁶

CIVIL RIGHTS ERA IN EUGENE (1956–1969)

Eugene’s Black population gradually grew during the city’s population surge in the decades following World War II. From 1950 to 1960, the number of Black residents living in Lane County more than doubled from 161 to 336 and continued to steadily increase throughout the 1960s.²²⁷

Legal victories during the Civil Rights movement began at the state level and spurred some gains in the late 1950s. The Oregon Legislature passed its first fair housing legislation in 1957, making it illegal for property owners and real estate agents to receive any public funding to discriminate based on the sale, lease, or rental of a property solely by race, color, religion, or national origin. The Oregon Legislature finally ratified the 15th Amendment, almost one-hundred years after its adoption, granting Black Americans the right to vote in 1959. As more Black students gained access to higher education, an unprecedented number of Black students enrolled at the UO beginning in the 1960s. By the late 1960s, several Black scholars secured faculty positions at UO for the first time.

Amid the growing Civil Rights movement, community organizing and grassroots campaigns gained momentum in Eugene. Local groups and organizations led by Black and white community members who challenged structural and systemic racism and inequality were at the forefront of the Civil Rights movement in Eugene. Civil rights activists worked collectively to combat housing and job discrimination and end police harassment against Black residents. Eugene organizations coordinated with leaders and other civil rights organizations in Portland, like the NAACP and Urban League. The St. Mark CME Church served as a leading local advocate of civil rights, helping to facilitate and support activism efforts in Eugene.²²⁸ UO professors and students were also highly engaged in organizing for social justice causes.

In 1963, the Eugene chapter of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was established to challenge housing, employment, and the educational inequalities in Eugene. Founded in 1942, CORE was one of

²²⁴ Basalyga, “Architect shaped Pacific Northwest style.”

²²⁵ “Will Our Faculty Act On the NAACP Issue?,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), May 22, 1953.

²²⁶ Paul Keefe, “SAC Approves NAACP: Petition Changes Given as Reason,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), May 22, 1953.

²²⁷ US Census Bureau, 1950 US census.; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon,” sec. E, 114.

²²⁸ Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Interview, *Racing to Change. Oregon’s Civil Rights Years: The Eugene Story*, University of Oregon, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YBJWV19TDs>.

the leading civil rights organizations that achieved significant milestones during the Civil Rights movement, such as the Freedom Rides and the March on Washington. The Eugene CORE was formed by UO faculty Daniel Goldrich, Jim Klonoski, Lawrence “Larry” Carter, Robert Ackerman, and Robert Agger.²²⁹ All professors were white, except Larry Carter.²³⁰ CORE meetings were held at the St. Mark CME Church. Dr. Clyde Deberry, one of the first Black professors at UO, served as a statistician planner for the organization. He was instrumental in helping conduct early studies and investigations, unveiling covert racism and discrimination in housing, employment, education, public accommodations, and policing in Eugene.²³¹

CORE was pivotal in community organizing and advocacy during the civil rights movement and organized countless public demonstrations and protests in Eugene in support of the national Civil Rights movement. Shortly after forming, CORE organized a walk from **Lincoln School (650 W. 12th Ave.)** to downtown in support of the March on Washington in August of 1963.²³² An estimated one-third of the marchers were Black residents.²³³ Roughly 400 people attended a rally afterwards.

Many of Eugene’s founding family members and newcomers joined the nationwide movement to advance civil rights. First and second generations of the founding Black families were at the center of civil rights activism in Eugene, with many serving as early founders and leaders of local organizations. Members of the Mims and Reynolds families played an essential role in civil rights activism and advocacy in Eugene. Several of the family members were early contributors to the Eugene chapter of CORE. Annie Mims and Mattie Reynolds organized pickets and marches to protest landowners who declined renting to Black residents and business owners who refused to hire Black employees.²³⁴

Daughter of Sam and Mattie Reynolds, Lyllye Reynolds-Parker was a dedicated civil rights leader, who became involved in advocacy at a young age. She was just three years old when her family was forcibly removed from the Across the Bridge Community. Reynolds-Parker described the covert racism that prevailed while growing up in Eugene:

Nobody stood on the street corner waving banners and threatening Black people here in Eugene, but you couldn’t rent or buy a house anywhere you wanted to. You couldn’t find a job that paid a living wage. The doors to the University of Oregon weren’t thrown open to local Blacks. Though

²²⁹ Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Interview, *Racing to Change*.

²³⁰ Along with Dr. Coleman, Larry Carter was only one of a few Black professors at UO during the late 1960s. Carter played a significant role in local advocacy, serving as one of the founding members of CORE and Eugene HRC. He initially studied mathematics at the UO but later went on to earn a graduate degree in sociology. Carter became a professor at UO, teaching quantitative methods, social demography, and advanced sociology methods courses. While involved in the HRC in the late 1960s, he acted as a mediator between Eugene City Hall and the Black Panthers. He remained a devoted activist throughout his life, described by his former college roommate as being “...dedicated to the equal treatment of human beings, and he took a lot of time away from his studies to deal with things. Later in his career, he co-developed the Lee-Carter model, a numerical algorithm used to forecast mortality. See “Remembering University professor Lawrence Carter,” October 23, 2011, *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), accessed April 21, <https://dailymerald.com/85050/news/remembering-university-professor-lawrence-carter/>.

²³¹ “Bias Termed ‘Subtle.’ Discrimination in Eugene Cited,” *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), October 9, 1963, 1.

²³² “C.O.R.E. Official Denies ‘Outsiders’ To March.” *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), August 23, 1963, 1.

²³³ “C.O.R.E. President Calls Eugene Rights Rally ‘Highly Successful.’” *Eugene Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), August 29, 1963, 1.

²³⁴ “Mattie Reynolds, interview by Sebastian Bolden in Eugene, Oregon, February 12, 1993,” accessed March 12, 2025, Oregon State University, *Oregon Black Pioneers Oral History Collection*, <https://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/omeka/items/show/35427>.

we weren't feeling physical violence, we suffered the emotional and mental violence of not being treated equally.²³⁵

Reynolds-Parker and other Black students faced discrimination in Eugene's school system, which did not encourage or support Black students in learning or advancing to college. She aspired to be a civil rights lawyer like Thurgood Marshall but was told by her middle school guidance counselor that because she was a Black woman, her future was limited to a career in home economics, cosmetology, or nursing.²³⁶ When Lyllye Reynolds-Parker was a teenager, she became involved in activism, joining CORE and serving as vice president of the Eugene chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a civil rights organization led by young people who challenged systemic racism through nonviolent action and concentrated their efforts on voter registration campaigns in southern states.²³⁷

While a political science major at the UO from 1965 to 1967, Lyllye Reynolds-Parker's brother, Sam Reynolds Jr. was disheartened that higher education failed to reflect his life as a Black man and neglected to teach about Black culture and history. He was a dedicated activist and quick to call out racism at the University.²³⁸ He often wrote letters to the editor in the *Oregon Daily Emerald*, condemning offensive cartoons and bigotry. In response to an article where a white UO athletic department staff boasted that "...athletic teams on the road have done more for civil rights than Martin Luther King and...practically taken segregation out of the hotel business." Reynolds responded, "Let's not kid ourselves. Oregon's athletic teams have done nothing to break down the barriers of racial discrimination in other parts of the country..." and continued to proclaim that it was because of the efforts of King, Farmer, Foreman, Carmichael, and other civil rights leaders that athletes of color were now allowed to stay in all-white hotels.²³⁹ While a student during the mid-1960s, Reynolds Jr. served as chairman of CORE and spent his Christmas break in Ferriday, Louisiana helping Black residents register to vote.²⁴⁰ Sam Reynolds Jr. left the University sometime around 1968 and moved to Oakland in an effort to provide more avenues and opportunities for Black students in higher education.²⁴¹ There, he befriended Tommy and Howard Anderson of the Black Panther movement and was encouraging of the group organizing a branch in Eugene.

Universities served as hubs for social change as the Civil Rights movement progressed in the 1960s. As a small number of Black students began to enroll in UO's predominately white student population during the 1960s, Black students confronted systemic racism and promoted the need for cultural, political, and social change on campus. Students drawn to social change and activism, such as Howard Anderson and Ray Elgin relocated to Eugene to enroll at the UO during the later part of the decade. The perspectives of

²³⁵ Museum of Natural and Cultural History, "A Community Rises Up," *Racing to Change. Oregon's Civil Rights Years: The Eugene Story*, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/mnchexhibits/racing-to-change/community-rises-up/>.

²³⁶ Lyllye Reynolds-Parker, interview by Samantha Matsumoto, *Think Out Loud*, OPB, November 21, 2019, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://www.wnyc.org/story/black-cultural-center-named-for-lyllye-reynoldsparker/>; "Friends, colleagues remember the UO's Lyllye Reynolds-Parker," *OregonNews*, University of Oregon, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://news.uoregon.edu/content/friends-colleagues-remember-uos-lyllye-reynolds-parker>.

²³⁷ State of Oregon, House Concurrent Resolution 31, Oregon Legislative Assembly, April 1 2025, accessed April 20, <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HCR31/A-Engrossed>.

²³⁸ Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Interview, accessed via *Racing to Change. Oregon's Civil Rights Years: The Eugene Story*, University of Oregon, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=199RWzirlAM>.

²³⁹ "Fooling," *Emerald* Editor, *Oregon Daily Emerald*, April 4, 1967, 7.

²⁴⁰ "In Louisiana, CORE Sponsors Freedom Holiday," *Oregon Daily Emerald*, January 4, 1966, 1.

²⁴¹ Sam Reynolds Jr. remained dedicated to racial and social justice throughout his life, later becoming the head of Lane Human Resources in 1970 and eventually the Affirmative Action Regional Director for the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Wyoming. See Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Interview, accessed via *Racing to Change*.

newly arrived students from larger cities like Los Angeles, Compton, and San Francisco helped facilitate and organize collective change at the University.²⁴²

To create a place for Black students to challenge the dominant white-center narrative in higher education, Black students formed the Black Student Union (BSU) and the Black Studies Department at the UO in 1966. John Holloway, who also started the NAACP in Eugene, served as the organization's first president. Meetings were typically held at the Erb Memorial Union (EMU) on campus. BSU initiated panel discussions where topics such as the racial climate and the role of violence in the Black struggle were discussed with white peers. In 1968, the BSU made a list of grievances and demands that remain relevant today. Some of the listed demands were equal access to dormitory housing and job opportunities, ending exploitation of Black athletes, increased faculty representation, the recruitment of more Black students, as well as facilities for a tutoring center for people of color.²⁴³ The Black student-led organization also recruited Black acclaimed civil rights activists, such as Floyd McKissick and Stokely Carmichael to speak at the UO. While BSU lacked recognition from the administration during the early years of the student-led group, CORE, SNCC, and other organizations supported BSU and their commitment to Black student advocacy.

Black-led student organizations, like the BSU, influenced the development of other groups and organizations at UO and other colleges and universities across the state, including the Oregon State University (OSU) Black Student Union. Founded in 1968, the BSU at OSU staged a walkout in protest against policies that forced Fred Milton, a Black athlete,²⁴⁴ to shave his beard and mustache to comply with the team's no facial hair policy after the coach threatened to expel Milton and terminate his scholarship.²⁴⁵ In solidarity with OSU, the UO BSU organized a sit-in weeks later with hundreds of students and staff joining in support of the boycott.

²⁴² Herman Brame Interview, accessed via *Racing to Change. Oregon's Civil Rights Years: The Eugene Story*, University of Oregon, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/mnchexhibits/racing-to-change/community-rises-up/videos/>.

²⁴³ "Black Student Union memo: Grievances and Demands of Black Students on the University of Oregon," UO Office of the President, University of Oregon. Oregon Digital, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://oregondigital.org/concern/documents/df66j9257>.

²⁴⁴ Prominent athletes during the era included Winston "Harry" Jerome. Jerome received a B.S. in physical education from the UO in 1964 and earned a Master's degree in 1968. He taught physical education in Canada during those years, and was subsequently involved in several physical education programs, including the National Fitness and Amateur Sport Program, and the Premier's Sports Award Program. He was also personally involved in the creation of Canada's Ministry of Sport. He was a vocal advocate for athletes in general, and minority athletes in particular. Just before his death, Jerome was inducted into the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame in 1981, and the University of Oregon's Sports Hall of Fame in 1993.

²⁴⁵ Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 118.

The Eugene chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) emerged from the UO Black Student Union in 1968. With a membership of roughly 18 to 20 people at its peak, the BPP worked with the Black Student Union to confront racism at the university but also sought to address more widespread social issues within the larger community (Figure 18).²⁴⁶

The Eugene chapter of the BPP was the first officially sanctioned BPP branch in Oregon.²⁴⁷ The Eugene chapter formed just two years after Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the first BPP organization in 1966.²⁴⁸ Founding members of the BPP Seattle Chapter, Elmer and Aaron Dixon, went to Eugene to help organize the Eugene Chapter. Three of their members remained in Eugene to support the development of the chapter. Brothers Howard and Tommy Anderson (also members of the Black Student Union) led the Eugene chapter. Howard Anderson relocated from Los Angeles and, prior to his arrival in Eugene, had worked for CORE and SNCC in Southern states. In addition to the Black Student Union, the Eugene BPP partnered and collaborated with various community groups and other anti-racist groups in Eugene, including the Patriot Party, Brown Berets, and Asian student groups.²⁴⁹



Figure 18. The Black Panthers giving a speech on the UO campus in 1969. Members shown (from left to right) Oliver Patterson, Tommy Anderson (speaker), Howard Anderson, William Green, Jerome Foster, Julius Hurst, Dennis White, Darrel Fields, Teo DeRuso, and Artie Cox (University of Oregon Special Collections).

²⁴⁶ Anderson, "Short History of the Black Panther Party in the Eugene, Oregon Chapter," It's About Time – Black Panther Legacy & Alumni, accessed April 4, 2025.

http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/chapter_history/eugene_oregon_chapter.html; Moreland et. al., "Black Historic Resources in Oregon," sec. E, 118.

²⁴⁷ Lucas N. N. Burke and Judson L. Jeffries. *The Portland Black Panthers: Empowering Albina and Remaking a City* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2016), 208.

²⁴⁸ Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 304; Jaja (Tommy) Anderson, "Short History of the Black Panther Party."

²⁴⁹ Anderson, "Short History of the Black Panther Party."

Mirroring the national BPP movement, the Eugene chapter stood for Black empowerment and Black liberation. The BPP adopted progressive social programs in Eugene, such as the Free Breakfast Program, a Liberation School that taught African and African American history to youth, and a Public Speaker Program that planned demonstrations and rallies in Eugene. These programs were offered to underprivileged families regardless of race, as was the BPP philosophy to address racial and class issues.²⁵⁰ Free meals were provided to 30 to 40 children daily at the **First Congregational Church (1050 E 23rd Ave.)** as part of the Free Breakfast Program during the 1969 school year (Figure 19). William Green and Alice Spencer, the communication secretary and instructor of the Eugene BPP branch, coordinated the program by reaching out to Black families in the community, Lane Human Resources, and local parent and teacher associations. Sam Reynolds Jr, well respected in the Black community, served as an intermediary between the newly emerging Eugene chapter of the BPP and the Black community and helped facilitate the program. Eleven schools in Lane County participated in the program. Food and other resources were donated by local community members and businesses.²⁵¹ In 1969, the BPP also worked alongside Lane County Free School, Springfield Low-Income Council, YWCA, and Young Patriots to sponsor a Thanksgiving meal for underprivileged and under-resourced families, elderly, students, and other community member in 1969. An estimated 600 people were in attendance.²⁵²



Figure 19. Alice Spencer serving children free meals at the First Congregational Church, 1050 E 23rd Ave. as part of the Eugene BPP's Free Breakfast Program in 1969 (*Oregon Daily Emerald*).

In addition to community-minded social services, another objective of the Black Panthers was to end police brutality and violence against Black communities. BPP charters taught self-defense classes and, in some cities, armed members to patrol streets and monitor police activity by witnessing arrests and informing Black individuals of their legal rights.²⁵³ As was the case across the US, the Eugene chapter of the BPP was the target of police surveillance and harassment. The Eugene Police Department routinely profiled BPP members, with one incident escalating to an armed confrontation and standoff between head BPP members and the Eugene Police Department in 1969 but the incident was diffused when a lawyer intervened.²⁵⁴

The Eugene BPP chapter dissolved in 1970, when the head of the chapter Howard Anderson, moved to Oakland to work more closely with Huey Newton, the Minister of Defense. Some members remained

²⁵⁰ Anderson, "Short History of the Black Panther Party."

²⁵¹ "Black Panthers serve breakfast to children," *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), September 30, 1969, 5.

²⁵² "Thanksgiving eat-in," *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), December 1, 1969, 9.

²⁵³ Jules Boykoff and Martha Gies, "'We're Going to Defend Ourselves': The Portland Chapter of the Black Panther Party and the Local Media Response," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 111, no. 3 (2010), 282.

²⁵⁴ Anderson, "Short History of the Black Panther Party."

students at the UO, other members relocated and dispersed to various cities where they remained active in the BPP movement.²⁵⁵

Continuing Housing Inequality

The 1949 Housing Act provided federal funds to cities for urban redevelopment in the post-war period. Title I of the Act offered federal funds to local public agencies to assemble, clear, and resell or lease land for predominantly residential uses to private developers or public housing agencies – what many referred to as “slum clearance.” The 1954 Housing Act expanded the scope of this effort and increased the amount of federal funds available for nonresidential projects.²⁵⁶ Urban redevelopment projects originated at the local level through urban renewal agencies which could access federal funding distributed to public housing agencies and municipal governments through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant and loan program, collectively referred to as urban renewal.²⁵⁷ Beginning in the 1950s, urban renewal projects and widespread redevelopment prevailed in cities across the US, supported through the housing legislation and the Federal-Highway Act of 1956. Urban renewal was prescribed as planning improvements designed to modernize cities by removing neighborhoods deemed “slums” or “blight.” Urban renewal projects disproportionately impacted communities of color and uprooted entire neighborhoods and communities.²⁵⁸ New housing projects were not intended to rehouse existing communities that were forcibly removed, but rather to attract middle-class white people. Through eminent domain, displaced residents were left without just compensation or aid from cities or the federal government. Residents were forcibly removed from their homes as neighborhoods and communities were lost to make way for new buildings, highways and other development.

There were several redevelopment projects in Eugene during the 1960s under the Urban Renewal Agency (URA), established by the City in 1958. Eugene voters rejected the first major urban renewal project proposed by the City in 1960 that would have expanded the city center to the Ferry Street Bridge.²⁵⁹ Other projects, including the first public housing project (Parkview Terrace at 255 High St.) built in Eugene by the URA and the Housing Authority of Lane County in 1966, proceeded uninterrupted. Before construction began, residents of an entire neighborhood block (bound by High St. and Mill St. and E 2nd Ave. and E 3rd Ave.) were given six weeks to vacate their homes. Of the 12 residents, nine were Black. Despite the opposition from CORE and the Black community, the City insisted there was no other place to build the complex.²⁶⁰ Residents who had been forced out of their homes were prohibited from living in the new housing complex. Displaced residents only received relocation assistance after protestors picketed and threatened to “lie down under the bulldozers.”²⁶¹ Rev. Wesley Nicholson of the First Congregational Church was elected chairman of a relocation committee. At a committee meeting in 1964 Rev. Nicholson expressed difficulty finding housing for displaced Black residents, relaying that he frequently encountered white property owners who wouldn’t rent to Black residents because of “old” racially restrictive covenants. Rev. Nicholson said he pointed out that the covenants no longer had legal standing, but Eugene City Attorney Eugene Venn corrected him, clarifying that they were illegal.²⁶²

²⁵⁵ Anderson, “Short History of the Black Panther Party.”

²⁵⁶ Johnson and Tashman, *Urban Renewal in Oregon*, 7.

²⁵⁷ Ann Pfau, David Hochfelder, and Stacy Sewell, “Urban Renewal,” *The Inclusive Historian’s Handbook*, November 12, 2019, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://inclusivehistorian.com/urban-renewal/>.

²⁵⁸ Evans, “How Interstate Highways Guttered Communities—and Reinforced Segregation.”

²⁵⁹ Pinyerd and Wright, *Eugene Modernism*, 3.5.

²⁶⁰ Clyde E. DeBerry, Joseph Fashing, and Calvin Harris, “Black Power and Black Population: A Dilemma,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 38, no. 1 (1969), 16. doi:10.2307/2294174.

²⁶¹ Dave Jordan, “Eugene Discrimination Cases Cited in Tuesday Dialogue,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), February 19, 1964, 1.; DeBerry, Fashing, and Harris, “Black Power and Black Population: A Dilemma,” 16.

²⁶² “Relocation Aid Unit Meets to Organize,” *Register-Guard* (Eugene, OR), June 4, 1964, 5B.

Venn's response was likely in reference to the 1957 fair housing legislation but racial restrictive covenants were not illegal until after the Federal Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, although racial covenants remained on certain property deeds that pre-dated the 1968 law.

The most significant advancement in racial equality during the Civil Rights era was the enactment of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.²⁶³ The act revoked Jim Crow laws, ending outright racial segregation in schools, jobs, and public accommodations. Discriminatory practices in employment were also banned. Despite social change and progress, racism and discrimination remained deeply embedded in American society. While the Civil Rights movement generated monumental change in the US, it was also a violent and turbulent time. As activists and advocates across the country mobilized for equality and against injustices like police brutality and violence against Black Americans, individuals and groups in Eugene joined the struggle for equality and positive change.

Several months after the enactment of the Civil Rights Act, the City of Eugene formed the Eugene Human Rights Commission (HRC), with support from the Eugene chapter of CORE. HRC began as a 15-member commission to ensure equal rights to individuals in Eugene. Members of the commission were appointed by the mayor to serve three-year terms. Adopted under city ordinance, the commission members were chosen to broadly represent "racial, religious, and other groups in the city..."²⁶⁴ A primary objective of the commission was to serve as a liaison between state law enforcement agencies and community members whose rights had been violated. The commission was also formed with the intention of providing equal access to employment opportunities in local government jobs. Robert Campbell, Chairman of the commission and head of the UO economics department during the commission's formation in 1964, claimed that Eugene did not "have a serious racial discrimination problem."²⁶⁵

Despite some social change and progress, racial prejudices still prevailed in Eugene. Sam Reynolds Jr. was refused service at the Snappy Cafe at 453 Willamette Street in 1965, despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act. He was told to leave, but having done nothing wrong, he remained at the restaurant and was arrested for disorderly conduct. Less than an hour later, Ruth Nettles and her friends entered the café and were also denied service by the same waitress. She pressed charges and the server was also arrested shortly after.²⁶⁶

Leading up to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, CORE organized the "Selma Sympathy Civil Rights March" at the **Park Blocks** on March 13, 1965, to coincide with the Selma to Montgomery marches (Figure 20). CORE also organized a protest outside the Pioneer Building at the Lane County Fairgrounds on November 10, 1965, when white supremacist and sheriff Jim Clark, known for his violent tactics against nonviolent civil rights leaders and supporters in Selma, came to speak to over 600 people at the Eugene Fair Grounds.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ State of Oregon, "Later Developments," Black in Oregon 1840–1870.

²⁶⁴ "Eugene Establishes Rights Commission," *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), November 24, 1964, 1.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Bob Carl, "UO Freshman Arrested In Loyal Rights Incident," *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), May 18, 1965.

²⁶⁷ "....And Protesters Rally," *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), November 11, 1965, 1.

Further advancements came in 1965 with the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, making it unlawful to deny or restrict the right to vote based on race or color. A total of roughly 250,000 Black Americans registered to vote by the end of 1965.²⁶⁸

Among the locally significant figures during the Civil Rights Act period was Dr. Edwin “Ed” Coleman. In 1966 Dr. Coleman relocated to Eugene with his wife, Charmaine, at the height of the Civil Rights movement.²⁶⁹ As an undergraduate student at Chico State University, Dr. Coleman was a civil rights activist with CORE, attending sit-ins, fighting for equal housing, and eventually meeting with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.²⁷⁰ Unlike in Chico and other cities in California, after settling in Eugene, Dr. Coleman recalled seeing signs posted at local restaurants and at the Department of Motor Vehicles office in Eugene stating that “Discrimination Will Not Be Tolerated.”²⁷¹ Dr. Coleman earned a doctorate in theater from the University of Oregon and joined the English Department as an assistant professor in 1971. At the time, he was only one of five Black professors when he arrived and “only a handful” of Black students were enrolled at the UO.²⁷² Dr. Coleman promoted literature by Black scholars and people of color and worked towards diversifying the department’s curriculum. In addition to teaching, Dr. Coleman worked as a student advisor for the BSU and Cultural Center which formed in 1966.²⁷³

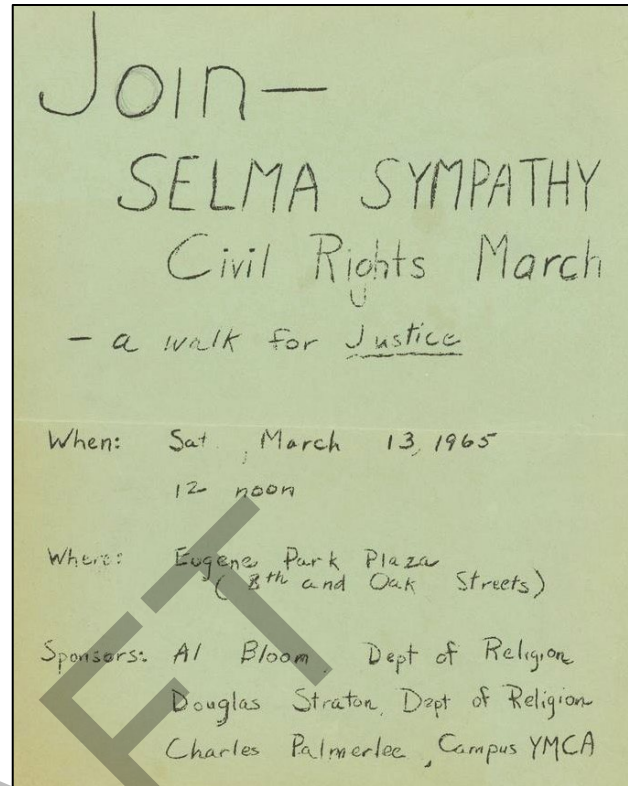


Figure 20. Flyer for a Eugene march in support of the Selma to Montgomery marches (University of Oregon Special Collections, Laura J. Bock papers).

Along with Dr. Coleman, Larry Carter was only one of a few Black professors at UO during the late 1960s. Carter played a significant role in local advocacy, serving as one of the founding members of CORE and Eugene HRC. He initially studied mathematics at the UO but later went on to earn a graduate

²⁶⁸ National Archives and Records Administration, “Voting Rights Act (1965),” Milestone Documents, accessed April 4, 2025, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/voting-rights-act>.

²⁶⁹ Dr. Coleman began his academic career in San Francisco public colleges and was a performing musician while enlisted in the Air Force. See “Campus mourns loss of retired English professor Ed Coleman,” *Around the O*, University of Oregon, January 25, 2017, <https://around.uoregon.edu/content/campus-mourns-loss-retired-english-professor-ed-coleman>.

²⁷⁰ Andrew Field, “Retired UO Professor Edwin Coleman Dies,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), January 24, 2017, last modified November 6, 2018, accessed October 2024, [dailymerald.com/news/academics/retired-uo-professor-edwin-coleman-dies/article_98daa445-a9d8-562f-998e-6c46d37dc519.html](https://www.dailymerald.com/news/academics/retired-uo-professor-edwin-coleman-dies/article_98daa445-a9d8-562f-998e-6c46d37dc519.html).

²⁷¹ Dr. Ed and Charmaine Coleman Interview. City of Eugene Archives. Need more info to complete citation.

²⁷² Dr. Ed and Charmaine Coleman Interview. City of Eugene Archives. Need more info to complete citation.

²⁷³ Louis Krauss, “Friendly Neighborhood Celebrates Finished Murals for Dr. Edwin Coleman Jr.,” August 9, 2021, *Register Guard* (Eugene, OR), accessed November 14, 2024, [registerguard.com/story/news/2021/08/09/eugenes-friendly-neighborhood-celebrates-murals-dr-edwin-coleman-jr/5533519001](https://www.registerguard.com/story/news/2021/08/09/eugenes-friendly-neighborhood-celebrates-murals-dr-edwin-coleman-jr/5533519001). His talent extended beyond academia, Dr. Coleman toured as a professional musician playing bass for Cal Tjader, Ella Fitzgerald, Peter, Paul, and Mary.²⁷³ Throughout his life he remained a dedicated civil rights advocate in Eugene.

degree in sociology. Carter became a professor at UO, teaching quantitative methods, social demography, and advanced sociology methods courses. While involved in the HRC in the late 1960s, he acted as a mediator between Eugene City Hall and the Black Panthers. He remained a devoted activist throughout his life, described by his former college roommate as being "...dedicated to the equal treatment of human beings, and he took a lot of time away from his studies to deal with things." Later in his career, he co-developed the Lee-Carter model, a numerical algorithm used to forecast mortality.²⁷⁴

Academic, scholar, civil rights leader, and activist, Dr. Clyde Deberry, received his doctorate degree in higher education administration and psychology from the UO. While president and statistician planner of CORE, Dr. Deberry published scholarly work and studies under the UO's School Desegregation Training & Research Institute. He later became a criminal justice professor and worked in the prison system, before finishing his career at Grambling State University, a public HBU.²⁷⁵

Mattie Reynolds demonstrated the need for political change by running for City Council in 1966. She was the first Black person to seek public office in Eugene, giving voice and representation to the Black community and paving the way for future generations. Younger generations of the founding families who also engaged in social activism included Lyllye Reynolds-Parker and Sam Reynolds Jr. of the Reynolds family, Willie Mims, son of C.B. and Annie Mims, and Pauline (Gibson) Davidson, who was raised by the Johnson family.

Influenced by his childhood friend Sam Reynolds Jr., Willie Mims became engaged in local activism during the 1960s. Willie Mims was an early member of CORE, which he later described as "...like someone turning on a bright light in my life."²⁷⁶ Years later, he became vice-chairman of CORE and served as a community aid for a government-funded War on Poverty program established through Lane Human Resources during the late 1960s.²⁷⁷ The program was part of a multi-million dollar project to support and assist underserved communities who faced economic barriers in Eugene. When the program did not meet the requirements of establishing a board with at least one-third of its members reflecting the underrepresented communities it was supposed to serve, Mims and other staff members formed a "sort of mutiny" demanding equal representation and more engagement within the communities they were serving.²⁷⁸

In April of 1969, the first anti-discrimination ordinance was passed in Eugene. The Equal Opportunity Ordinance prohibited discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations in Eugene on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Over 60 cases of discrimination had been reported to the City the year before in 1968.²⁷⁹ The Eugene Human Rights Commission organized in 1964 to eliminate discrimination and protect human rights, were the intergovernmental body responsible for lobbying and implementing these laws, yet racial discrimination remained a significant issue in Eugene. By 1969, all new members had been appointed to the HRC panel, replacing the original committee members. This included Rev. Norman Pott, a white pastor from the Presbyterian Central United Church, who served as the new Chairman. Some white residents in Eugene opposed the ordinance. Less than one month after the ordinance was passed, the Presbyterian Central Church was bombed, damaging the

²⁷⁴ "Remembering University professor Lawrence Carter," October 23, 2011, *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), accessed April 21, <https://dailymerald.com/85050/news/remembering-university-professor-lawrence-carter/>.

²⁷⁵ Canesha Harris, "The act of giving back," The Gramblinite, College Media Network, 2025, <https://www.thegramblinite.com/2014/10/30/the-act-of-giving-back/>.

²⁷⁶ Willie Mims, "The Mosaic: Black Activism in Eugene," (speech, Eugene, OR, July 3, 2016), KLCC, <https://www.klcc.org/social-justice/2016-06-06/the-mosaic-black-activism-in-eugene>.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ "City adopts discrimination law," *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), April 29, 1969, 1, 7; Nagae, "Dealing With Race," in *Eugene 1945-2000*, 208-209.

entrance and shattering the windows.²⁸⁰ Larry Carter, who also served on the HRC panel when the ordinance was passed was a founding member of CORE.²⁸¹

African Americans continued to overcome racial barriers to advance in athletics throughout the Civil Rights era, playing an important role in advancing racial and social equality. Several African American athletes in Eugene excelled during the Civil Rights era, gaining local and national recognition.

Born in Alabama, Otis Davis played basketball and baseball while enlisted in the Air Force during the Korean War.²⁸² He then enrolled at the UO on a basketball scholarship. After not getting much playing time on the court, he transitioned to track and field in 1958 and qualified for the Olympics just two years later, in 1960. At the 1960 Rome Olympics, he won the 400-meter gold medal, becoming the first UO Olympic gold medalist and setting a world record. Davis also helped the men's relay team win a gold medal several days later, making him one of the only two-time Olympic gold medalists from Oregon. He is one of five track & field icons depicted on the exterior of the tower at the newly remodeled Hayward Field in Eugene.²⁸³

At the age of five, Margaret Bailes moved to Eugene with her family in 1956. She attended Lincoln Elementary School and Churchill High School. She joined the Churchill track team and set the high school records for 100 and 200 meters (which remain today) as well as for the Oregon Track Club. At the age of seventeen, she tied the world record for 100 meters at the national championships in 1968. At the Summer Olympics in Mexico City a few months later, Bailes along with her teammates won the gold medal in the 4 x 100-meter relay, setting a world record in the process. Bailes was the first Black woman inducted into the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame in 1991.²⁸⁴

The end of the 1960s and Civil Rights movement was marked by the national Fair Housing Act of 1968. The Act “prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, and sex,” but housing discrimination was not completely eradicated and was still unlawfully practiced by some realtors, mortgage lenders, and homeowners. Redlining and racial covenants were outlawed under the Fair Housing Act. State and local government were also slow to adopt fair housing laws, and the Black community and activists continued to advocate for anti-discriminatory policies in housing into the 1970s.

POST-CIVIL RIGHTS ERA IN EUGENE (1970–1980)

Note to Reader: This preliminary historic context identified a significant gap in information and the need to collect and gather more information on the recent Black past during the succeeding decades after the Civil Rights movement.

The 1970s were a momentous era of progress, tension, and change in which Black community organizations pushed to build economic wealth through homeownership and business development. Black liberation and Black power rejected white racial prejudices and advocated for economic self-sufficiency in the Black community. Black empowerment and the celebration of Black culture and identity that took

²⁸⁰ “Explosion blasts door,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), October 7, 1969, 1.

²⁸¹ “Discrimination query dismissed in hearing,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), October 7, 1969, 1.

²⁸² USA Track & Field, “Athlete Bio: Otis Davis,” accessed September 8, 2023, <https://www.usatf.org/athlete-bios/otis-davis>; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002,” sec. E, 123–124.

²⁸³ Davis also became the first person in history to run that distance in under 45 seconds. See Bob Moseley and Zach Lawson, “But First There Was Otis,” Hayward Field, University of Oregon, accessed September 8, 2023, hayward.uoregon.edu/otis-davis; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002,” sec. E, 124.

²⁸⁴ Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002,” sec. E, 124–125.

shape in the 1960s, progressed into a movement by the 1970s. Black liberation and pride was expressed through hair and clothing styles that embraced the “Black is beautiful” movement that gave representation to the Black community.²⁸⁵ The Black press — with such newspapers as *The Northwest/Clarion Defender* (1962–1973)²⁸⁶ and *The Skanner* (1975–present) in Portland — provided Oregon’s Black community with an outlet to express themselves and learn about events relevant to their lives. *New Birth*, a newspaper published by and for Black UO students, was created to “...offer the Black student an opportunity to the issues and events that our lives through a black perspective.”²⁸⁷

By the 1960s, the city’s Black population had reached 161 and had grown to over 700 by 1970.²⁸⁸ With the growth of the Black community came an increasing demand for social services and commercial businesses tailored to Black consumers. Black-owned businesses were integral to Eugene’s Black community, and many businesses served as community and cultural hubs. One such business was the **Black Boutique**, which used to stand on the corner of **7th and Willamette Streets** (Figure 21). The business was opened ca. 1970 by brothers Willie and John Mims, sons of Mr. and Ms. Mims, prominent members of Eugene’s early Black community. Black business



Figure 21. The Black Boutique on the corner of 7th and Willamette Streets in 1971 (KEZI 1966–1980 Archives, Coll 427, FV085. University of Oregon Special Collections).

owners, like the Mims brothers, overcame systemic barriers to open and operate businesses in Eugene. Black Boutique provided retail goods, including clothing, jewelry, cosmetics, art, records, and publications for the Black community. Before it opened, Eugene’s Black residents had to travel to Portland for similar products. The Black Boutique provided more equitable shopping options for Black customers and also created jobs for the Black community.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Museum of Natural and Cultural History, “Embracing Black Identity,” *Racing to Change. Oregon’s Civil Rights Years: The Eugene Story*, University of Oregon, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/mnchexhibits/racing-to-change/black-proud/black-identity/>.

²⁸⁶ Portland State University, “Clarion Defender,” *Historic Black Newspapers of Portland*, accessed January 8, 2025, <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/clariondefender/>.

²⁸⁷ Museum of Natural and Cultural History, “Turn It Up,” *Racing to Change. Oregon’s Civil Rights Years: The Eugene Story*, University of Oregon, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/mnchexhibits/racing-to-change/black-proud/art-music/>.

²⁸⁸ Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung. *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States* (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2002).

²⁸⁹ Chuck Beek, “Black Boutique Business is Definitely in the Black,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), January 15, 1971, 3, <https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/2004260239/1971-01-15/ed-1/seq-3/>.

The early 1970s were also a time of political and economic self-determination in the Black community. While employed for LHR, Willie Mims was part of a committee working to establish the OUR Credit Union to assist people in Lane County experiencing financial insecurity and living below the poverty level.²⁹⁰ OUR was open to all Lane County residents, regardless of income and provided small loans to people of lower economic status. The credit union also offered free career and job counseling services.²⁹¹ Community efforts by Mims and others at LHR also led to the development of the Lane Community College (LCC) dental technician program, OUR Credit Union, and a tutorial program at UO. At LHR, Willie Mims also helped to establish programs like Title VI to ensure federal compliance with the Civil Rights Act, legal aid, and the Lane County Housing program, which had to be relocated from Springfield to Eugene because of discrimination.²⁹² In 1968, Mims worked with four prominent white businessmen, who did not want to be named publicly, to hire 38 African Americans in their workplaces. Six went on to retire at their place of employment.²⁹³

Wanting to serve as a role model for her two children, Lyllye Reynolds-Parker returned to school at the age of 40 to further her education and earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the UO. Several years later, she began her career as an academic advisor at the UO Office of Multicultural Academic Success (now the Division of Equity and Inclusion's Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence), where she devoted 17 years of her life to mentoring, empowering, and providing a space for young students of color while supporting students pursuing a college education.²⁹⁴

Continuing Civil Rights Efforts

Local community advocacy efforts continued well into the 1970s to address discrimination in education, employment, health, housing, and policing that remained pervasive in Eugene despite the enactment of laws and ordinances. CORE, with considerable assistance from Willie Mims, Sam Reynolds Jr., and HRC members Larry Carter and Bruce McKinlay, conducted the Eugene Black Community Survey in 1970.²⁹⁵ The survey was sponsored by HRC. Information from the survey was obtained from interviews with Black community members conducted by CORE members. The report demonstrated housing discrimination in Eugene, in which 73% of the Black individuals interviewed reported they had experienced housing discrimination in Eugene.²⁹⁶ An additional report also identified and demonstrated patterned police harassment, including following, stopping, and interrogating Black residents and people of color at a significantly higher rate than white residents. The study disclosed that Eugene police officers were racially profiling Black drivers, who were significantly more likely to be pulled over than white drivers. A total of 52% of Black residents were stopped by police within the survey period, versus 3% of white residents.²⁹⁷ The HRC questioned the validity of the report and concluded that they found no evidence of patterned police harassment towards the Black community members and people of color. The HRC even went on to demand CORE disclose the names of the individuals involved in the survey and

²⁹⁰ Charlene Yogi, "Proposed Credit Union to Aid Poor," *Oregon Daily Emerald*, November 22, 1968, 1.

²⁹¹ Shahryar Ahmad, "Credit Union offers alternative to banks; loans available to low-income applicants," *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), July 10, 1973, 1.

²⁹² Willie Mims, "The Mosaic: Black Activism in Eugene."

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Lyllye Reynolds-Parker, interview by Samantha Matsumoto.

²⁹⁵ "Eugene Black Community & Survey of the Black Community Report to the Human Rights Commission (selections)" UO Office of the President, University of Oregon. Oregon Digital, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://oregondigital.org/concern/documents/df66jb80h>.

²⁹⁶ "Report of Community Relations Committee Eugene Chapter, Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E)," City of Eugene Archives.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

concluded with recommendations including that individuals and organizations “should refrain from making irresponsible and unsupported charges against other individuals and groups.”²⁹⁸ HRC did make some suggestions to the police department like emphasizing training, recruiting qualified Black police members, and implementing a procedure that would help reduce the number of times innocent Black residents were pulled over.²⁹⁹ Despite these recommendations racial profiling and police harassment of the Black community persisted.

Although initially organized as a student-led organization, a local charter branch of the NAACP was established in 1976. One of the primary goals of the organization during the early years was to end discrimination in local school districts and at the UO.³⁰⁰ Eric Richardson served as early president before transitioning to executive director. The St. Mark CME Church and Bethel Temple Ministries remained committed to advocacy and support of the Black community. The churches forged a close relationship with the NAACP.

The struggle to end discrimination in Eugene public schools continued. A majority of Eugene’s white population did not consider inequalities in education or did not approve of desegregation methods, like bussing, to improve disparities in education.³⁰¹ Anti-discrimination efforts in education were later led by Bahati Ansari, a Black mother who initiated “Racism-Free Zones” in Eugene in 1986 after images depicting Black people being lynched were shown to her son’s 6th grade class at Jefferson Middle School. Ansari confronted the teacher, principal, and superintendent of the school district, who remained ignorant to issues of racism but spurred conversations which led to the development of “Racism-Free Zones.” Jefferson, Cal Young, and Spencer Butte Middle Schools as well as Adams Elementary School had all adopted anti-racist policies.³⁰² This initiative served as model that began to be applied to other schools throughout the US.³⁰³

To better represent Black athletes at the UO, Willie Mims came up with the concept of the “Afro Duck” or “Soul Duck” in 1971. The decals were designed and printed locally by the Potter Manufacturing Co. near River Road in Eugene. Employee Quinton Barton (white) who designed the mascot, believed it to be the first team mascot to represent Black athletes.³⁰⁴ The “Afro Duck” gained national attention, appearing in numerous newspapers across the US. Black members of the track team were in support of the “Afro Duck” decal design and Lyllye Reynolds recalled the “Afro Duck” as a sign of pride in the Black community during the 1970s.³⁰⁵ Some students today view the decal as a racist depiction of a Black athlete that reinforces stereotypes.

²⁹⁸ Report of Community Relations Committee Eugene Chapter, Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E), City of Eugene Archives. Report of Community Relations Committee Eugene Chapter, Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E), City of Eugene Archives.

²⁹⁹ Nagae, “Dealing With Race,” in *Eugene 1945-2000*, 203.

³⁰⁰ “NAACP Chief Wants Justice,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), May 18, 1979, 9.; Moreland et. al., sec. E, 135.

³⁰¹ DeBerry, Fashing, and Harris, “Black Power and Black Population: A Dilemma,” 19.

³⁰² Nagae, “Dealing With Race,” in *Eugene 1945-2000*, 209–210.

³⁰³ “Local Woman Fights Racism, Carries Torch for Social Causes,” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), September 22, 2003, 44.; Moreland et. al., sec. E, 135.

³⁰⁴ Paul Lukas, “None More Black: Oregon Had ‘Soul Brother’ Mascot in ‘71’,” *Uni Watch*, Inconspicuous, LLC, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://uni-watch.com/2020/11/10/none-more-black-oregon-had-soul-brother-mascot-in-71/>.

³⁰⁵ Museum of Natural and Cultural History, “From Athletics to Activism,” *Racing to Change. Oregon’s Civil Rights Years: The Eugene Story*, University of Oregon, <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/mnchexhibits/racing-to-change/university-of-oregon/athletics/>.

Black athletes continued to make significant contributions to sports and athleticism during the post-Civil Rights era. Many succeeded in breaking records and went on to join professional teams.

Ronald “Ronnie” Lee was a skilled basketball player and part of the UO basketball team known as the “Kamikaze Kids” for their aggressive play style.³⁰⁶ Lee significantly contributed to the team’s success and made it to the National Invitation Tournament twice in the 1970s. Throughout his college career, he played to record breaking crowds at **McArthur Court (1601 University St.)**. He continues to hold the state’s record of the highest points scored in a career, scoring over 2,000 points.³⁰⁷ His success continued after the UO and he played professionally in the NBA for six years, earning more achievement awards and setting records.³⁰⁸ Other members of the “Kamikaze Kids” were Greg Ballard and UO future head coach Ernie Kent. Ballard played with UO for two seasons and still holds several state records, including the highest number of rebounds in a career. He went on to play in the NBA for 11 years. Kent played on the basketball team while enrolled at UO during the early 1970s. His coaching career started during his last year in college, when he became the UO freshman coach under Dick Harter.³⁰⁹ In 1997, Kent became the first Black head coach of the UO basketball team.

Ahmad Rashad (born Robert “Bobby” Moore) played football while enrolled in the UO in 1967 and set records for rushing, receptions, all-purpose yardage, and scoring, including his receiving record which still stands.³¹⁰ He was named (as Bobby Moore) College Football All-American in 1971.³¹¹

Other notable Black athletes included Georgene Rose, Debbie Adams, and Quenna Beasley. Georgene Rose competed on the track and field team in 1976 and was the first Black varsity female athlete at UO. Debbie Adams was the first UO Black women’s basketball player in 1977 and was the first Black woman to win all-district honors. Quenna Beasley was the first Black NCAA All-American in shot put at the 1983 national championships.

UO baseball player and football player, Don Reynolds was drafted by the San Diego Padres in 1974 and Yogi Johnson was the first Black softball player at UO in 1981, who led the team in home runs and RBIs.

Center fielder, George McPherson played for the Eugene Emeralds (Ems) from 1974 to 1977. McPherson was a local favorite, known for his dynamic playing style. He played many games at Civic Stadium (destroyed by fire in 2015) and led the team to win consecutive championship titles in 1974 and 1975. The Emeralds were the only independent team to win the Northwest League Championship.³¹² McPherson remained in Eugene after his baseball career. He owned the Fairfield Lanes bowling alley located on Highway 99 North from 1986 to 1999. McPherson was also a baseball instructor before becoming the official scorer of the Eugene Emeralds in 2004.

³⁰⁶ Kerry Eggers, “Relentless Ronnie Lee Embodied Kamikaze Kids,” *Portland Tribune*, March 5, 2023, https://www.portlandtribune.com/sports/relentless-ronnie-lee-embodied-kamikaze-kids/article_49cfaf97-b9d3-5b57-81ad-9ce514135396.html; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002,” sec. E, 140.

³⁰⁷ University of Oregon Athletics, “Ron Lee,” Hall of Fame, accessed April 8, 2025, <https://goducks.com/honors/hall-of-fame/ron-lee/132>; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002,” sec. E, 140.

³⁰⁸ Eggers, “Relentless Ronnie Lee.”

³⁰⁹ Hockaday, “All his Ducks in a row.”; Moreland et. al., “Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788–2002,” sec. E, 141.

³¹⁰ University of Oregon Athletics, “Ahmad Rashad,” Hall of Fame, accessed April 8, 2025, <https://goducks.com/honors/hall-of-fame/ahmad-rashad/165>.

³¹¹ Oregon Sports Hall of Fame and Museum, “Ahmad Rashad – Football,” November 26, 2018, accessed April 4, 2025, <https://oregonsportshall.org/timeline/ahmad-rashad-football/>.

³¹² Nina-Grace Montes, “Eugene’s adopted homegrown player,” *Daily Emerald* (Eugene, OR), July 5, 2003, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://dailymerald.com/47567/sports/eugenes-adopted-homegrown-player/>.

EPILOGUE (1980 TO PRESENT-DAY)

The Mims house was listed in the NRHP as a contributing resource to the East Skinner Butte District in 1982. During the 1980s Willie Mims worked with the City of Eugene to restore the Mims residence and the former rooming house.³¹³

Eugene Police Chief Jim Hill alongside other police officials in Lane County signed a pledge in 1999, condemning racial profiling by any law enforcement agency.³¹⁴

In 2002 Oregon removed all racist language from the state's constitution.

In more recent decades, notable Black-owned businesses include Glamor Girls and Guys Hair Studio located on **125 W. Broadway**, owned by Betty Snowden. Snowden was committed to racial justice and organized the Betty Cares nonprofit, later renamed 8:46 Justice Today.

The murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police spurred massive protests across Oregon and the country in 2020. His death reignited the Black Lives Matter movement, ensuing large-scale demonstrations and protests against racial and social injustice and police violence inflicted upon Black Americans. Black individuals and communities had long been victim to and witnessed police violence and brutality for generations, yet technology now allowed violent and unjust incidents to be documented. A shift towards increased awareness and national conversations on systemic and institutional racism and the history of racism in the US began to unfold across the country.

As Eugene continues to reckon with its exclusionary past, it is important to incorporate past and present narratives that commemorate and recognize the contributions of Black individuals and communities, who have traditionally been excluded. Places and sites in Eugene reflect and represent the contributions and achievements of Eugene's Black residents. In 2003 the NAACP orchestrated the name change of Centennial Blvd. in Eugene and Springfield to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. In recent years, streets and buildings have been named to elevate Black leaders and members of the community. The St. Mark's CME Church is now located along a street that honors Sam Reynolds. Streets along the downtown waterfront south of the Willamette River (across the river from the Across the Bridge Community site) were named in honor of Wiley Griffon and Annie Mims.

With the help of the LCC Black Student Union and other organizations, Cheri Turpin and LCC and UO professor Mark Harris raised funds to erect a monument at Wiley Griffon's grave at the Eugene Masonic Cemetery. A historic marker was placed at the site of his home in 2022. A plaque now stands along 4th Ave. near the City Hall, at the former site of Wiley Griffon's home and a mural of Griffon was painted on Willamette St., where the streetcar once passed.

In 2017, the Black Student Task Force made it publicly known that Frederick Dunn, the namesake of Dunn Hall the wing of the Hamilton Hall Complex dormitory, was a white supremacist and once former member and leader of the Ku Klux Klan. The building name was revoked following further investigation that entailed a written report³¹⁵ by a panel of distinguished local historians and public input. Dunn Hall was officially renamed Unthank Hall in recognition and honor of DeNorval Unthank Jr.

³¹³ Mikael Krummel, "The Mims Houses: Honoring Eugene's First Black-Owned Properties," Eugene Magazine, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://eugenemagazine.com/breakdown-lane/the-mims-houses/>.

³¹⁴ Nagae, "Dealing With Race," in *Eugene 1945-2000*, 203.

³¹⁵ Johnson, Taylor, and Weisiger, *Report on the History of Matthew P. Deady and Frederick S. Dunn*.

The Eugene City Council renamed the Westmoreland Community Center to the Dr. Coleman Community Center to commemorate the life and legacy of Dr. Ed Coleman. A mural was painted on the exterior of the building to further highlight his life and achievements. In a unanimous vote made by UO Board of Trustees, the name of the new Black Cultural Center honored Lyllye Reynolds-Parker in 2019. She was the first Black woman and living person to have a building named after on the UO campus.³¹⁶ A park near the former Reynolds home in the West 11th area, co-designed by Black community members, was named in honor of Mattie Reynolds. A nearby marker at the EmX stop on West 11th Ave. near Bertlesen Rd. tells the story of the Reynolds family removal and displacement to the West 11th Ave. area. The Eugene NAACP raised funds to place a memorial plaque outside the Mims' home and in 2016, NAACP moved their offices into the Mims' house.³¹⁷

In 2020 the Lane County Board of Commissioners adopted the Black Lives Matter resolution, supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and acknowledging the county's racist history and commitment to redress and work towards racial equity.³¹⁸

Lane County publicly acknowledged the role it played in the destruction of the Across the Bridge Community and issued a formal apology for the past wrongdoing in 2021.³¹⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

National Register of Historic Places and City Landmark sites in Eugene currently do not represent the places and spaces associated with the city's Black/African American community. This document is a foundational beginning of the work of uncovering and elevating Black history, acknowledging past and unaddressed harms, identifying people and places central to Eugene's Black/African American history, and preserving those stories and places. To be fully realized, this work must be prioritized and supported broadly across the community, including by decision-makers and leaders across local governments and agencies, the business community, and community members. The Preliminary Historic Context Statement Black/African American History in Eugene, Lane County is an important first step in providing the framework to guide and inform future research and survey efforts with the intention of elevating the stories and experiences of Eugene's Black community.

Building off this work, outlined below is a list of preliminary recommendations to consider to further research and public engagement as needed for the next phase of this project:

- 1. Co-design³²⁰ an engagement process with interested members of the Black community, including but not limited to members of the families identified in the Preliminary Context Statement.** Work together on strategies and tactics for review of and

³¹⁶ "Friends, colleagues remember the UO's Lyllye Reynolds-Parker."

³¹⁷ Krummel, "The Mims Houses: Honoring Eugene's First Black-Owned Properties."

³¹⁸ Lane County Board of Commissioners, Order and Resolution No., accessed April 4, 2025, https://cdnsm5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_3585797/Image/Government/County%20Departments/County%20Administration/Advisory%20Committees/Equity%20and%20Access/BLM%20resolution.pdf.

³¹⁹ Lane County, Agenda Cover Memo, January 21, 2021, https://cdnsm5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_3585797/File/Government/BCC/2021/2021_AGENDAS/020221agenda/T.9.B.pdf

³²⁰ To the extent possible, provide opportunities for community members with lived experience, knowledge of the field, and/or subject matter expertise to participate in the design of community engagement plans (draft policy from Chapter 1, Community Engagement, Envision Eugene Comprehensive Plan)

subsequent additions to the Preliminary Context Statement, including activities like contemporary interviews with members of the Black community to collect stories and oral histories and verify/correct written historic documents.

2. **Be guided by Black community and provide space and opportunity for the collection and documentation of their stories and accounts to ensure history is documented accurately.** Conduct and provide on-going support for coordinated community engagement, including but not limited to crowdsourcing and community outreach events. Community engagement will provide the opportunity to gain cross-generational perspectives and will also help address voids in research. Furthermore, community engagement will provide a more comprehensive and complete account of Eugene's Black/African American history and allow for the more recent Black past to be researched and documented. This preliminary historic context identified the need to collect and gather more information on the recent Black past during the succeeding decades after the Civil Rights movement. Areas of research should include biographical accounts of individual Black residents and families, education, housing and residential patterns, Black-owned businesses, social groups, community events, etc. from the 1970s onward.
3. **Work to secure effective and adequate resources that allow research, documentation, and measurable outcomes to continue and be prioritized.** Pursue sufficient funding to conduct future research in local and state repositories, including archival collections and oral histories. Additional time should be dedicated for the review of City of Eugene and Lane County historic records. Future research efforts could also benefit from collaboration with local and statewide community associations and organizations, including historical societies, libraries museums, and universities.

Additionally, consider:

1. **Continue to research and document the history of displacement of the Black community.** In partnership with local and state organizations, continue efforts that recognize and preserve the memory of the Black community in the spaces they created and occupied throughout the Eugene area. Measurable outcomes could include historic sites and places nominations; documentaries on historic sites, places and people; mapping of Black history and their spaces, etc.
2. **To further examine housing discrimination and segregation in Eugene, collect data on racial covenants.** This research has yet to be completed in Eugene and Lane County. Consider establishing a crowdsourcing platform as a means to collect data. Researching historical deeds and titles in public records is time consuming and often limited due to funding. Additionally, many homeowners are unaware that racial covenants are included in their deeds. Historians and researchers have had the most success uncovering restrictive deeds when providing homeowners the opportunity to share restrictive covenants when encountered. Property owners and title officers will be able to share property records if it is known that this information is being collected. A secure email address to send records could be included on a webpage that also provides information on how to remove racist and

discriminatory language from property deeds through the Circuit Court per ORS 93.270³²¹ and ORS 93.274.³²² Identifying racial restrictive covenants in Eugene will help demonstrate past exclusion and the impacts of housing discrimination and inequality in Eugene and provide communication on the process to removing racial restrictions at property owners' request.

3. **Complete archaeological studies of the Across the Bridge and the West 11th communities.** Conduct archaeological studies at the Across the Bridge and the West 11th communities and document findings. Provide recommendations to the findings that will result in a clearer understanding and illumination of Black history. Lastly, consider a historic designation for the Across the Bridge Community and potential other locations.
4. **Apply the National Register of Historic Places framework to acknowledge, recognize, and amplify Black stories in the broader history of Eugene.** This preliminary historic context serves as an imperative step in identifying and recognizing places and spaces associated with Eugene's Black history and provides the opportunity to include narratives that confront past injustices and highlight the resiliency of the Black community through various historic preservation strategies.

Strategies shall include but are not limited to the following recommendations:

- Update historic resources in Eugene's Historic Resources Inventory
- Amend existing National Register nominations, like the East Skinner Butte Historic District and the Smeede Hotel to include Black individuals and their contributions to Eugene's history.
- Building from past survey work completed as part of the *Black Historic Resources in Oregon, 1788-2002 MPD*, complete a Reconnaissance-Level Survey (RLS) and Intensive-Level Survey (ILS) of the Eugene area as a first step in potentially identifying additional historic resources associated with Eugene's Black/African American history. Historic surveys are the first step in collecting and recording information about historic resources, as well as identifying historic properties for National Register listing. The ILS will provide a more detailed and in-depth investigation and evaluation of each historic property. Proposed survey areas could include residential areas of West 11th and Glenwood.
- Consider the Mims House for individual listing in the National Register. The Mims House is currently listed in the NR as contributing to the East Skinner Butte Historic District. The East Skinner Butte Historic District was listed as significant for architecture, community planning, and early settlement, and the historic time period does not include the years the Mims lived in the house. The nomination is outdated

³²¹ Oregonlaws.org, "ORS 93.270—Certain Restrictions in instruments prohibited," Oregon Revised Statutes, OregonLaws, accessed June 1, 2025. https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_93.270.

³²² Oregonlaws.org, "ORS 93.274—Petition to strike discriminatory provisions from recorded instrument; recording order and redactions," Oregon Revised Statutes, OregonLaws, accessed June 1, 2025. https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_93.274.

and only briefly mentions the Mims. We recommend that the Mims House be listed in the National Register as individual resource to demonstrate its connection to the Mims family and significance to the Black community.

- Evaluate historic properties associated with Eugene’s Black community that are potentially eligible for individual listing in the National Register, such as the St. Mark CME Church, as well as historic resources associated with the streetcar and railroad to determine accuracy and to uphold the stature of the historic properties so to cement their importance. Work with the community to determine which properties should be prioritized.
- Update and expand the *Eugene Area Historic Context Statement*, written in 1996 to include historic sites, places, and people in Eugene that are associated with the Black/African American community. Update and expand the *Eugene Downtown Core Area Historic Context Statement*, written in 1991 to include historic sites, places, and people in Eugene that are associated with the Black/African American community. Expand *The Eugene Modernism 1935-1965* context statement completed in 2003 and verify information is consistent and up-to-date with current research. Verify and update *Preliminary Historic Context Statement LGBTQIA+ History in Eugene Lane County, Oregon* to include historic sites, places, and people in Eugene that are associated with the Black/African American community.
- As stated previously, this preliminary historic context is a living document, intended to be updated and amended. With further research and community input, consider further development on themes associated with Eugene’s Black history, according to the National Register and continue to identify additional historic properties that reflect the contributions of the Black community.

5. Continue to research and document the history of displacement of Black community.

Collaborate with the “Equity Atlas” project to record the stories and lived experience from members of Black/African American community about housing and displacement in Eugene. Work with local subject matter experts to better understand how government funded projects contributed to the displacement of Black/African American communities in Eugene and endeavor to mitigate the ongoing impacts.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A: Preliminary List of Known Historic Resources

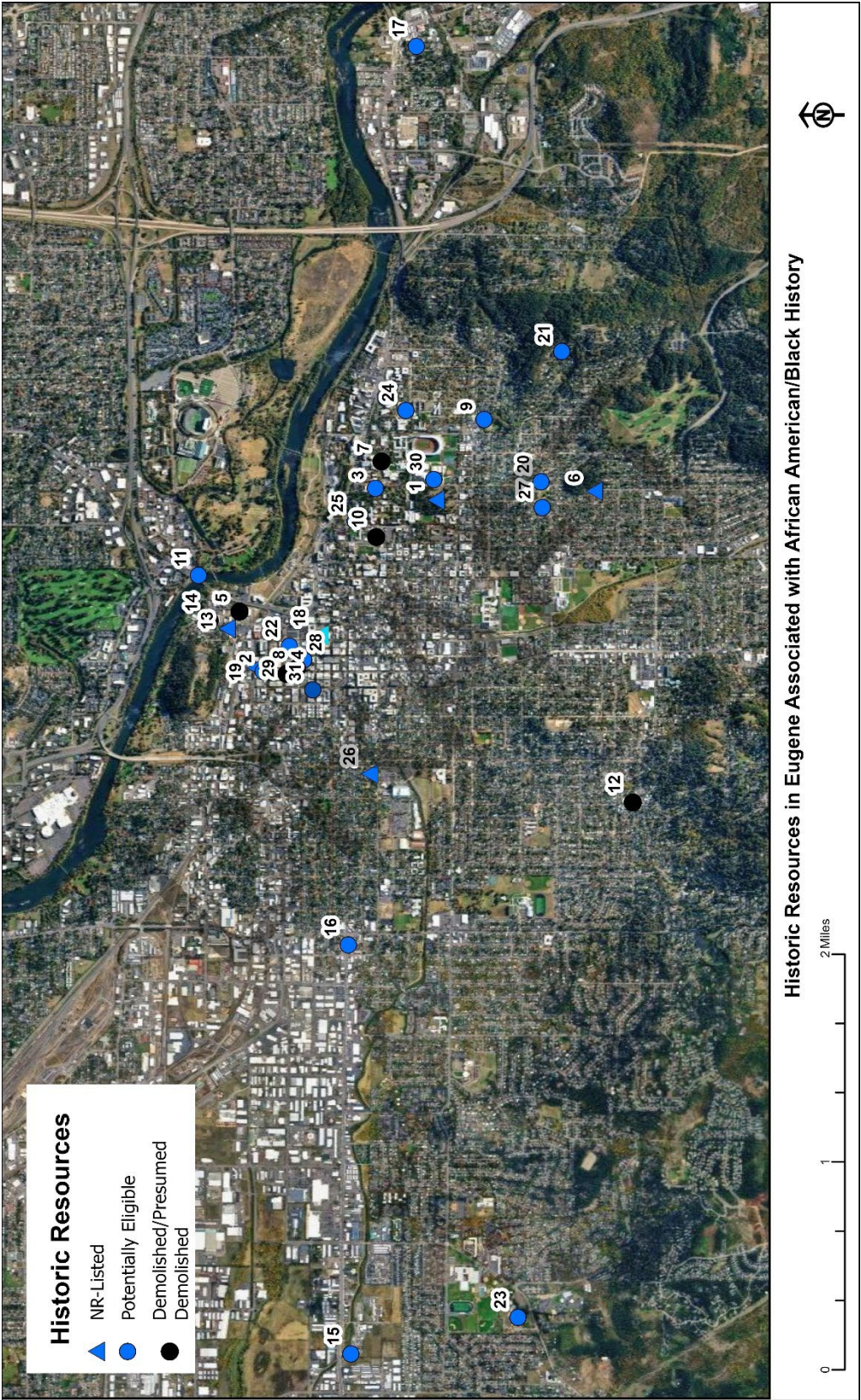
Res. No.	Resource Name	Address	Construction Date	Themes/Sub-Themes	NRHP Status
1	I.O.O.F. Pioneer Cemetery	1001 E 18 th Ave.	1872	Notable Community Member	NRHP-listed
2	Eugene & College Hill Street Railway	Linear feature – Multiple blocks	1891–1900	Transportation	Potentially Eligible
3	Friendly Hall	1233 University St.	1893	Labor, Employment Trends	Potentially Eligible
4	Smeede Hotel	767 Willamette St.	1885	Labor, Employment Trends	NRHP-listed
5	Residence (Wiley Griffon)	E 4th Ave. and Mill St.	c. 1909	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	Demolished
6	Eugene Masonic Cemetery & Hope Abbey Mausoleum	University St and E 25th St.	1859	Notable Community Member	NRHP-listed
7	Residence (Mabel Byrd)	1378 13th Ave.	Undetermined	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	Presumed Demolished
8	Residence (William Savage)	775 Willamette St.	Undetermined	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	Presumed Demolished
9	Residence (Maxine Maxwell and Nellie Franklin)	1970 Columbia St.	1909	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	Potentially Eligible
10	Residence (Robert Robinson and Charles Williams)	825 E 13th St.	1927	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	Presumed Demolished
11	Across the Bridge Community	N/A (now a portion of Alton Baker Park)	ca. 1948	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	Potentially Eligible (Archaeological)

12	Residence (Glaster family)	2785 Friendly St.	Undetermined	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	Potentially Eligible
13	Mims House	330 and 336 High St.	1867 (OHSD), 1900 (county tax assessor)	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	NRHP-listed (East Skinner Butte Historic District)
14	Residence (Redman family)	360 E 2nd Ave.	Undetermined	Racial Segregation, Residential Settlement and Housing Patterns	Demolished
15	St. Mark Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME)	1167 Sam Reynolds St.	1955	Religion and Spirituality	Potentially Eligible
16	Jerusalem Church of God in Christ	1760 W 11th St.	c.1950	Religion and Spirituality	Potentially Eligible
17	Antioch Baptist Church	1545 Brooklyn Dr.	1956	Religion and Spirituality	Potentially Eligible
18	Eugene Hotel (Shasta Masonic Lodge No. 37 and Deborah Chapter No. 16)	222 E Broadway	1925	Clubs and Organizations	NRHP-listed
19	Carpenter's Hall (Shasta Masonic Lodge No. 37 and Deborah Chapter No. 16)	40 E 5th Ave.	1908	Clubs and Organizations	NRHP-listed
20	Robert D. & Opal R. Clark House (Unthank Jr. designed)	2323 University St.	1952	Businesses and Professional Development	Potentially Eligible
21	Crasemann House (Unthank Jr. designed)	2520 Woodland Dr.	1958	Businesses and Professional Development	Potentially Eligible
22	Lane County Courthouse and associated park block (Unthank Jr. designed)	125 E 8th Ave.	1960	Businesses and Professional Development	Potentially Eligible
23	Kennedy Middle School (Unthank Jr. designed)	2200 Bailey Hill Rd.	c.1965	Businesses and Professional Development	Potentially Eligible
24	Justice Bean Hall (Unthank Jr. designed)	1695 E 15th Ave.	1962	Businesses and Professional Development	Potentially Eligible
25	McKenzie Hall (Unthank Jr. designed)	1101 Kincaid St.	1970	Businesses and Professional Development	Potentially Eligible
26	Lincoln Elementary School/Woodrow Wilson Junior High (Civil Rights march)	650 W. 12th Ave.	1924	Civil Rights Movement	NRHP-listed

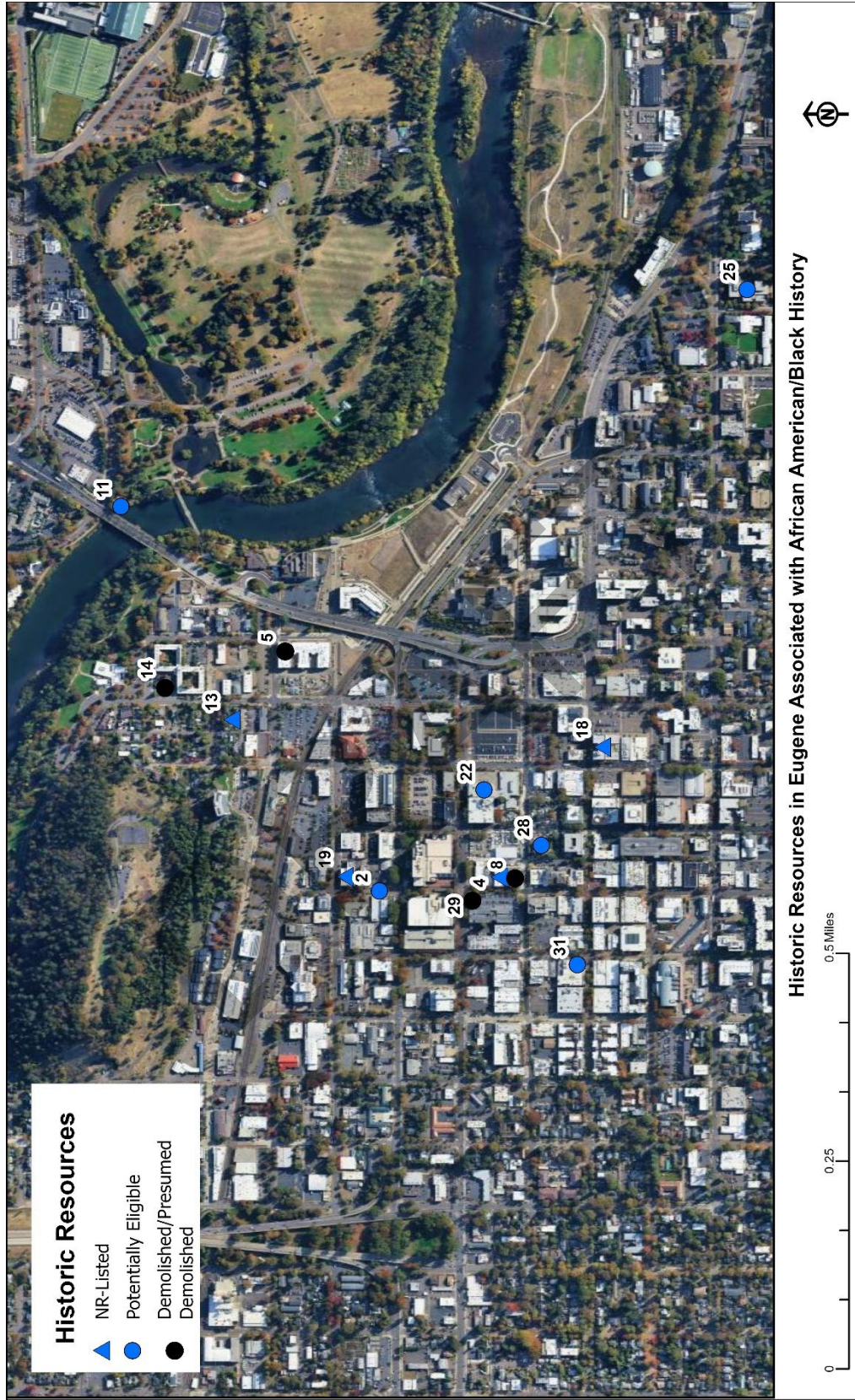
27	First Congregational Church (location of Free Breakfast Program)	1050 E 23rd Ave.	Undetermined	Civil Rights Movement	Potentially Eligible
28	Park Blocks (Civil Rights march)	W Park St. and E Park St., E 8 th Ave. and S Park St.	N/A	Civil Rights Movement	Potentially Eligible
29	Black Boutique	E 7th Ave. and Willamette St.	Undetermined	Businesses and Professional Development	Presumed Demolished
30	McArthur Court	1601 University St.	1926	Athletics	Potentially Eligible
31	Glamor Girls and Guys Hair Studio	125 W. Broadway	Undetermined	Businesses and Professional Development	Potentially Eligible

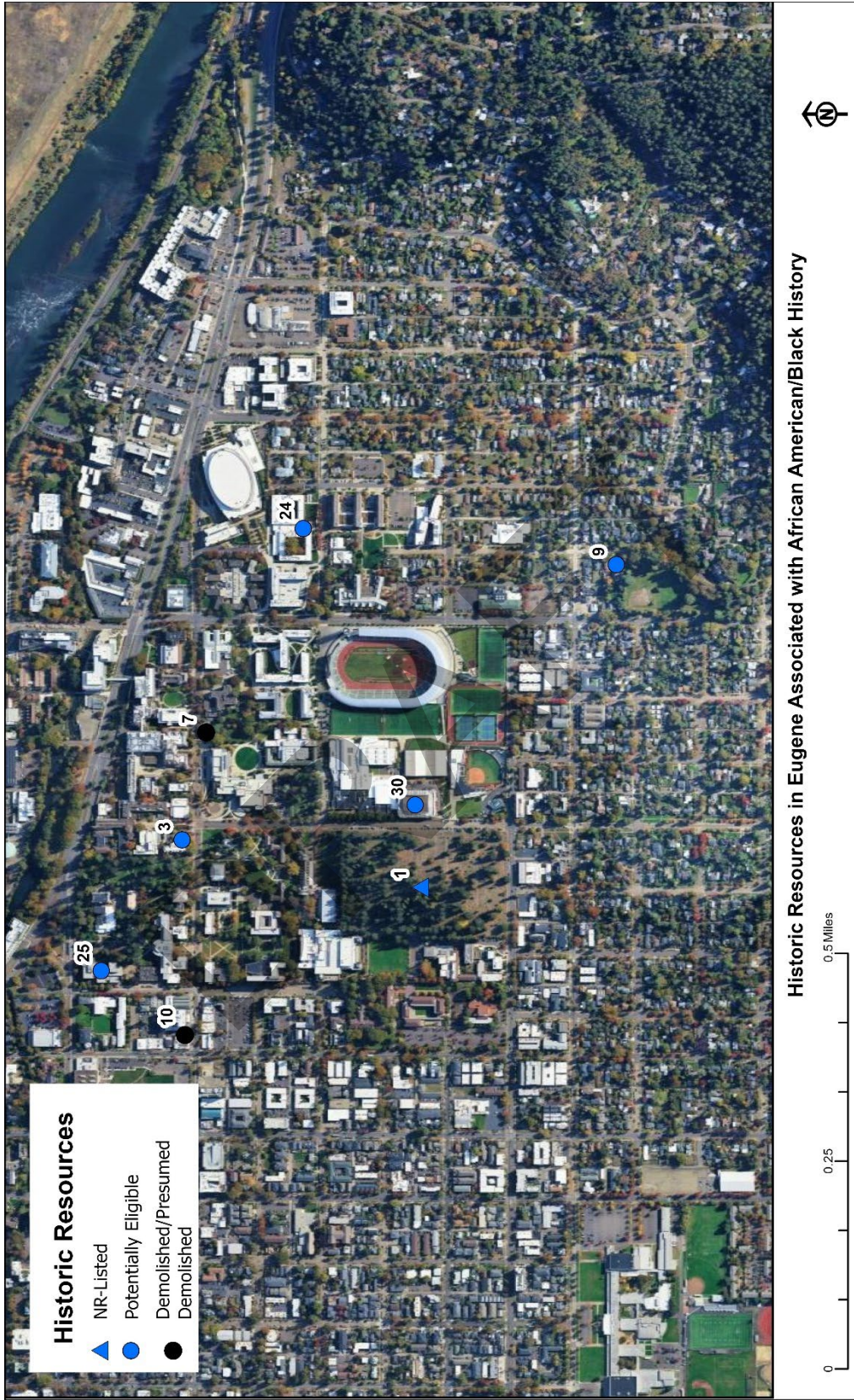
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Appendix B: Historic Resources Maps















Appendix C: List of Community Members and Leaders

Coleman William (commonly known as Cole)

Pauline (Coleman William's grandmother)

John Warren Downer

Wiley Griffon

Henderson Stone and Family

Mabel Byrd

William Sherman Savage

Maxine Maxwell

Nellie Franklin

Ellen Law

Robert "Bob" Robinson

Charles "Chuck" Williams

Huber Allen

Mathew "Mack" Robinson

Robert "Smokey" Whitfield

Johnson Family (Charles and Bertha, Charles, Eloise, Rober Louis, Billy, Terry, Jerry, and Perry)

Mims Family (C.B., Annie, Willie, John, Pearlie Mae)

Nettles Family (Joe, Marnie, and Olenza)

Reynolds Family (Sam and Mattie)

Holt Family

William Family

Rucker Family

Joiner Family

Frenchwell Family

Lester Family

Garret Family

Henry Family

Reverend S.H. Holloway

Glaster Family (Leon, Maxine, and Ruby)

Pauline Gibson (Charles and Bertha Johnson's niece)

Washington Family (Leo, Pearlie Mae, Brenda, Jerry, and Ron)

Redman Family (Ralph and Edna)

Willie and Thelma Glaster
Mary Walker, Anthony (son)
Samuel and Bertha Pledger
John and Essie Tyler
John Green
Austin Scriber
John T. Taylor
Reverend E. E. Wilson
Reverend Dewey H. Griggs
Reverend O. B. Wiley
Reverend P. H. F. McQuarter
Arthur and Luvenia Shankle
Mary Samuels
Lettie Reynolds
Pearlie Mae Joiner
Clifford Joiner
Bonnie Rucker
Mary Lee Taylor
Mary Williams
DeNorval "De" Unthank, Jr.
Robert (Bob) Holloway
Lawrence "Larry" Carter
Dr. Clyde Deberry
Lyllye Reynolds-Parker
Howard and Tommy Anderson
William Green
Alice Spencer
Sam Reynolds Jr.
Ruth Nettles
Dr. Edwin "Ed" and Charmaine Coleman
Otis Davis
Margaret Bailes
Eric Richardson
Bahati Ansari

Ronald “Ronnie” Lee

Greg Ballard

Ernie Kent

Ahmad Rashad (born Robert “Bobby” Moore)

Georgene Rose

Debbie Adams

Quenna Beasley

Debbie Adams

Don Reynolds

Yogi Johnson

George McPherson

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Appendix D: Major Events Timeline

The following timeline largely follows the National and Oregon Chronology of Events outlined by the State of Oregon.

1843	Oregon Provisional Government is created
1844	First of exclusionary laws formed by provisional government denying Black Americans from living in the Oregon Territory and punishment entails public lashing.
1845	Exclusionary law was amended and lashing was changed to forced labor as punishment Provisional Government legislative committee repealed actions relation to slavery
1846	Treaty of Oregon is signed, ending 28-year joint occupation with Great Britain
1848	Oregon becomes U.S. territory
1849	Oregon Territorial Legislature enacts exclusion law that prohibits Black people from emigrating or residing in the territory. Black residents already living in the territory were able to remain, but further emigration was banned. Any individuals caught risked arrest, removal, and expelling.
1850	Donation Land Claim Act provides free land to white men, excluding women and people of color from owning land.
c.1855	Coleman “Cole” William and his grandmother are earliest recorded Black residents to live in Lane County
1851	Exclusion law is enforced against Jacob Vanderpool, the only instance a Black person was expelled under exclusion laws
1854	Oregon Territorial Legislature bars testimony from Black people and people of color in proceedings involving a white person
1859	Oregon voters approve the Oregon constitution, banning slavery but prohibiting Black people from emigrating to the state, and making it illegal for Black Americans to own property, make contracts, vote, or use the legal system.
1859	Oregon becomes state, only state admitted to the Union with exclusion laws in its constitution
1861	Beginning of the Civil War
1862	Oregon Legislature passes law banning interracial marriage and institutes a \$5.00 annual tax on people of color, those unable to pay were forced to perform road maintenance.
1863	Emancipation Proclamation frees slaves in Confederate States
1865	Congress passes the Thirteenth Amendment, banning slavery

- 1866** Congress passes the Fourteenth Amendment, Oregon ratifies the amendment, rendering the state's exclusion clause irrelevant, although it is not removed from the constitution
- 1868** Oregon rescinds its ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment
- 1869** Congress passes the Fifteenth Amendment, prohibiting the federal government and states from denying citizen's right to vote on account of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude."
- 1870** Fifteenth Amendment ratified, Oregon Supreme Court rules Black residents can vote because the amendment despite Oregon's inaction.

Railroad built from Portland to Eugene
- 1880** Railroad extended to California
- c.1890** John Downer arrives in Eugene

Wiley Griffon arrives in Eugene and becomes conductor of Eugene's first streetcar system

Henderson Stone owns and operates a barbershop and bathhouse on Willamette St., one of the first documented Black business owners in Eugene
- 1900** Oregon voters reject a proposal to repeal the exclusion clause in the constitution
- 1903** John Downer purchases 200-acre mining claim in the Blue River Mining District, becoming one of the first known Black property owners in Lane County.
- 1909** Wiley Griffon obtains a permit to construct his house in Eugene, becoming one of the first known Black homeowners in Eugene.
- 1914** Early civil rights in Oregon, first NAACP chapter is founded in Oregon
- 1917** Mabel Byrd becomes first Black student to attend the University of Oregon. She is denied housing and has to live with her professor as a servant in order to finish her education.
- 1921** Ku Klux Klan organizes a chapter in Eugene and throughout Oregon
- 1923** William Sherman Savage becomes the first graduate student at the University of Oregon, he was denied on-campus housing.
- 1926** Exclusion law is removed from the Oregon Constitution

Robert "Bob" Robinson and Charles "Chuck" Williams are the first collegiate athletes to attend the University of Oregon and the first students to be admitted into dormitory housing, but only under segregated conditions.
- 1927** State Constitution is amended to remove voting restrictions against African Americans and Chinese Americans
- 1939** Start of World War II, approximately 22,000 Black Americans came to Oregon to work in the shipyards

- c.1947** Across the Bridge Community forms outside Eugene
- 1948** Vanport flood displaces an estimated 18,500 residents, including over 6,000 Black residents, several relocate to Eugene seeking housing and aid.
- Ferry Street Chapel is established at the Across the Bridge Community
- Mims family purchase High St. properties, one residence provides safe housing for Black travelers
- 1949** Forced removal and displacement of the Across the Bridge Community, residents resettle in West Eugene near West 11th, East Skinner's Butte, and Glenwood areas
- St. Mark Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church is established along West 11th
- First NAACP branch in Eugene is organized by University of Oregon students
- 1950** Jerusalem Church of God in Christ is established in the Glenwood community
- 1951** Law repealed prohibiting interracial marriage
- 1952** Antioch Baptist Church (later Bethel Temple Faith Ministries) in Glenwood community is established
- DeNorval Unthank, Jr. becomes first Black man to graduate from the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts
- 1953** Public Accommodations Law prohibits racial discrimination by business
- 1954** Supreme Court rules segregation in schools illegal
- 1955** Shasta Masonic Lodge No. 37, Eugene chapter of the Prince Hall Grand Chapter forms
- Eugene chapter of the Eastern Stars, Deborah Chapter No. 16 forms alongside Masonic Lodge
- 1957** Oregon Fair Housing Act passes
- Urban Renewal Agency (URA) forms in Eugene
- 1959** Oregon Legislature ratifies Fifteenth Amendment, 90 years after its adoption in the U.S.
- 1963** Eugene chapter of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) is formed, becoming one of the early civil rights organizations in Eugene
- 1964** National Civil Rights Act passes outlawing racial segregation in schools, workplaces, public places, and unequal voter registration requirements
- City of Eugene forms the Eugene Human Rights Committee (HRC)
- 1965** Congress passes Voters' Rights Act, prohibiting qualifications or pre-requisites to vote
- 1966** Black Student Union (BSU) is established at the University of Oregon
- Residents of an entire block (a majority of whom were Black), were displaced for the construction of a public housing complex built by Eugene's Urban Renewal Agency and the Housing Authority of Lane County

- 1968** Eugene chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) forms, becoming the first officially sanctioned Black Panther branch in Oregon
- 1969** Equal Opportunity Ordinance passed in Eugene, prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations
- c.1970** Black Boutique store opens, owned by brothers Willie and John Mims
- 1973** Oregon re-ratifies the 14th Amendment, 105 years after rescinding their ratification
- 2002** Measure requiring the removal of racist language from the State Constitution passed by Oregon voters
- 2007** Oregon Equality Act Passes
- 2022** Oregon voters pass Measure 112, removing the use of slavery and involuntary servitude as punishment for a crime

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Appendix F: Population of Black residents in Eugene from 1850 to 1970

Growth of Eugene's Black Population from 1850 to 1870			
Decade	Starting Population	Ending Population	Population Growth as a Percentage
1850s	0	1	100%
1860s	1	0	-100%
1870s	1	4	300%
1880s	4	10	150%
1890s	10	17	70%
1900s	17	13	-24%
1910s	13	13	0%
1920s	13	16	23%
1930s	16	15	6%
1940s	15	161	973%
1950s	161	336	109%
1960s	336	743	121%
1970s	743	?	?

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