

A Proud Tradition

Celebrating Black History in Winchester

Every February, we celebrate African Americans' contributions to the development of our nation and society through Black History Month. President Obama stated in 2016, "Black History Month is about the lived, shared experience of all African Americans, high and low, famous and obscure, and how those experiences have shaped and challenged and ultimately strengthened America."

Nowhere is that sentiment more accurate than in Winchester. As far back as 1898, the City directory recorded 1,760 African Americans in various occupations, including barbers, livery owners, restaurant owners, blacksmiths, grocers, nurses, and skilled masons. African Americans

ran prosperous hotels, restaurants, lunchrooms, beauty salons, and funeral parlors. They also served as doctors, dentists, ministers, and many other professions.

Like other Americans, African Americans in Winchester worked hard to build a better life for themselves and their children while investing in the City's institutions, schools, and churches. They persisted and flourished during tough times, such as war and economic depression, and in the face of bitter racism and segregation.

Just a few of their many stories are shared below.

Photos courtesy of the Handley Library Archives and Winchester-Frederick County Convention and Visitor's Bureau



Powell Gibson

Powell Gibson served the community as a leading educator, author, and poet from 1916 until he died in 1959. His son, Willard, operated a print shop behind the family residence and published The Progressive Advocate and The Virginia Informer, Winchester's two Black newspapers with a reputation for engaging reporting and commentary.

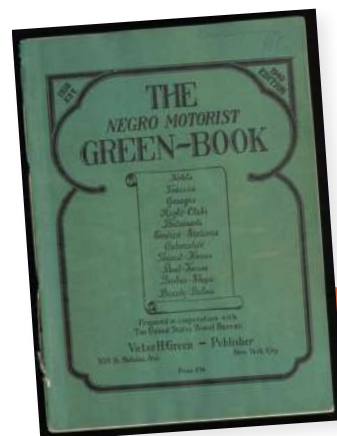
Ruth & Boyd Jackson

Ruth and Boyd Jackson and their daughter Vivienne operated "Ruth's Tea Room" on East Cecil Street from 1927 until the 1990s. Construction workers building the George Washington Hotel ate their lunches here, and visitors of all backgrounds and races were welcome. Ruth's relatives, Russell and Hilda Jackson, also established and operated the Community Food Store grocery for over 50 years.



The Green Book

The legendary Negro Motorist Green Book listed four Winchester Black-owned businesses, including the Dunbar Tea Room, Mrs. Joseph Willis, Ruth's Tea Room, and Evan's Hotel.



Harry Ransom

Harry Ransom was an influential business owner, musical director, and leader. As proprietor of The Square Deal restaurant, Ransom's Dancing Academy, and Negro Minstrels, Harry regularly hosted social events supporting community members, including African American soldiers heading to war.

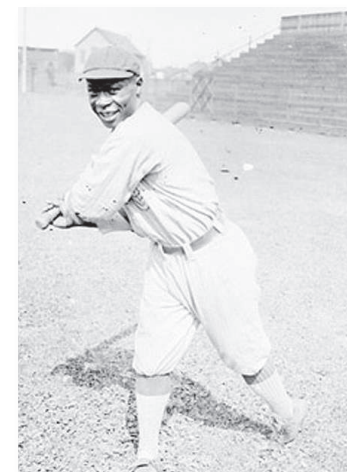


Dr. John Poulson Sr.

Dr. John Poulson Sr. was the first Black physician to practice in Winchester, with a practice on North Kent Street. He later moved to Southwerk Street. Although he was not granted hospital privileges, he cared for any patient in need, White or Black.

Spotsy Poles

Spottswood (Spotsy) Poles was born in Winchester in 1886 and is remembered as perhaps the greatest baseball player in the history of the Negro Leagues. In 1911, playing for the New York Lincoln Giants, Spotsy batted .610 in ten exhibition games against Major League Baseball teams. Spotsy also served his country in World War I in the 369th Infantry Regiment. Later, Spotsy brought his Harrisburg, PA-based team to Winchester to play against a local team during a community picnic hosted by the Odd Fellows.



The Douglas School

The Douglas School was the base of Winchester's African American academic community from its founding in 1927. In 1938 alone, of eight graduating students, one became a lawyer, one a research biologist, one a psychologist, and another the first Black Fire Marshall in Washington, DC.

Roland Hayes

Internationally renowned singer Roland Hayes sang in France, Germany, and the UK (including a performance for King George V). Roland also performed at Winchester City Hall on November 23, 1923, in a benefit concert sponsored by John Mann United Methodist Church. The City and Shenandoah University will hold a Roland Hayes tribute concert on Feb. 23 (see the following page).



The Brown Bombers

The Brown Bombers semi-professional football team helped build community pride and Winchester's sporting tradition while winning numerous regional championships.

Black Clubs

Many Black Clubs served community members over the years, including the King Hiram Masonic Lodge (chartered in 1886), the Apple Blossom Chapter 196 of the Order of the Eastern Star, and many others.



Check out the next page for a schedule of events.
We hope to see you there!

Black History Month Calendar of Events

February 2

Douglas Night Basketball
Game, Handley High School



Doors open at 5:00 p.m.

February 4

Museum of the
Shenandoah Valley Presentation
"Segregation to Integration"



3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

February 7

Alamo Drafthouse
Cinema Black History Movie
"Rustin"



7:00 p.m.

Feb. 3, 11, 17 & 25

Win-Fred Convention &
Visitor's Bureau Black
History Trolley Tours



February 3, 11, & 25: 1:00 p.m.
February 17: 2:00 p.m.

February 10

Clarke County Dramatic
Reading, Josephine
School Community Museum



1:30 p.m.

February 14

Douglass Day Closing
Keynote by David R.
McCormick, SU Smith Library



4:00 p.m.

February 17

St. Paul AME Church
Brunch



Doors open at 11:00 a.m.

February 23

Roland Hayes Production,
Shenandoah University
Armstrong Auditorium



7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

February 24

City of Winchester Poles
Park Commemoration, corner
of Woodland Ave. and Elm St.



11:00 a.m.

February 24

Black History Month Expo,
Winchester Moose Lodge



12:00 – 6:00 p.m.

February 25

"She Is The Narrative",
produced and directed by
Desirée Dabney '14
Glaize Theatre



4:00 p.m.

February 29

Handley Black Student
Union History Exhibit &
Performance,
Handley High School



11:05 a.m – 12:05 p.m.

February 29

Winchester NAACP
& AAUW of Winchester
Discussion "Barriers Broken,
Barriers That Remain",
Handley Library Auditorium



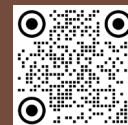
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

March 2

Contemporary Masai
Cultural Performance
"Uncovering Kasserian Ingera?",
Douglas School



1:00 – 3:00 p.m.



**Scan the QR code for the
most updated information**