



Sankofa:

“Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi” (Akan language)

“It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten” (West African Proverb)

We Were Here

African-Americans in Danville and
Boyle County, Kentucky, 1784-2019

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Overview of Black History in the Boyle County region

- Motivation and rationale
- Early Black History
- The Civil War and Camp Nelson
- Black settlements 1865 on
- Jim Crow and Segregation
- Education
- The Great Migration
- Urban Renewal and Integration
- Decline of the Black Community - influence and numbers

Motivation and Rationale

- I'm a White "Yankee. Why should I be interested in this?
- My interest in genealogy and history began mid 1960s
- Found little work done on Black families
- Began recording family and vital records
- Now over 1700 families, 4,000 death records, 6,700 marriages, 4,000 memorials on Find A Grave

Motivation and Rationale (2)

- Began work restoring Shelby City African American Cemetery, October 2013, Meadow Lane, April 2018
- In 2013, helped organize the Danville Boyle County African American Historical Society
- In 2015, helped organize Central Kentucky African American Cemetery Association

Early Black History

- This is Boyle County, but similarities in other area counties
- Few records of Blacks by name prior to Civil War
- Many did come with White settlers to area including Harrodsburg, Stanford, Boonesborough
- Only listed as numbers in census records before 1870 unless they were free
- By 1850s and 1860s, three schools for Blacks in Danville
- More free Blacks in 1860 than any counties except Jefferson, Fayette, and Franklin

Early Black History (2)

County	Pop	Slaves	% of Total	Free Blacks	% of Blacks
Jefferson	89,404	10,304	12%	2,007	19%
Fayette	22,599	10,015	44%	685	7%
Franklin	12,694	3,384	27%	450	13%
Boyle	9,304	3,279	35%	435	13%
Mercer	13,700	3,270	24%	278	9%
Lincoln	10,647	3,430	32%	158	5%
Garrard	10,531	3,578	34%	96	3%
Casey	6,466	666	10%	57	9%

Early Black History (3)

- Dennis Doram and wife Diademia (Taylor) Doram became wealthiest Black family in Boyle County
- Purchased much land, and a number of slaves
- Slaves were freed, then given or sold land
- Many Black landowners in and around present-day Constitution Square, Stanford Ave, or in eastern part of county (Clifton, Needmore)
- Portraits in KHS, Frankfort, of Dennis and Diademia.
- Family had many prominent members.



The Civil War and Camp Nelson

- Prior to 1864, Blacks not allowed to enlist in Union Army
- Opening of Camp Nelson, Jessamine County, ended that prohibition
- Hundreds marched through Danville, stoned, shot at (historical marker)
- Camp Nelson was 2nd or 3rd largest Black recruiting camp in the US.



Black Settlements 1865 on

Danville
1876

South 1st

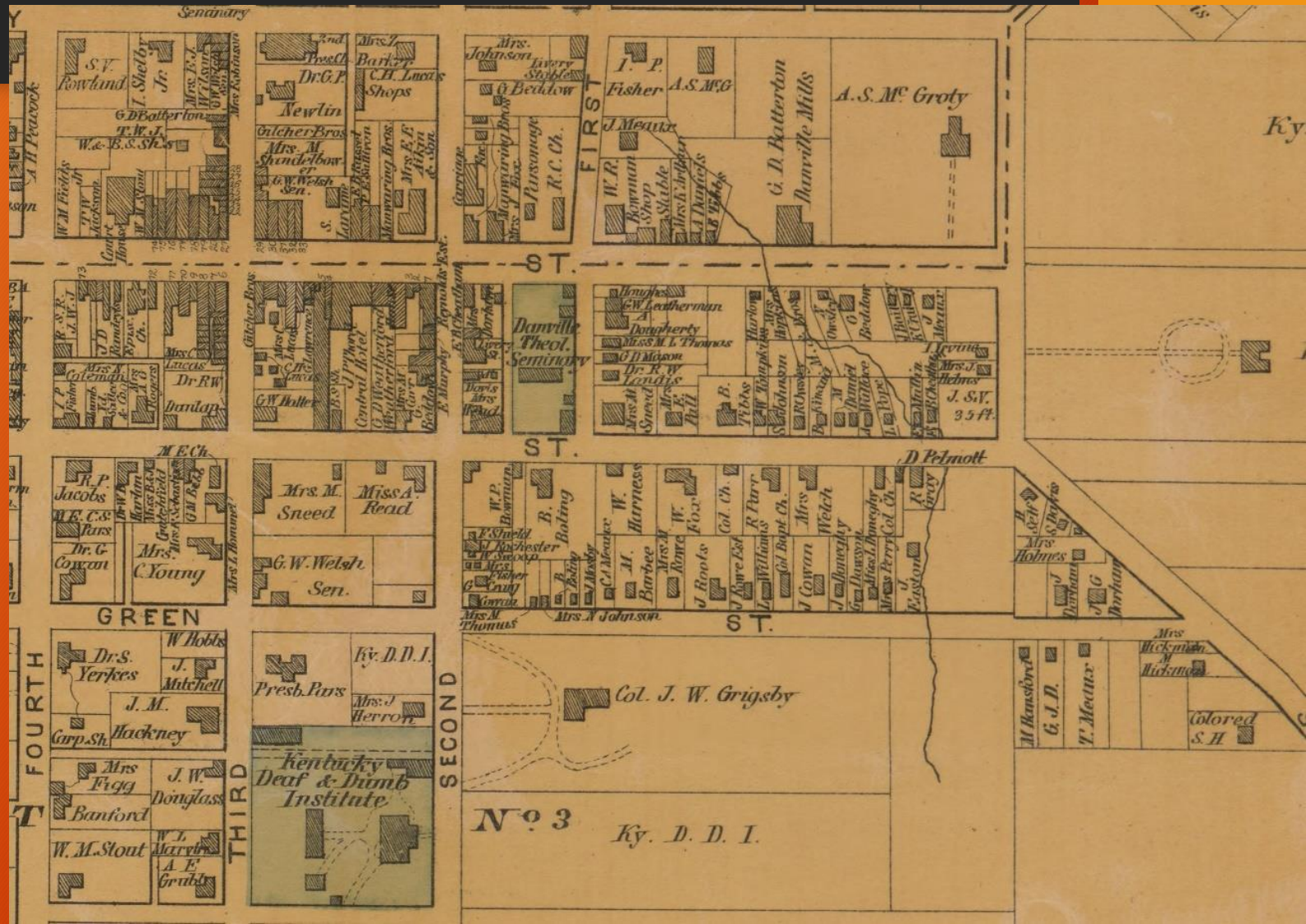
South 2nd

Walnut St

Green St

Stanford Ave

6th, 7th,
and Rowe



Black Settlements 1865 on (2)

- Two types of settlements

Somewhat integrated, usually settled before 1865

Almost all Black, usually settled after 1865, often set up by Whites to keep their labor force nearby

- African American settlements before 1865

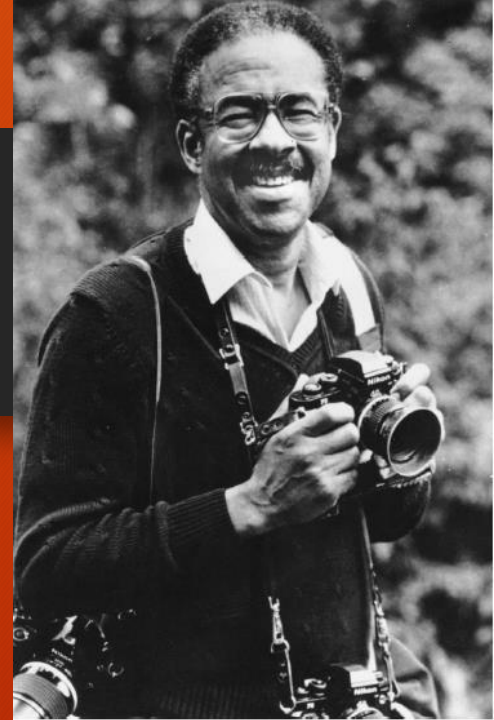
Aliceton, Atoka, Brumfield, Danville, Mitchellsburg, Shelby City

- Settlements after 1865:

Clifton, Meauxtown, Needmore, Sleettown, Stony Point, West Danville, Wilsonville, Zion Hill; Mayo (Mercer Co), Davistown, White Oak (Garrard Co), Rowland (Lincoln Co)

Black Settlements 1865 on (3)

- The Sleet Family, established Sleettown, northwest of Perryville after the Civil War
- Sleettown thrived until 1930s
- Depression, out-migration, and aging
- Moneta Sleet, first Black photographer to win Pulitzer Prize for photo of Mrs. Coretta Scott King at Dr King's funeral
- Amelia Sleet Burton, long-time teacher in Perryville "Colored" school; the school has been restored in her honor.



Moneta Sleet, 1959.



Jim Crow and Segregation

- Blacks generally voted Republican
- When Democrats came back in power, restricted Black voting and power
- Danville's 1891 City Charter put most Blacks in one ward
- WW1's 369th Infantry (Harlem Hellfighters)

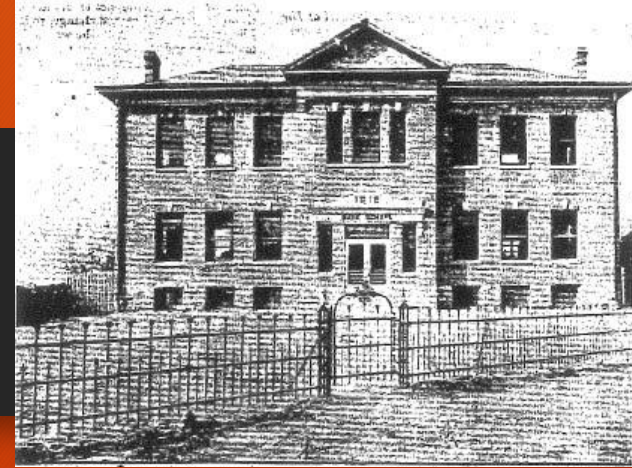


Jim Crow and Segregation (2)

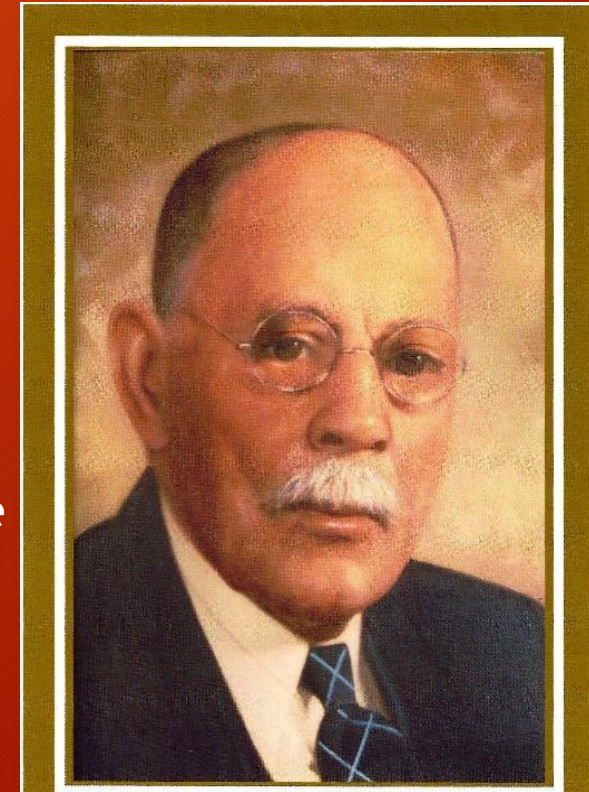
- “Colored” schools created after 1865 in all Black settlements (Freedmen’s schools, 600 students by 1875)
- Schools segregated by Day Law, 1904
- “Danville Colored School” became Bate School, 1920s
- Danville Yankees, and other local baseball teams VERY popular by 1900
- Some from here played semi-pro ball in Lexington



Education



- Bate School began as one room freedman's school
- John W Bate principal, 1881
- Enlarged and expanded several times
- One of the best “colored” schools in KY
- Prof. John Bate, born a slave, became a leading educator in KY
- By Bate's retirement in 1941, he said
“I came to the school at 26 and retired from Bate at 85. I found a one room school and I left a building of twenty rooms. I was the one teacher and now there are fifteen. I found six students and I left a school with 600.”



Professor John William Bate
December 21, 1851, Lexington, KY - September 3, 1945

Education (2)

- Other cities had Black high schools, like Dunbar (Lexington), Lincoln (Stanford)

- Boyle had 17 from 1865 to 1956

Danville Freedmen School

Danville American Missionary Ass'n School

Shelby City Freedmen School

School #2 on Green Street

Presbyterian Church School

Stony Point School

Perryville School

Atoka School

Bate School

Parksville American Missionary Ass'n School

School #1 on Green Street (Willis Russell)

Methodist Church School

Baptist Church School

Wilsonville School

Zion Hill School

Junction City School

Colored Department of the Kentucky Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb (KSD)

Education (3)

Mercer had at least 14 “colored” schools pre-1956

Susan Mary Craig School

Ellen Craig Harris School

McAfee School

New Methodist Church School

St. Peter's Church School

Lexington / Warrick St School

Harrodsburg School

Salvisa School

Unity School

Burgin School

Robinson Row School

Wayman Institute

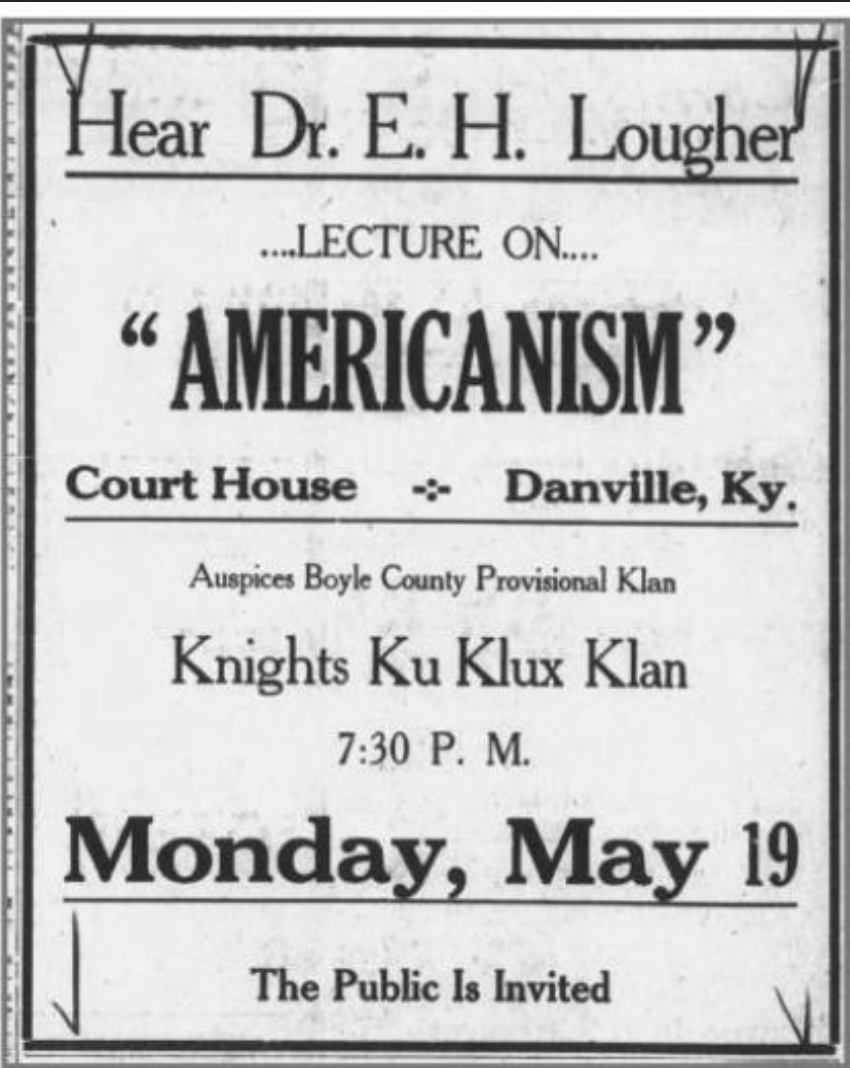
West Side School

Mayo School

The Great Migration (1)

- “Jim Crow” and segregation took more civil rights away in the South, many Blacks moved north.
- Largely to Northern industrial centers - Chicago-Gary, Indianapolis, Detroit, Cincinnati-Dayton, Cleveland-Youngstown
- Still faced racism and discrimination in the North, but at least had decent jobs
- Two waves, 1915-1940, and 1960-1970 (both to the North and the West Coast).
- Many families here headed by a married woman whose husband was working in IL, IN, OH or MI.

The Great Migration (2)



- From 1922 to 1926, the Ku Klux Klan was active in Boyle County
- This caused many Blacks to leave the area
- Special trains came from Lexington to Danville bringing thousands
- Opposed race-mixing, Catholics, Jews, Negroes, immigrants in general

The Great Migration (3)

- Between WW1 and the 1960s, not much changed positively
- Integration proceeded slowly through the courts
- Daily life did not improve, nor did it really worsen that much
- “Life goes on”, as a Black friend said to me
- Main issue was illegal alcohol, both before and after official “prohibition” (“Give him two dollars”)
- Restaurants, barber shops, pool halls became focus of daily life
- Best resource - Isabel Wilkerson, [The Warmth of Other Suns](#)

Urban Renewal and Integration



Integration (1)

- Blacks could live and shop anywhere. Good?
- No longer patronized Black-owned businesses
- Businesses closed, buildings deteriorated
- Urban renewal bulldozed many Black communities (IU, Adamstown)

Integration (2)

- Many working outside Black areas found jobs lacking or inadequate
- Pay for Blacks was less than for whites
- Often, businesses would hire just one Black to “integrate”
- Caused the second Great Migration north and west

Integration (3)

- School integration generally peaceful, but some high schools only wanted Black athletes
- Danville and Boyle County integrated by 1964
- Bate became Danville Bate Middle School (grades 6-8)
- Changed to John W Bate Middle School in 2018

Urban Renewal (1)

- Began in 1960s as effort to erase “urban blight”.
- Generations of poverty created poor neighborhoods with deficient housing and other buildings
- Most “blighted” areas in the South were Black neighborhoods.

Urban Renewal (2)

- “Urban Renewal” promised
 - rehabilitation of properties,
 - updated and newer homes for residents,
 - more visually appealing cities.
- Historic properties (those which Whites wanted saved) were saved
- I now call it “urban destruction”

Urban Renewal (3)

- Reality for Black neighborhoods:
 - Destroyed many homes of Black residents without replacing neighborhoods or communities
 - Destroyed Black communities by spreading residents out throughout the area
 - Destroyed Black institutions, ended or retarded social organizations
 - Even churches lost adherents
 - Businesses destroyed but not replaced

Urban Renewal and Integration (4)



South Second Street,
Danville, before 1970

Nearly everything in these
photos is GONE. Almost
nothing was “renewed”.



2nd St. business district, across from the McDowell House Museum

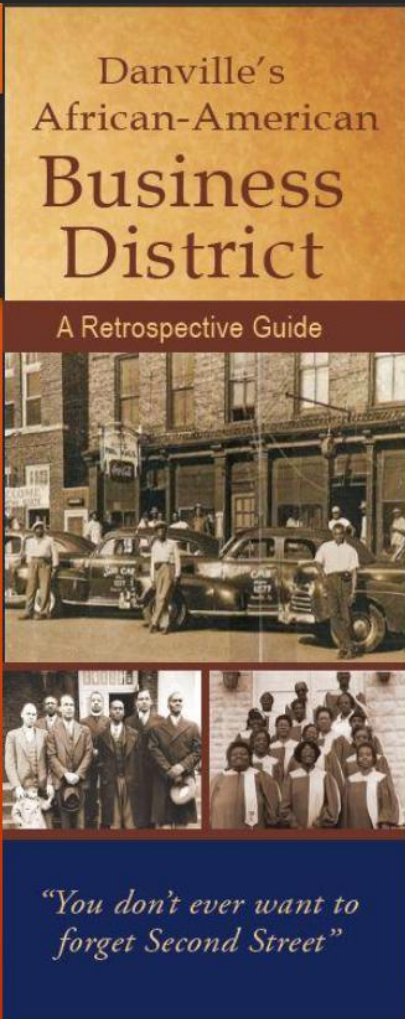
Decline of the Black Community

- With urban renewal and integration, communities declined
- Black schools closed as desegregated schools proliferated (and later “white flight” left these schools majority Black)
- Businesses closed as Blacks shopped in White-owned stores
- Destroyed sense of identity within the Black community
- One retired teacher noted that in a Black school students received positive attention; in an integrated school, they were just part of the crowd.
- As many Blacks left, those left behind failed to prosper

Decline of the Black Community and efforts to counter that decline

- Danville Boyle County African American Historical Society, Inc, organized December 2013 to try to preserve what is left of African American history in Danville and Boyle County
- Central Kentucky African American Cemetery Association, LLC, organized 2015, to locate, record, restore and preserve Black cemeteries in Boyle, Casey, Garrard, Lincoln and Mercer Counties
- Recording and preserving records of the Black community at website, <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~kydaahs/index.htm>

Publicity and Activities



FORGOTTEN LANDMARKS



AFRICAN AMERICAN SITES IN BOYLE COUNTY

- Facebook Pages
- Newspaper articles (*Advocate* and *Interior Journal*)
- Soul of Second Street Festival and History Conference
- Tourist brochures
- “Good Blues Tonight” at Pioneer Playhouse
- Black History month events
- Cemetery restoration/preservation

Saved!

- Shelby City African American Cemetery, Junction City, now owned by the CKAACA.
- 2.5 Acres, so overgrown that people living on the road did not know there was a cemetery with 800 graves there.
- After 5 years of volunteer work Lincoln Co has now stepped in to help maintenance.



Saved! (2)

- Meadow Lane African American Cemetery, Kilby Lane, Danville, owned by CKAACA, but now transferred to the City of Danville
- Originally, Lawson Moore's slave cemetery, probably dating from 1830s
- Arguably the oldest extant Black cemetery in Boyle County
- Possibly 200 graves here



What Now?

- Many aspects of Black life in Boyle County are repeated in Garrard, Lincoln and Mercer Counties
- Less so in Casey, as that county never had a significant Black population
- Other counties had Black neighborhoods, stores, schools, churches, social institutions
- Find out what was there, before all recollection is gone
- Preserve what you can, record what you can't
- Try to look at history and present from Black perspective
- Let Blacks in YOUR county say, "WE WERE HERE".